

Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group Meeting Summary

Overview

Subject	March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group
Date and Time	March 23, 2023 5-7:10 p.m.
Location	Virtual Zoom Meeting
Attendees	13 members of CBOs serving equity framework communities 5 members of advisory committees (RTAC, EMAC, STRAC)
Staff and presenters	Erika McCalpine (<i>she/her</i>) (facilitator) Hannah Williams (<i>she/her</i>) Nicole McDermott (<i>she/her</i>) David Gitlin (<i>he/him</i>) Rochelle Brahalla (<i>she/her</i>) MJ Jackson (<i>she/her</i>) Isabelle Kennedy (<i>she/her</i>),

Participants

Attendee	Organization
Emmanuel Williams (<i>he/him</i>)	Black United Fund of Oregon
Andrew Campbell	ACHIEVE Coalition
Danny Faccinetti (<i>he/him</i>)	Oregon Food Bank
Kasi Woidyla (<i>she/her</i>)	Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center RTAC
Jawad Khan (<i>he/him</i>)	Muslim Educational Trust
Gerina Hatch (<i>she/her</i>)	Community in Motion
Abby Griffith (<i>she/her</i>)	Organizing People, Activating Leaders (OPAL) Environmental Justice Oregon
Pete Danner (<i>he/him</i>)	Rotary Club of Oregon City
Maria Delores Torres (<i>she/her</i>)	Adelante Mujeres
Stephanie Lynch (<i>she/her</i>)	Black Community of Portland (BCP)
Izzy Armenta (<i>he/him</i>)	Oregon Walks EMAC
Adam Torres (<i>he/him</i>)	Clackamas County Public Health EMAC
Rachel Winslow (<i>she/her</i>)	EMAC

I-205 Toll Project

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

Attendee	Organization
Dr. Philip Wu (<i>he/him</i>)	STRAC

Materials

- Agenda
- Presentation

Event Summary

The Community Based Organization (CBO) Discussion Group began at 5:00 pm on Thursday March 23, 2023. The objectives of the meeting were to build understanding about the Low-Income Toll Program, learn about the I-205 Toll Project Environmental Assessment (EA), and to provide an opportunity for CBOs to provide feedback and guidance to ODOT regarding future implementation of tolling and the I-205 Toll Project EA. ODOT invited representatives from CBOs serving [equity framework communities](#) in the greater Portland metropolitan area to participate in the discussion. ODOT was also joined by representatives from committees advising ODOT on tolling implementation: the [Equity & Mobility Advisory Committee](#), the [Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee](#), and the [Regional Toll Advisory Committee](#).

The virtual discussion was facilitated by Erika McCalpine, ODOT Assistant Director for the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

During the meeting, ODOT shared the latest plans for implementing a tolling system in the greater Portland area, including our latest information about a [low-income toll program](#) and how we're collaborating with community organizations and local neighbors on options for future toll accounts.

In addition, we also shared in-depth details about the [I-205 Toll Project Environmental Assessment](#), which was open for public review and comment until Friday, April 21.

Community organization representatives were very interested in qualifications for and implementation of the low-income toll program. This included advising ODOT to lower barriers for participation and ensuring that it will be as accessible as possible when tolling starts on I-205. There were specific questions around how ODOT would provide access for people without bank accounts, what toll payments systems will look like, and requests for more details about who specifically would qualify for the program.

In response, ODOT confirmed that there will be a low-income program **on day one of tolling**. While the toll discount amount has not been decided, ODOT is prioritizing a toll discount for **households with incomes at or below 200%** of the federal poverty level (\$55,500 for a

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

household with four people). ODOT is also pursuing a verification process that leverages existing programs to avoid additional steps for people to sign up.

The next steps for the low-income toll program will be a discussion with the Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee in July. In addition to this topic, the committee is discussing how customers would register for a toll accounts and pay bills, as well as the system for enforcement of unpaid tolls (civil penalties, fees, and disputes), vehicle rates and exemptions, and the process for how tolls are set and adjusted.

Thank you to all participants.

A complete meeting summary follows, including answers to questions that were not answered directly during the meeting; these follow-up responses are noted as “SUPPLEMENTAL.”

