

Foundational statements and next steps for developing an equitable toll program and projects (October – November 2021)

The ask

Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC) members are deeply committed to and excited to help Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) staff and the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) create an equitable toll program. In order to advance the partnership between EMAC, ODOT, and OTC, it is essential for the [Equity Framework](#) to guide development of the Oregon toll program. As a next step, the following actions are being requested for all groups:

1. **Agree on a set of Foundational Statements** to use as building blocks for further developing and refining EMAC recommendations and ODOT and the OTC's commitments to create an equitable toll program.
2. **Discuss and identify next steps to help clarify what is needed** from EMAC to best inform ODOT and the OTC's commitments to create an equitable toll program.

Important grounding

ODOT and the OTC recognize that past land-use and transportation investments in the Portland metro area— including highway investments—have resulted in negative cultural, health, economic, and relational impacts to local communities and populations, especially for historically excluded groups. As identified in the [Equity Framework](#), “Our Approach” includes committing to incorporating trauma-informed perspectives, identify disparities, address power dynamics, and maintaining a learning orientation.

As identified in [EMAC's Charter](#), [EMAC's](#) work began with the OTC's need to create equitable processes and outcomes to address affordability, neighborhood health and safety impacts, and multimodal transportation options in the toll program.

As EMAC members, ODOT staff, and the OTC work toward commitments to advance equity with tolling, we must recognize, and to the degree possible, account for the climate crisis, widening wealth gap, existing health disparities, and housing affordability challenges that are deepening economic and social divides in Oregon and Washington.

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Foundational Statements

For ODOT and the OTC to further their commitment to EMAC and the recommendations offered by the committee, we agree to the following:

1. Provide enough investment to ensure that reliable, emissions-reducing, and a competitive range of transportation options (bike, walk, bus, carpool, vanpool, etc.) are provided to advance climate, safety, and mobility goals, and prioritize benefits to Equity Framework communities.
2. Climate and equity needs are connected and solutions must be developed to address both at the same time. In order to do this, further works needs to done to support both congestion management and vehicle miles of travel (VMT) reduction with an emphasis on increasing functional alternatives to driving, while not increasing diversion nor heavily impacting low income car-dependent people.
3. There must be toll-free travel options available to avoid further burdening people experiencing low-incomes who are struggling to meet basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, healthcare).
4. To the greatest degree possible, investments that are necessary to advance equity must be delivered at the same time as highway investments and be in place on day 1 of tolling or before. Additional work needs to be completed to identify these investments.
5. Tolling must be user-friendly system that is clear and easy to use by people of all backgrounds and abilities, including linguistic diversity, and those without internet access.
6. Benefits that are offered in Oregon -must extend into Southwest Washington.
7. Although the toll projects will have a statewide impact, they -must be developed in coordination with regional partners to build an equitable and successful transportation system, together.

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Next steps

Additional work needs to be completed between ODOT and EMAC to identify what will advance equity on the I-205 Toll Project and the Regional Mobility Pricing Project. The following list identifies items that need to be addressed to help EMAC develop recommendations to inform ODOT and the OTC's commitments to create an equitable toll program:

- Continued application of the [Equity Framework through ongoing education and engagement with Equity Framework communities](#)
- Commitments to dedicate toll revenues, exemptions, credits, or discounted toll rates to address the needs identified in the Foundational Statements
- Commitments for public policies that address the needs identified in the Foundational Statements
- Understanding step #3 of the Equity Framework, identifying benefits and burdens, by receiving information from the project-level environmental review process (NEPA)
- Defining the area (corridor) for investments from toll revenues
- Toll rate setting process, evaluation, and future oversight of toll rates once they are in place
- Enforcement and fees for not paying tolls
- Oversight of toll data and security of information gathered
- Greater recognition of historic and current barriers for [Equity Framework communities](#) and further planning to address them
- Partnerships with transit agencies, transportation service providers, local governments, and community-based organizations in Oregon and Southwest Washington to deliver services not offered by ODOT

Spring 2022 is the target date for EMAC's next connection with the OTC in further developing recommendations to advance equity in the Oregon Toll Program.