

The Influence of Stakeholder Input on Oregon Toll Program Development

State legislation that passed in 2017 and 2021 directs the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to use congestion pricing, through variable rate tolls, to manage congestion and generate revenue for system enhancement, maintenance and operations. The adopted legislation focuses on I-5 and I-205 based on statewide input to address congestion in the Portland area. Based on the results of a 2018 feasibility analysis and guidance from OTC and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), ODOT has moved forward to implement state law.

Stakeholder engagement and feedback has played a significant role to design a congestion pricing program that works for Oregon. Since 2020, ODOT has conducted outreach and engagement to inform Oregon Toll Program development. To date, stakeholder input has influenced:

- Project and policy design
- Technical analyses
- Solutions and mitigation for negative effects
- Decision and engagement process



Outcomes, decisions and actions shaped by stakeholder engagement



Centering of equity in project development to increase benefits and avoid harm

Many comments have stressed the importance of not causing further harm and increasing benefits to communities of color and people experiencing low incomes when implementing toll projects. Agency partners, community leaders and the traveling public consistently provided this feedback during each public comment period and when amending the Oregon Metro Regional Transportation Plan to include the I-205 Toll Project.

OTC and ODOT formed and provide ongoing support to an Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC). EMAC advised on and adopted an **Equity Framework** with a trauma-informed perspective that provides a five-step process to promote outcome equity and process equity during project development. The Equity Framework is a guiding tool to assess opportunities to increase benefits and avoid harm to communities historically excluded and underserved by transportation projects. In addition, the OTC accepted EMAC's **foundational statements** for an equitable toll program, which are now guiding EMAC's and the toll program's work. ODOT has applied EMAC's advice during the environmental review and the rulemaking processes and to invite public input. For example, the project team worked with EMAC and agency partners to develop and apply **equity performance measures** for the I-205 Toll Project environmental assessment analysis. The OTC also incorporated **EMAC's equity recommendations** into "Goal 6: Tolling and Congestion Pricing" within the Oregon Highway Plan in early 2023.



Low Income Toll Program Development

Public, agency and advisory committee comments received since 2018 repeatedly raised concerns about the potential for tolls to negatively affect transportation costs of low-income households. Starting in 2021, ODOT invited focused feedback from EMAC, partners and travelers on initial program design of a low-income toll program through committee meetings, stakeholder interviews, discussion groups and online survey. The final recommendations are documented in a 2022 [Low Income Toll Report](#).

The OTC also amended toll policies in the [Oregon Highway Plan](#) that directs ODOT to structure toll rates to not impose unfair burdens on people experiencing low-incomes.



Enhancing public transportation and multimodal options

Agency partners, led by Clackamas County, EMAC and public commenters have expressed the need for toll-free travel options and enhanced public transportation with a toll system. The Oregon Constitution prohibits use of toll revenue for ongoing transit service.¹ ODOT and OTC are enhancing multimodal options through other strategies.

As part of the I-205 Toll Project, **multimodal mitigation solutions** have been proposed in collaboration with city and county staff in Oregon City, Gladstone, Lake Oswego, Tualatin, Stafford, and Canby to give transit movement priority, make bus stop improvements, add sidewalks or protected pedestrian crossings, and add bike lanes. These solutions will address documented negative impacts from the toll project.

Separate from mitigation, ODOT is convening a workgroup of agency staff to **co-create a Public Transportation Strategy** to identify near- and long-term projects and supportive services that complement the toll projects on I-5 and I-205. Identified projects will be funded through a variety of funding mechanisms and led by public transportation providers. In addition, the OTC directed **public transportation vehicles be exempt** from paying tolls in the Oregon Highway Plan.



Addressing negative impacts from diversion

EMAC and the communities and local governments near I-205 have repeatedly commented in online surveys, committee meetings and briefings that local roads offering a toll-free travel route will become more congested and less safe due to drivers rerouting off the highway.

