



Portland Metro Area I-5 and I-205 Tolling Project Frequently Asked Questions

Date: November 2018

Q: What problem will tolling try to address?

A: Drivers in the Portland metro area experienced nearly a 14 percent increase in hours of congestion between 2013 and 2015. As congestion grew, travel delays increased almost 23 percent in the same time period. Crashes also increased. This congestion impacts the economy through delayed movement of goods and services, and compromises reliability and certainty for employers and employees. Our quality of life is reduced as we sit in cars or buses trying to meet work and family commitments on time. Commuters, business travelers, freight haulers and others now struggle to plan consistent departure and arrival times. With population growth, congestion will continue to grow.

HB 2017 funded bottleneck relief projects, new highway lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to address these safety and traffic concerns. These new investments will help reduce traffic congestion, but won't make the positive or beneficial impact the public demands without using additional tools, such as congestion pricing.

Q. What is the objective of tolling in Portland?

A. Tolling is being considered to improve traffic congestion. Tolling that uses congestion pricing can provide funding for transportation improvement projects that add lanes to highways and improve the efficiency of our highways. The State of Oregon is exploring tolling as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing congestion in the Portland area.

Q. Where are the proposed tolling locations?

A. The application seeks federal approval for tolls on two sections of the study area:

- I-5 between North Going Street/Alberta Street and Southwest Multnomah Boulevard in Portland, a seven-mile stretch of road (exact end points to be determined during future refinement). The feasibility analysis showed this would reduce congestion and provide travel time savings in one of the most severely congested corridors in the Portland metro area. Tolling this section could also help raise money to pay for new lanes on I-5 at the Rose Quarter and other improvements to the highway.
- I-205 on and around the Abernethy Bridge, the exact location still to be determined. The feasibility analysis showed this could ease congestion and serve as a funding strategy for the planned widening and seismic



strengthening of I-205 between OR 99E and Stafford Road, including the Abernethy Bridge.

Q: How will ODOT use the revenue collected through congestion pricing?

A: The Keep Oregon Moving legislation (House Bill 2017) established a Congestion Relief Fund within the State Highway Fund, which would receive any net proceeds from tolling. Under the Oregon Constitution, the State Highway Fund must be spent on roadway projects, which could include travel lanes, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, or transit improvements such as enhanced transit stops. Revenue from tolling would be used for adding new lanes on I-5 and I-205 and other highway improvements.

Q: What is “congestion pricing”?

A: The terms congestion pricing and value pricing are used interchangeably to describe a type of tolling that aims to reduce traffic congestion with user fees that are higher during more congested times of the day. The higher fee, typically implemented along with transit improvements, encourages some drivers to consider using other travel options such as carpools or transit, or changing their travel time to other, less congested times of the day. If a small percentage of highway users choose another mode of travel or time of travel it could alleviate traffic congestion for those who can't modify their trip and can improve traffic flow for the entire system. Congestion pricing is a proven tool to manage congestion with nearly 40 congestion pricing projects in operation in the U.S.

Q. What are the impacts of tolling?

A. Additional analysis is needed to understand the benefits and impacts of tolling. During the feasibility analysis phase of the project, the public clearly identified three priorities that are critical for the success of the tolling effort. They are:

- **Special provisions for low income and environmental justice communities.** These issues were frequently heard during public outreach. Mitigation efforts in other parts of the country include rebates or discounts for different income levels; integrating benefits between modes, such as transit passes that accumulate toll benefits; and toll credits for low-income households.
- **Policies to ease potential diversion.** Diversion to surface streets to avoid paying tolls was frequently mentioned by the public. The next phase of analysis will look more closely at potential diversion and safety on affected and/or parallel routes and modes.
- **Improved public transportation and other transit options.** Most congestion pricing projects in the country have included increased public transportation, carpool/vanpool and other active transportation



measures. The next phase of the project is expected to include more analysis of transit improvement in areas affected by the tolls.

Q: Would tolling divert traffic onto surface streets and make congestion worse for nearby neighborhoods?

A: Diversion onto non-tolled surface streets currently takes place with drivers looking to avoid highway congestion. However, some drivers currently diverting to neighborhood streets may choose to travel on the highways with congestion pricing because they would enjoy a faster, more reliable trip. Diversion considerations are important for the OTC, ODOT and local agencies. ODOT will address this in the studies to come by coordinating with local agencies, studying trip patterns and implementing mitigation strategies, such as traffic calming, to prevent diversion from drivers seeking to avoid a toll. One expected outcome of congestion pricing would be to move longer-distance trips back to the freeway so that surface streets may better serve shorter, local trips.

Q. Are investments in other forms of transportation needed to make tolling succeed?

A. A robust transit system is necessary to make sure sufficient options are available. As the tolling project moves forward, studies will look at the impact on other types of transportation – mass transit, bicycles and walking, in particular – and whether additional investments are needed.

Q: How did this tolling analysis get started?

A: It started in 2017 when the Oregon Legislature approved House Bill 2017, known as [Keep Oregon Moving](#), which invested billions of dollars in transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and highway projects that will improve the transportation system in the region, statewide and in the Portland area. HB2017 directed the OTC to conduct a Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis and develop a proposal for value pricing, also called congestion pricing, as another way to address congestion in the Portland metro area.

