

Meeting Summary

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| Subject | Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee – Meeting #26 |
| Date and Time | December 4, 2023/ 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. |
| Location | Virtual via Zoom; recording available via YouTube livestream |

Attendance

| Committee Members | Organization |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Paul Burgess | Fourth Plain Forward |
| Jan Campbell | Committee on Accessible Transportation |
| LaQuinta Daniels | Clark County Juvenile Court |
| Leah Fisher | Clackamas County Public Health Division |
| Amanda Garcia-Snell | Washington County Community Engagement |
| Olivia Kahn | At-large member; City of Vancouver |
| James Paulson | WorkSystems, Inc. Board |
| Dr. Philip Wu | Oregon Environmental Council |
| Commissioner Alicia Chapman | Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) Liaison |

| Name | Meeting Role | Name | Meeting Role |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Mandy Putney | ODOT, Presenter | Nick Fazio | Project team |
| Jacob Easter | ODOT, Presenter | MJ Jackson | Project team |
| Mary McGowan | ODOT, Presenter | Jodi Mescher | Project team |
| Jessica Stanton | Facilitator | Perla Solis | Project team |
| Chris Lepe | Project team | | |

1 Welcome, Introductions, and Objectives

Jessica Stanton welcomed meeting participants and facilitated a round of self-introductions. Jessica reviewed meeting logistics, and reminded EMAC members that this meeting is public. She reviewed EMAC’s working agreements and discussed the meeting agenda and objectives.

2 Low-Income Toll Program

Garet Prior, ODOT, provided an overview of the Low-Income Toll Program development process and the key decisions for the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) to consider. The OTC provided feedback on the decisions at the November 9th meeting that EMAC will consider before formal ratification of those decisions. Dr. Phil Wu and Amanda Garcia-Snell provided context to the history of EMAC and the Low-

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Income Toll Program, as well as the foundational statements and framework for establishing EMAC's recommendations.

Garet discussed key decisions for the existing low-income toll program and reviewed the OTC's directions for the geographic extent and benefit type for the low-income toll program. OTC's direction is to offer a discount program to residents of Oregon and Washington. OTC's direction is also to commit to a 50% discount for 0 – 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). ODOT believes the 50% discount is acceptable to balance revenue generation goals; at 75% discount level, the impact on net revenue is less clear. The OTC provided direction to analyze 10% and 25% discounts for both 300% FPL and 400% FPL, with a decision in 2025 on the benefit level after the analysis is completed.

Discussion question: Do you support ODOT's direction for the following Low-Income Toll Program components (geographic scope, benefit type)?

- An EMAC member asked if the low-income program would be available to the full state of Washington or if the geographic scope would be limited.
 - Garet clarified that, if extended to Washington, the program would be available to all of Washington.
- An EMAC member asked if there is any legal risk for limiting the program to Oregon and Washington without extending the benefit to Idaho and California.
 - Garet replied that ODOT still needs to do legal review to understand the legal implications of excluding Idaho and California. He added that any program extended to those states would also need to be agreed upon through a bi-state process.
- An EMAC member commented that it will be imperative to focus on education and program awareness to Washington residents to increase enrollment.
- An EMAC member asked what role WSDOT would play in outreach to Washington residents.
 - Garet replied that users would need to apply for the low-income program through ODOT to receive the benefit, even if they are out of state. However, ODOT is working to make sure the bi-state systems are inter-operable.
- An EMAC member asked if the decision from OTC to offer a discount instead of a credit means that credits are off the table.
 - Garet replied that there could be a sign-up credit offered, but the programmatic-level benefit system will be a discount.

Discussion question: Do you support ODOT's direction for the following Low-Income Toll Program components (benefit level for 0 – 200% FPL and 400% FPL)?

- An EMAC member asked if the benefit level would apply to 501C3 organizations from Washington (i.e., Tribal, domestic violence shelters, VA, medical support).
 - Garet responded that non-profits can play a role by helping individuals to sign up for an account to receive those benefits.

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- An EMAC member commented that, from a workforce perspective, the goal is to up-skill people to living wage jobs. They are concerned that people may not receive the benefit level if they have an incremental wage increase that pushes them just above the 200% FPL.
 - Gareth commented that it would be helpful to have input on how to address workforce needs in ways not through the toll discount. He reiterated that supplemental funding options would be something to explore later.
- An EMAC member commented that the committee is also recommending to OTC to explore additional partnerships with agencies and NGOs to assist in enrollment in the program and subsidize toll costs to help reach a toll-free option. Another EMAC member agreed that this is a good approach to help support free access to people that need it. Additionally, an EMAC member commented that it will be important for ODOT to engage with and support non-profits in that work.
- An EMAC member asked if different percentage discounts could apply to different income levels (i.e., 75 percent discount for 200% FPL and 50 percent discount for 400% FPL).
 - Having two tiers of benefits levels is a recommendation for the program. The low-income program is trying to balance providing benefits without being complex and administratively costly. ODOT is working to have all the policies apply consistency for the I-205, RMPP, and the I-5 interstate bridge toll programs.
- An EMAC member expressed concern that the toll program is leaving out people with disabilities and older adults that rely on their cars, emphasizing those community members should be considered in the equity considerations.
 - Gareth replied that through the tolling rules, ODOT is looking at expanding toll exemptions to include transit services to expand the resources available to people.
- An EMAC member asked why the program is not moving forward with an additional benefit level up to 400% FPL at this time.
 - Gareth clarified that the direction from OTC is to continue analysis of this benefit level before deciding. Low enrollment rates and high administrative costs will likely limit the benefit level available to those above 200% FPL.