Engagement Update

Hannah Williams presented [how modern tolling would work](#), what we have heard from the community and what we are doing with the feedback. The presentation focused on closing the feedback loop from the last CBO discussion that was centered around creating an equitable toll program. For the March 2023 presentation, Hannah focused on next steps on the low-income toll program, enrollment, and enforcement. Hannah also spoke about the Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee (STRAC) and rulemaking process, and opportunities for community input on these topics over the next year. There was a short question session after the presentation that included the following questions:

- Question from Kasi Woidyla: What factors were used in determining the 200% of federal poverty level threshold for the Low-Income Toll Report? Suggested that the threshold should be aligned with Oregon Health Plan’s threshold of 136%.

Response, Philip Wu, Statewide Rulemaking Advisory Committee: Clarified that the recommendation would be 200% or lower. He also clarified that EMAC had recommended additional discounts up to 400% of the federal poverty level.

Overview of I-205 EA Findings

Nicole McDermott, I-205 Project Team, presented on key findings of the Environmental Assessment (EA), including methods, assumptions, findings, timeline, how to comment, and how comments will be incorporated. The following questions came up during the question-and-answer session:

- Question from Kasi Woidyla: Is the comment form available online in multiple languages?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: Yes, there are multilingual comment forms available on the project website, available in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese.

I-205 Toll Project

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

- Question from Andrew Campbell: Question about the EA: when was the data was collected for the assessment? Was it prior to 2020 or after 2020? Was the study of the other modes or routes evaluated on how that will impact time; for example, if someone doesn't want to pay for tolling and uses side roads, was that part of the EA for people trying to avoid tolls?

Response, Nicole McDermott, I-205 Project Team: Thank you for this question. Some of the traffic counts were done during COVID, but we looked at counts prior to COVID and made adjustments to make sure we considered differences in travel on the roadways. In looking to the future, most of analysis of impacts is based on future-year conditions and regional travel demand model that Metro runs. More details are in the EA Transportation Technical Report (Appendix C), and in the [video](#) covering that Report. We looked at how the project would impact things in future years and a large area of potential impact. We saw roadway volumes changing with the project, using representative scenarios looking at how people would travel from point A to point B using and not using the tolled facility.

SUPPLEMENTAL:

The year for baseline data used in the EA analysis depends on the environmental topic area, with some data originating before 2020 and some during or after 2020. For example, traffic count data for the transportation analysis was collected in June and October 2021. However, U.S. Census data used in various analyses generally draws from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey because this was the most recent full dataset available at the time of the analyses.

All of the data sources are cited in the I-205 Toll Project Environmental Assessment and include the applicable year. More details about data sources are also discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3) of each of the technical reports prepared for the EA.

- Question from Pete Danner: Thanks Andrew for question about traffic on side roads. Neighbors are very concerned about what will happen when tolls take effect and people are seeking alternate routes. When looking at the EA, we appreciate things that improvements will do, seem necessary and important to maintain safety, but it seems silly to say, here are the improvements with tolling, versus no tolling and nothing will happen. Neighbors were concerned. Have other funding sources been considered?

Response, Nicole McDermott, I-205 Project Team: Yes. Because of declining revenue due to electric vehicles, the gas tax is not an option. ODOT has pursued and will continue to pursue grants and other funding sources, but they have not been available to the scale that are needed to fund improvements on I-205. Tolling is necessary funding tool for improvements.

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: In addition, with inflation, costs have increased. ODOT is always and continuing to look for funding but don't want to delay the project due to the urgency of safety improvements.

I-205 Toll Project

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

- Emmanuel Williams (in chat): How much is the annual gas tax revenue?

SUPPLEMENTAL:

According to the [April 2023 revenue forecast](#), total gross state motor fuel tax collected in Fiscal Year 2022 was \$652 million.

- Question from Abby Griffith: For people who don't want to drive when tolling starts, does ODOT have a plan to increase transit system in that area so people can take buses? Are you working with TriMet, increasing the transportation system in the area where people could benefit from it?
 - Andrew Campbell (in chat): Great question. Was going to ask if ODOT would discuss with TriMet to extend green line.

Response, Nicole McDermott, I-205 Project Team: Great question. In the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, ODOT is looking specifically at impacts from the Toll Project. Outside of that, ODOT is working with local transit agencies to discuss regional public transit options and strategies to increase investment in those options. Public transit strategy that is something ODOT is working on closely with transit agency staff in the region.

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: Additionally, this is something we have heard with Toll Project engagement. There is a strong sentiment. People want transit options. Before tolling, they don't feel like they have many and would like more. There is a strong effort with folks in jurisdiction and transit experts working in partnership to develop projects that will work with their transit planning.