The OTC established a Value Pricing Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) to provide a recommendation on congestion pricing. The PAC included 24 representatives from local governments from Oregon and Washington, environmental, business, social justice and equity advocates and other highway users to learn about congestion pricing options, discuss them with their networks and share their opinions. The PAC considered public comment, technical analysis, and other factors that informed the [recommendation](#) to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC).

The law directed the OTC to submit a proposal to the Federal Highway Administration by Dec. 31, 2018, to implement congestion pricing along I-5 and I-205 in the Portland metro area. After the 2018 proposal is submitted, next steps



will likely include public outreach and environmental, traffic, and revenue analysis.

Q: What did the Policy Advisory Committee recommend to the OTC?

A: In summer 2018, the [PAC](#) delivered its recommendation on congestion pricing strategies to the OTC, the tolling authority in Oregon. The PAC provided a recommendation on:

- Locations on I-5 and /or I-205 best suited to implement congestion pricing
- Type of congestion pricing that should be implemented and
- Mitigation strategies that should be pursued to reduce impacts on environmental justice communities or nearby communities.

The recommendation was based on consideration of:

- Improvements to traffic operations
- Diversion of traffic onto other routes
- Adequacy of transit service or walking and bicycling as an alternative
- Impacts on low income or diverse populations
- Impacts on the community, economy, and environment
- Consistency with federal, state and regional law and policy
- Potential revenue and costs
- Public input
- Potential to alter the expected delivery schedule for planned projects on the corridor.

View the full [recommendation](#).

Q. Why does Oregon have to submit a tolling proposal to the Federal Highway Administration?

A. The application is being submitted to meet requirements outlined in HB 2017. Federal law governs where tolling can occur, particularly on interstate highways. Federal law generally allows tolls on interstate highways like I-5 or I-205 when reconstructing or replacing a bridge, tolling a new lane, or converting a carpool (high occupancy vehicle) lane to a high occupancy toll lane. The OTC may seek authority to toll under the federal Value Pricing Pilot Program, which allows FHWA to waive some restrictions on tolling, or federal law under Title 23 Section 129, which allows tolling when associated with some infrastructure improvements. The type and level of approval needed will depend on the pricing proposal developed by the OTC.

Q. What is Oregon asking of the federal government in its December 2018 pricing application?

A. The application asks federal officials to concur with our proposed process and clarify what steps are necessary to comply with federal requirements for tolling on segments of I-5 and I-205. These include identifying:



- Which of the several federal tolling programs are appropriate for Oregon's plans.
- The nature of the analysis and project development needed under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), a necessary step in the process.
- An estimate of the timeline needed for NEPA review.

Q: What happens after the proposal is submitted to the federal government?

A: The next steps will be determined with the FHWA and will depend on the type and location of congestion pricing projects that will move forward. Future steps include clarifying objectives and developing performance metrics, conducting a more detailed study of traffic and revenue potential, identifying preferred pricing policies such as price caps/floors, discounts, transponder requirements, low income programs and other environmental analysis.

Q. When will tolls be implemented?

A. Several steps are needed before any tolls are in place. If Oregon gets FHWA approval to move forward, planning would be followed by a review of potential impacts and ways to mitigate impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act. Funding and construction of the infrastructure would follow with implementation several years later.

Q: Does the public have a voice in the process?

A: Yes. ODOT has received thousands of public comments since the PAC first met in November 2017 in a broad public conversation about congestion pricing through regular open houses, stakeholder meetings, surveys and online engagement.

The OTC also held a public comment listening session in July 2018 to supplement an open comment period to collect feedback on the PAC recommendation. The public comments we received from the region helped inform the recommendation to the OTC and the selection of the congestion pricing locations along I-5 and I-205. The OTC wanted to ensure that many perspectives were [heard](#) to inform the development of a proposal to the federal government and will continue to accept public comment as the study continues.

Q: Where can I obtain up-to-date information and provide comments about congestion pricing?

A: The latest information about the tolling projects is posted on the project website at www.ODOTValuePricing.org. Questions can be submitted at any time to the ODOT project team at valuepricinginfo@odot.state.or.us.

Q. Why did the process begin on I-5 and I-205?



A. The Oregon Legislature designated I-5 and I-205 for the first study because those are the most congested highways in the state and are the primary corridors for moving traded goods north and south through Oregon. Managing traffic congestion through congestion pricing on these highways may result in the most benefit to the most travelers in the region as well as the statewide economy.

Q. Will other Portland area highways be considered for tolling?

A. The OTC [recently](#) directed ODOT to develop an approach to studying tolling on other Portland area highways. This approach, or scope of study, will be presented to the OTC in early 2019.

Q. How much will the tolls cost and what time of day will they be in place?

A. Neither the price of tolls nor the exact times of day tolls may be in place have been determined. Those details will be based on a variety of factors and policy decisions considered in project development.

Q: Will there be toll booths to collect fees?

A: No. Fees could be collected electronically so drivers do not have to stop at toll booths. There are several different methods used in congestion pricing systems throughout the world, including the use of transponders, a device that collects fees electronically as you drive, and license plate recognition technology. The most appropriate technology for the Portland metro area will be determined at a later stage.

Q: Will out-of-state residents have to pay tolls in Oregon?

A: The congestion pricing projects being considered would apply to all drivers who choose to use the highways during congested periods, regardless of the state of residence, just as it is on other tolled facilities around the world. In the next phase of analysis, ODOT will explore special access programs and discounts for some travelers.