Toll program staff met with agency partners and **identified intersections** where toll project-related rerouting off I-205 could occur and modeled the predicted traffic changes. The traffic analysis for the I-205 Toll Project draft Environmental Assessment found 14 negatively affected intersections out of 50 studied in Oregon City, Gladstone, Lake Oswego, Tualatin, Stafford Road and Canby. Agency partners have reviewed and provided input on proposed mitigations in their respective communities. New turn lanes, added signals or roundabouts or multimodal improvements are now **proposed for mitigation**. In the longer-term, ODOT will work with the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) to develop a diversion monitoring plan.

For the Regional Mobility Pricing Project (RMPP), avoiding or minimizing negative diversion to other roadways is a **foundational principle**. This principle was built into the transportation model used for the traffic analysis.

¹ The Oregon Constitution (Article IX, Section 3a) specifies that revenues collected from the use or operation of motor vehicles is spent on roadway projects, which could include construction or reconstruction of travel lanes, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities or transit improvements in or along the roadway.



Keeping toll revenue in the corridor where it was collected

Early in toll project development, questions about the use of toll revenue arose from public comments and agency partners. Concerns existed that toll revenue would be used on highways throughout the state. In response, the OTC adopted a policy concept in 2021 directing toll revenue be used in the corridor in which it was collected. Since then, this concept has been formalized in the **Oregon Highway Plan** and the **I-205 Toll Project Purpose and Need Statement**, the latter of which links I-205 Toll Project revenue to planned I-205 corridor improvements.



Creating a regional tolling system

During the early planning for the I-205 Toll Project, agency partners said a comprehensive tolling system is needed for the Portland metropolitan area. Early plans for an I-5 toll project were expanded to become the **Regional Mobility Pricing Project**. The RMPP concept would toll I-5 from the Columbia River to the Boone Bridge and I-205 from the Glenn Jackson Bridge to its intersection with I-5, excluding the segments already tolled in other projects. More recent stakeholder comments received as part of the RMPP “scoping” period have reinforced the request for a regional system.



Conducting a robust technical analysis

ODOT has engaged local agency partners and EMAC to design the technical analysis for the two toll projects. The Regional Modeling Group and Transit Multimodal Working Group began in early 2020 to guide this work, which was integrated into the **transportation analysis methodologies and refinement of results**.

EMAC’s input on the social resources in the I-205 corridor helped ODOT identify appropriate categories of resources—such as medical facilities, social service providers (food assistance providers, housing services, job training, etc.), religious organizations, and schools—that should be considered in the analysis of impacts. EMAC’s input also helped the project team develop an approach to analyzing impacts on affordability, including an analysis of the percentage of household income for lower income drivers spent on tolling compared to the percentage of income spent on tolling for middle and higher-income drivers. The analysis of impacts on environmental resources will be captured in the I-205 Toll Project **Social Resources and Communities, Environmental Justice, and Economic Technical Reports** and in the draft Environmental Assessment.



Ongoing engagement of partners, stakeholders, equity framework communities and the traveling public

Including diverse stakeholder voices in decision-making has been a priority for ODOT and this need has been reinforced by agency partners and EMAC since 2020. As a result of input, ODOT has continued to evolve engagement approaches and activities. This has included the formation of the **Regional Toll Advisory Committee** with regional leaders in the summer of 2022, the active outreach to and partnership with **trusted advisors** (community engagement liaisons and community-based organizations), the input of EMAC to design public involvement plans, surveys and discussion groups and the use of **engagement stipends** to engage historically underrepresented communities. Reports that document the activities to solicit feedback during formal public comment periods and summaries of the comments received are posted [online](#).

Future decisions to be shaped by stakeholder engagement:

A strong stakeholder engagement program will continue to shape how the Oregon Toll Program and toll projects move forward. Upcoming decisions where collaboration with the community, advocates, agency staff and elected leaders includes:

- Rulemaking for customer accounts, low-income toll program and enforcement strategies (2023)
- Rulemaking for toll rates (2024)
- Final mitigation for I-205 Toll Project (2023)
- Public Transportation Strategy (2023)
- RMPP technical analysis and mitigation (2024)
- Diversion monitoring framework and plans (2023 for I-205 Toll Project and 2024 for RMPP)
- Criteria for allocation of RMPP toll revenue (2024)
- Inclusion of toll projects into the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan and 2024-27 MTIP