Response, Philip Wu, Statewide Rulemaking Advisory Committee: EMAC thought very deeply about some of these issues around putting in place measures to help communities at time of tolling starts, rather than waiting a year or so to collect revenues to put in place mitigating measures. EMAC was pretty strong about putting things in place on day one of tolling. It may require additional sources of revenue and partnering with other agencies to put these in place. These recommendations are in EMAC's report [Shaping an Equitable Toll Program](#).

- Question from Stephanie Lynch: I'm curious, tolling is to fund improvements on roadways and bridges. It looks like timeline will be done in 2025? Do we get rid of tolling after improvements are complete?

Response, Nicole McDermott, I-205 Project Team: The earliest tolling would start is 2024. Construction on highway improvements will not be complete for a while after that.

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: Great question. These policy decisions have not been made. Tolling is also a larger strategy for managing congestion, which is why we are using variable rate tolls to encourage people to use system smarter, reduce trips,

I-205 Toll Project

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

and carpool. Tolls on these two bridges are paying for improvements. ODOT is taking out bonds to pay for improvements – which could take 30 years to pay back, like a mortgage. The bonds won't be paid off by construction completion in 2027.

- Comment from Abby Griffith: I keep hearing about carpools and bike. I strongly suggest mentioning public transport more so people can get idea of what kind of resources are there for them and how you are working with transit agencies to implement transit systems along those areas. People who can't afford to own vehicles are having a hard time getting around and working with transit agencies. Using more words like “another way to get around should be public transit.” As a blind person, for carpool, it's not easy to ride with people to places because a lot of people don't like giving rides, and if you want to Lyft or Uber, it is expensive. Would be helpful if public transit included everywhere. I know you are planning for the Low-Income Toll Program - one method could be people using food stamps. People could tap their card on the device and pay that way. It's very helpful to have a public transit system.
- Question from Danny Faccinetti: Question regarding the low-income presentation. Curious, talking about 200% of the federal poverty level – I am familiar with how those numbers are generated and what they mean in reality. Why 200%? For context, some federal programs income levels that are as high as 300% to access different services. In Washington it's as high as 400%. I want to learn more about some of components of making program accessible. When I heard there could be penalties, that was a red flag. I urge you to take that component out of it.
 - Emmanuel Williams (in chat): What percent of PDX households are at or below 200%?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: The [Low Income Toll Report](#) shares best practices from other programs looking at how to get people signed up, getting rid of barriers, and plugging into existing low-income programs. STRAC will be having those conversations. STRAC will also address penalties.

Response, Philip Wu, Statewide Rulemaking Advisory Committee: EMAC spent a lot of time looking at what does 200% versus 400% mean, mapping that to actual incomes and expenses at different levels. There's no question that realistically, the 200% level was very severe. There are a lot of families above that level who will experience negative impact from tolling. We're not sure what the ultimate answer will be but we thought deeply about these different levels at which discounts should be applied. It's all in flux. Your point is well taken.

SUPPLEMENTAL:

See Table 5-1 of the Environmental Justice Technical Report for information about low-income populations (below 200% of the poverty level) in the counties in the Area of Potential Impact studied for the project, as well as for the Portland Metropolitan

I-205 Toll Project

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

Statistical area. Note that these percentages are for the population level, not household level.

Table 5-1. Environmental Justice Populations as a Percentage of Total Populations by County, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and State

Population		Clackamas County	Multnomah County	Washington County	Marion County	Portland MSA ^[1]	Oregon State	Washington State
Total Population		410,463	804,606	589,481	339,641	2,445,761	4,129,803	7,404,107
White Alone (Non-Racial Minority)		82%	70%	66%	66%	73%	76%	69%
Racial Minority		9%	19%	18%	8%	15%	11%	19%
Ethnic Minority (Hispanic or Latino)		9%	12%	17%	27%	12%	13%	13%
Low-Income	Below 200% of Poverty	19%	30%	22%	36%	25%	30%	26%
	Poverty	8%	14%	9%	14%	11%	13%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015–2019

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole; therefore, the values in the three racial/ethnic population rows may not total 100%.

[1] Portland MSA refers to the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA Metro-Area
MSA= metropolitan statistical area

- Question from Stephanie Lynch: Is 200% decided?

Response, Philip Wu, EMAC: 200% is decided, but what happens for 200%-400% is to be determined.

