

Exemptions Follow Up Research

Statewide Toll Advisory Committee (STRAC) November 2023 Meeting Materials

Date Updated: November 10, 2023

At STRAC's September 2023 meeting, we had a robust discussion on the proposed list of exemptions ([see toll rules](#)). We heard from multiple members of the committee the desire to offer no additional exemptions outside what is required by law.

Building from the "[Discounts and Exemptions Memo](#)" shared with STRAC in September 2023, this document provides additional research into the few additional categories that were proposed for exemptions (transit, highway incident response vehicles, police, fire, and ambulance).

Police

What's the estimated number of registered vehicles in the Portland region or statewide in Oregon?

Although we were unable to attain an estimate, vehicles that would fall into this category include those owned by Oregon State Patrol, Sheriff's Offices, and city-level police. At the current time, this would not extend to private security, university police, school police, transit police, or airport police. Further work is needed to define how this would apply to federal law enforcement.

NOTE: Washington State offers exemptions for on-duty emergency response vehicles ([WAC 468-270-085](#)). On-duty is defined ([WAC 468-270-030](#)) as, "Authorized emergency vehicle" means an on-duty vehicle of any fire department, police department, sheriff's office, Washington state patrol, ambulance service, public or private and which is equipped with emergency lights and siren and used to respond to emergency calls."

Fire

What's the estimated number of registered vehicles in the Portland region or statewide in Oregon?

Although we were unable to attain an estimate, vehicles that would fall into this category include are numerous service providers. According to the Multnomah County emergency response webpage, this includes:

- [Clackamas County EMS](#)
- [Gresham Fire & Emergency Services](#)

- [Multnomah County Rural Fire Protection District 14 \(Corbett Fire\)](#)
- [Portland Airport Fire & Rescue](#)
- [Sauvie Island Volunteer Fire District 30](#)
- [Scappoose Rural Fire District \(Columbia County\)](#)
- [Washington County EMS](#)

Our understanding to-date is that fire and emergency response vehicles primarily drive on roads that would not be tolled. Although, we have heard that with fire and emergency response vehicles may use the highway to setup in locations in non-emergency mode to prepare for response.

Further work is needed to discern for federal, hazardous material response, and wildfire response vehicles and decide whether or not the exemption would be extended to these services.

Ambulance

What's the estimated number of registered vehicles in the Portland region or statewide in Oregon?

According to the [OHA Ambulance Service Licensing](#) webpage, there are approximately 610 vehicles in Oregon. Vehicles that would fall into this category include are numerous service providers. According to the Multnomah County emergency response webpage, this includes:

- [American Medical Response \(AMR\)](#)
- [Community Ambulance \(Portland\)](#)
- [Cascade Locks Fire & EMS](#)
- [LifeFlight](#)
- [Metro West Ambulance](#)
- [Portland Fire & Rescue](#)

In talking with industry professionals, the estimate for AMR, LifeFlight, and Metro West Ambulances in the Portland region is around 220 ambulances. For example, AMR has the following distribution across the Portland region: Washington County (30), Multnomah County (40), and Clackamas County (29). See note above about our understanding of emergency vehicle response travel patterns.

NOTE: From our research, [Texas](#), [Louisiana](#), [Washington](#), and [Illinois](#) offer toll exemptions.

Highway incident response

What’s the estimated number of registered vehicles in the Portland region or statewide in Oregon?

Currently, around 30 incident response vehicles owned and operated by ODOT in the Portland region.

NOTE: Washington State offers toll exemptions for highway or transit operating and maintenance vehicles ([WAC 468-270-030](#)). This is defined as: “Highway or transit operating and maintenance vehicle means a vehicle assigned to operate or maintain the toll facility, including incident response vehicles, transit service supervisor or maintenance vehicles, and agency tow trucks.”

Transit

What’s the estimated number of registered vehicles in the Portland region or statewide in Oregon?

Based on input from Portland regional transit providers, they estimate around 1,100 vehicles for the larger providers (TriMet, C-Tran, and SMART). This includes all of their busses, shuttles, paratransit, and on-demand transit vehicles. For the smaller providers, Ride Connection has four (4) demand response vehicles, and Clackamas County eight (8) shuttle buses and six (6) demand response vehicles. The following chart was developed from registration data with the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicle records:

Type	Portland	Oregon
Bus (non-commercial)	1,920	7,991
Bus (commercial)	170	393
Total	2,090	8,384

With tolling planned to start on I-205 Abernethy Bridge and the I-5 Interstate Bridge, there would only be a smaller subset of these transit vehicles on the tollway. Therefore, we do not expect much of an impact to toll revenue.

NOTE: Washington State exempts public transit from tolls ([WAC 468-270-085](#)).

How would you recommend we write the rules to encompass bus, shuttle, paratransit, and demand response services for public and non-profit agencies?

The following were responses from C-Tran, TriMet, SMART, Ride Connection, and Clackamas County:

- Publicly operated buses, trains, subways, and vans that operates on a fixed route or deviated route and are available to the public. Privately-owned for hire vehicles are not exempt from tolls.
- Add to the draft language: “and vehicles operated by non-profit organizations exclusively providing fixed route, route deviation, or demand responsive service, open to the public, not charging a fare, or under contract with a governmental authority.”
- Authorized vehicles owned and operated by a public transportation service provider used in the provision or support of public transportation services.
- Federal Transit Administration doesn’t define bus, shuttle, paratransit, or demand response by the size of the vehicle or the number of seats. It defines it by the purpose of the service, as follows:
 - Bus: a rubber-tired automotive vehicle used for the provision of public transportation service by or for a recipient of FTA financial assistance (Interpretations of Definitions | FTA (dot.gov))
 - Paratransit: Comparable transit service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems. [49 CFR 37.3] Shared Mobility Definitions | FTA (dot.gov)
- Public transportation service provider means a mass transit district, a transportation district, an Indian tribe, a city, county, special district, intergovernmental entity, or any other political subdivision or municipal or public corporation that provide public transportation services. Mass transit district, transportation district, Indian tribe, special district, intergovernmental entity, and public corporation. A public transportation service provider may be organized outside Oregon.
- Public transportation services means passenger transportation service to the general public on a regular and continuing basis that is designed and advertised as shared-ride service. Such services may not include charter, sightseeing, exclusive school bus service, or services designed to meet the needs of a specific user group.

Do you have any maintenance vehicles specific to serving bus-on-shoulder services? If yes, how many?

Input from transit providers were as follows:

- SMART currently has two clearly marked service vehicles for their bus-on-shoulder services.
- TriMet has field operations and maintenance vehicles that would be called to service a bus or LIFT vehicle that has broken down in the shoulder. These includes SUVs, pickup trucks, and a tow truck.
- Clackamas County fleet vehicles respond to transit demand response vehicles that may have maintenance issues.

- As C-TRAN vehicles perform service in the provision of public transportation services in Oregon outside of bus-on-shoulder corridors agency operated public transit rideshare (vanpool) plays a critical role in corridor congestion management, as defined in C-TRAN's Transit Asset Management Plan. This is approximately 270 vehicles.