Jessica asked EMAC members to vote on whether to support the OTC's direction on the benefit type and level for the low-income program.

- Geographic scope: all EMAC members voted in favor of extending the low-income program to all Oregon and Washington residents.
- Benefit type: all EMAC members voted in favor of moving forward with a percentage discount for the low-income benefit.
- Discount level: all EMAC members voted in favor to support a 50% discount for 200% of FPL and below
- Discount level up to 400%: all EMAC members voted in favor to support OTC's direction to explore a benefit level up to a 10% and 25% discount

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The project team has written a draft memo to summarize EMAC's recommendations to the OTC, included in the meeting packet. EMAC members suggested additions to the memo.

- An EMAC member noted that the memo should identify who will be responsible for the additional work of exploring agency and NGO partnerships.
- An EMAC member commented that memo should direct the OTC to explore funding sources to support people on fixed incomes.
- An EMAC member asked if offsetting costs would come out of administrative tolling costs, or if alternative funding sources should be identified.
 - Gareth replied that is something ODOT can work on, but that is a good comment to provide to the OTC at this point.
- An EMAC member commented that the memo should include direction to extend the benefits to 501c3 organizations. Benefits should come through pre-existing channels.
- An EMAC member commented that item 2 of the memo should include a recommendation to explore partnerships.

Gareth reviewed the statewide toll rulemaking process and highlighted how the low-income toll program will be reflected in rules about toll applications, toll rate setting, toll rate adjustments, and the low-income toll enrollment process. Additional equity concerns will be reflected in statewide toll rules about toll bill payment and compliance, exemptions, and data privacy.

3 ODOT Implementation Plan

Mandy Putney, ODOT, discussed ODOT's Implementation Plan, which will be submitted to Governor Kotek on December 15. These plans will describe ODOT's process for incorporating partner and public input into toll program decision-making processes, outline future milestones and decisions, and forecast how ODOT will continue to provide opportunities for input and collaboration. ODOT plans to highlight EMAC's work as integral to the toll program's foundation.

Mandy reviewed the sequence of decisions and milestones for the Equitable Toll Program development and Diversion Management and Mitigation Plan and presented an updated timeline with clear decision points.

- An EMAC member asked if the committee would have an opportunity to give input on how revenue will be distributed.
 - Mandy responded that EMAC will be part of the conversation about revenue distribution and added that conversation will likely begin in 2024.
- An EMAC member suggested sharing monthly benchmarks to ensure accountability prior to a final plan.

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- Mandy responded that could be added the EMAC workplan to track items for accountability.
- An EMAC member asked if there is a way to make the workplan more focused to be able to move the project forward on a short timeline.
 - Mandy responded that ODOT and the OTC view EMAC as a great resource and they hope to plan for and track when key decisions will be made.

4 Strategic Action Plan

Mary McGowan, ODOT, discussed the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) intended purpose to describe ODOT's priorities, cover near-term actions, and identify measurable outcomes. The SAP is not a long-term policy, or a comprehensive list of all projects. Mary shared an outline of the strategic priorities and outcome areas, and reiterated that the priorities presented are draft.

Discussion question: Do you have any additional questions or concerns?

- An EMAC member commented that the SAP should include training development for the future workforce.

5 Public Comments

No members of the public joined to share a public comment. Jessica reminded meeting attendees that they can submit public comment at any time by emailing oregontolling@odot.oregon.gov, or by calling 503-837-3536.

6 Going Forward

Dr. Wu shared an update on STRAC, noting that the committee held their final meeting in November. James shared that the last RTAC meeting focused on a discussion about the Abernethy Bridge toll financial planning scenarios.

The next EMAC meeting will be held in-person in January 2024. The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) will meet on Tuesday, December 12, 2023. A decision about the low-income toll program and feedback is on the agenda.

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7 Action Items

The project team heard the following requests for action items:

- Revise memo to OTC to reflect committee member comments, including:
 - Direct OTC to explore partnerships for program enrollment support and supplemental funding options to reach toll-free trip options; Include in Item 2
 - Identify who will be responsible for the additional work of exploring agency and NGO partnerships
 - Direct the OTC to explore funding sources
 - Provide direction on if offsetting costs would come from administrative costs or if alternative funding is needed
 - Explore extending benefits to 501c3 organizations
 - Correct typo on Item 4; benefit level should be 25%, not 20%
- Provide a final draft toll program implementation report for EMAC review
- Update EMAC workplan to track items for accountability