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: To clarify, no policy decisions have been made yet. EMAC will continue working on this, and STRAC and the rulemaking process will be looking at it. We will bring back information from advisory committees and be asking for your help to share that, get feedback, etc. The summer CBO meeting will be more focused on digging into rules about exemptions and considerations for the Low-Income Toll Program.

- Question from Danny Faccinetti: I've only driven through tolls once. Will it slow you down, take pictures, use a toll booth, swipe a card? How will it work?

- Andrew Campbell (in chat): It will be like Seattle

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: No, you will not have to stop. Tolls will be all-electronic and will be collected via an electronic transponder.

- Comment from Danny Faccinetti: No one is going to want to engage deeply with toll process and will just want to go about their life. If you had an option for people to pay, in a rush, limited income, it would be a benefit. Trying to engage people in a discount

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

program is only as good as you are able to get people involved. If you are sending people bills, which they don't pay and rack up fines, it could do a lot of damage. If there is a way to pay in the moment, that would help.

Discussion Regarding Toll Payment Methods

Hannah Williams provided background information and emphasized that ODOT's goal is to keep costs and tolls low by using prepaid accounts. The discussion questions were presented:

- Would your community prefer to load a pre-paid toll card manually, or on auto pay?
- What are your thoughts on the difference between these types of accounts?
- How do we make it easy for people to sign up?
- What barriers could you anticipate?
- Would your CBO be interested in providing technical assistance to sign people up?

Erika McCalpine clarified that if ODOT were to work with CBOs for engagement there would be compensation provided.

- Comment from Emmanuel Williams: We would like to pay as little as possible. Don't know if you are trying to specifically speak to 200% below the federal poverty level but to answer this question, are people under the federal poverty level going to prepay for anything? They're going to err on side of not prepaying. Silly question for people under 200% - in PDX, they're teetering on houselessness because rent is super high. What percentage of the population is at 200% of the federal poverty level?
 - Pete Danner (in chat): Great point
 - Kasi Woidyla (in chat): 100% agree with Emmanuel

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: [Information provided on page 7]

- Question from Stephanie Lynch: What about people who don't have access to bank accounts? Is there an alternative for them?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: STRAC is working on that. We are looking at many methods for payment, including online, in person, through mail, with cash, check, etc.

Response, Philip Wu, Statewide Rulemaking Advisory Committee: Indicated that bank draft would be another method.

- Kasi Woidyla: A bank draft is an auto withdrawal from the bank, not credit card.
- Comment from Danny Faconnetti (in chat): I would say that it would be wise to revisit the 200% and delivery mechanisms and think about automatic enrollment in a low-income program through partnerships with other government entities such as DHS, etc.

I-205 Toll Project

Meeting Summary: March Urban Mobility Strategy Community-Based Organization Discussion Group,
March 23, 2023
5-7:10 p.m.

- Comment from Andrew Campbell: Echo what a lot of people have said in here. Feel like a simple answer like auto pay will be best for if someone has some kind of card and ODOT can automatically put money on it so people can pay for tolling rather than doing it themselves. Outside of connecting with CBOs to get information out there about prepaid accounts, use small businesses and other types of organizations and resources to get information out there. ODOT has a lot of other agencies that they talk to. On tolling, feel that it is interesting that if you are trying to go to the airport from Tualatin you are paying tolls twice, so round trip you are paying the toll four times. Keep in mind for people that are trying to connect to I-5, is that really necessary to pay twice? Will continue to be engaged on the project.
 - Danny Faconnietti (in chat): Great point Andrew
- Question from Emmanuel Williams (in chat): Will rideshare drivers get special consideration?

SUPPLEMENTAL: Rideshare considerations will be discussed as part of the ongoing STRAC and rulemaking process. All policy decisions will be made by the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Closing

Erika McCalpine recognized the historical harm ODOT has caused by not getting feedback before doing something that is going to impact people's lives. She thanked participants for showing up and emphasized how much ODOT values their feedback. She closed with a reminder that there will be future meetings to answer more questions and go in-depth about the Low-Income Toll Program.

Hannah Williams concluded the meeting with an overview of how input will be incorporated and reminders about the EA comment period closing date, compensation for their participation in the meeting, completing the meeting evaluation, and the upcoming spring CBO discussion.

Post Meeting Materials

- Evaluation
- Opt-in Form for Compensation
- Answers to questions posed in the discussion