

Oregon Toll Program

September 19 CBO Discussion Group Meeting Summary

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
CBO	Community-Based Organization
EECRC	Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural and Resource Center
EMAC	Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee
ODOT	Oregon Department of Transportation
RMPP	Regional Mobility Pricing Project
RTAC	Regional Toll Advisory Committee
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
STRAC	Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

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Meeting Overview

Subject	September CBO Discussion Group
Date and Time	September 19, 2023 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm PST
Location	Virtual Zoom Meeting
Attendees	11
Staff, Presenters, and Committee Members	Hannah Williams, ODOT Ben Duncan, Kearns & West Ellen Palmquist, Kearns & West Maria Verano, Kearns & West Gillian Garber-Yonts, Kearns & West

Participants

Attendee	Organization
Jacob Loeb	82 nd Avenue Business Association
Samir Randolph	Clackamas Workforce Partnership Center
Gerina Hatch	Community in Motion
Yonas Kassie	Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural Resource Center
Larry King	Exceed Enterprises
Pam Ferguson	Hayden Island Neighborhood Network
Kelie McWilliams	Imagine Black
Jawad Khan	Muslim Educational Trust
Aleksandr Kirilin (AK)	New Martyrs of Russia Orthodox Church
Luis Huerta Hernandez	Latino Leadership Northwest
Phung Ojala	Vietnamese Community of Clark County

Materials

- [Agenda](#)

Event Summary

The Community-Based Organization (CBO) Discussion Group began at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, September 19, 2023. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Hear a brief update on the Oregon Toll Program.
- Have a conversation about discounts, exemptions, and the Low-Income Toll Program.
- Learn about opportunities to stay updated and provide input on how to build a toll program that works for you.

ODOT invited representatives from CBOs serving equity-framework communities.

The virtual discussion was facilitated by Ben Duncan, Kearns & West. The meeting opened with a presentation from Hannah Williams, ODOT, on the Regional Mobility Pricing Project and the I-205 Toll Project. Hannah Williams shared additional information about discounts, exemptions, and the Low-Income Toll Program followed by small group discussions in break-out rooms.

Oregon Toll Program Update

Hannah Williams presented information on how tolling will work, updates on the Regional Mobility Pricing Project and the I-205 Toll Project, and information about discounts, exemptions, and the Low-Income Toll Program. There was a short question session after the presentation. Participants asked the following questions:

- Question from Samir Randolph: How is congestion defined for the Toll Program?
- Comment from Kelie McWilliams: The Denver discount program is limited to people who live in two specific areas of town; it is designed to make up for the displacement of a Black neighborhood.
- Question from Samir Randolph: What will ODOT do to ensure enrollment in the Low-Income Toll Program is not low?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: That is why we are here. We have heard we need to look at the interoperability of other programs and plug into that. We want to hear what is going on in your world and what is working for you. We can collect information and influence what is and is not feasible. These decisions have not been made - we are looking to understand what the barriers are for enrollment in discount programs.

- Comment from Samir Randolph: Will ODOT partner with CBOs to help people enroll in the Low-Income Toll Program?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: Yes. ODOT is looking to hear from CBOs about what works and does not work for enrollment.

- Comment from Yonas Kassie: I work with African refugees and immigrants and recommend ODOT reach out to and involve these groups in discussions about tolling.
- Comment from Yonas Kassie: Consider those who use the system the most, including Uber drivers, delivery drivers, and medical transportation.
- Comment from Pam Ferguson: Recommend including an incentive to enroll in the Low-Income Toll Program by a certain date to encourage people to sign up.

1.1 Break Out Room Discussions on Discounts, Exemptions, and the Low-Income Toll Program

Participants discussed the following questions on discounts, exemptions, and the Low-Income Toll Program. Key themes that emerged from the discussion groups are included below.

1. **Question:** How has your organization helped people sign up for benefit programs such as discounts, health care, or transit passes? What has your experience been?

Key Themes:

- **Partnering with CBOs.** Many CBOs shared that they did not offer enrollment services for discount programs but were willing to educate the public on how to register for a toll account. CBOs that did offer these services, like Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural and Resource Center (EECRC), were interested in assisting with income verification for the Low-Income Toll Program.
 - **Concerns About Enrollment.** Participants recommended strict guidelines for the Low-Income Toll Program application process to reduce fraud. Participants also shared that certain programs, like child support or housing vouchers, could put people over income threshold. Participants recommended not counting vouchers and child support in the application process.
 - **Clear Income Requirements.** Participants recommended having a clear baseline for income requirements. Income requirements for other programs often fluctuate and can make confirming the income status of an applicant more difficult.
2. **Question:** Which of the following options do you think would work best for communities enrolled in Oregon's Low-Income Toll Program?
 - 50% discount on each trip
 - Credit for a certain number of free trips per month

Key Themes:

- **Flexible Benefits.** Participants recommended giving the applicant a choice between the discount or credit option. Participants also recommended allowing participants to use both benefit types.
- **Credit and Discount Tradeoffs:** Many participants thought that the 50% discount would be more beneficial because it would result in a greater cost reduction for those who travel frequently. Frequent drivers may include families, truck drivers, delivery drivers, and people who live in neighborhoods that would need to use tolled roads more often. For those who travel less frequently, the credit option may be preferable.
- **Geographic Exemptions:** Participants shared that certain geographic areas, like Hayden Island and Black communities between I-5 and I-205, will be impacted by tolling more than others and should receive exemptions. Participants were also interested in exemptions for people providing a service, like delivering food, volunteering, driving people living with disabilities, and healthcare workers.

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3. Question: What is the best way for people to provide income information?

- Proof of enrollment in an existing program (SNAP, WIC, housing voucher, etc.).
- Last 2 paystubs from your work.
- Last year's tax return.
- Proof of enrollment in TriMet's low-income fare program.
- Other options: _____.

Key Themes:

- **Verification Options.** Participants were interested in a variety of options for providing income information. People who are self-employed may benefit from showing their tax returns while others may prefer to show a paystub. Participants acknowledged there may be security concerns when sharing this type of information. Participants recommended having a variety of ways to provide income information.
- **Enrollment in Other Programs:** Many participants were supportive of sharing proof of enrollment in TriMet's Low-Income Fare Program, the Affordable Care Act, or other programs to qualify for the Low-Income Toll Program.

Next Steps

Hannah Williams shared next steps for the rulemaking process and the following opportunities for further engagement:

- Complete a survey for the Regional Mobility Pricing Project from Sept. 26-Oct. 9 and help share the survey with their networks.
- Share input on draft rules during the rulemaking public comment period and public hearing in early 2024.
- Request a briefing for their organization.
- Attend and provide comments at tolling advisory committee meetings.

Closing

Hannah Williams and Ben Duncan thanked the attendees for their participation and closed the meeting.

Post Meeting Materials:

- Evaluation
- Answers to questions posed in the discussion
- Presentation