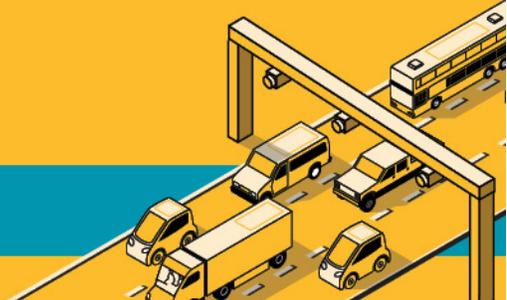


# I-205 Toll Project

## Equitable Engagement Plan



**Date** Updated March 23, 2021

### PURPOSE

The Oregon Toll Program is committed to minimizing burdens and maximizing benefits to communities historically and currently excluded or underserved by the transportation system. To achieve equitable outcomes and an equitable process in the I-205 Toll Project, the Oregon Department of Transportation seeks to actively engage these communities. The Oregon Toll Program will consistently and intentionally inform, listen to, learn from, and empower these communities throughout the Project's development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

ODOT seeks to build trust in the community with the agency's planning and stewardship of the state's transportation system and its decision process. Trust is built by continually engaging a community and stakeholders throughout an entire phase, ensuring information is accessible to all and closing the loop by communicating to stakeholders how their feedback was incorporated in the project process. Consistent engagement coupled with a racial equity lens can help shape transportation policies, programs, and projects that better serve historically excluded and underserved populations.<sup>1</sup>

Building trust requires time and repetition. Engagement efforts related to the Oregon Toll Program, in isolation, cannot achieve the goal of a trust relationship between ODOT and stakeholders. With active attention to the project's engagement goals, objectives and performance measures, progress will be made.

### I-205 TOLL PROJECT SCHEDULE

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>I-205 Improvements</b>	Project design and bid		Construction (4 years) →		
<b>I-205 Toll Project</b>		Environmental review			★ Tolling begins
<b>Equity</b>	Equitable engagement				

<sup>1</sup> TransForm. (2019). Pricing Roads, Advancing Equity. Transform. Retrieved from: [http://www.transformca.org/sites/default/files/Pricing\\_Roads\\_Advancing\\_Equity\\_Combined\\_FINAL\\_190314.pdf](http://www.transformca.org/sites/default/files/Pricing_Roads_Advancing_Equity_Combined_FINAL_190314.pdf)

This plan is focused on the environmental review process for the I-205 Toll Project from early engagement in 2020 through the comment period on the draft Environmental Assessment, scheduled for mid-2022. A final decision based on public input is slated for early 2023. After the environmental review, equitable engagement will continue to inform future project phases.

## **INTEGRATION WITH OTHER PLANS**

The I-205 Toll Project Public Involvement and Communications Plan and the Oregon Toll Program Equity Framework provide details on overarching principles, definitions, goals, objectives, performance measures, and messaging for all engagement activities. This Equitable Engagement Plan provides additional details and guidance for planning, engagement methods and timing.

The following principles, further discussed in the [Equity Framework](#), will guide implementation of all public engagement and communications:

- Incorporate a trauma-informed perspective in our current context.
- Begin with a racial analysis.
- Acknowledge historic context.
- Identify disparities.
- Prioritize input from impacted historically and currently excluded and underserved communities.
- Attend to power dynamics among stakeholders.
- Maintain a learning orientation.

## **EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

Tolling improves travel reliability and provides revenue to finance improvements in the transportation system. However, tolling may result in greater impacts to historically and currently excluded and underserved communities due to the potential for proportionally higher transportation costs, more limited transportation options in lower cost housing areas, limited schedule flexibility, and additional traffic rerouting through their neighborhoods by drivers attempting to avoid tolls.

Addressing challenges and limitations to make tolling work in the Portland metro area is central to the Oregon Toll Program. The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) has made the development of community mobility and equity strategies key components of successful toll projects.

To achieve outcome equity, ODOT will work with historically and currently excluded and underserved communities to ensure that tolls will be paired with strategies that:

- Help improve affordability of the transportation system.
- Improve access to opportunity through other transportation options; including improved transit.

- Address community health, including strategies to reduce negative effects to neighborhoods from changed traffic patterns, i.e. diversion.

## **AFFECTED COMMUNITIES**

Audiences for engagement under this plan are those directly affected by the Project.

### **Historically and currently excluded and underserved communities dependent on or affected by I-205:**

People experiencing low incomes, youth, older adults, Black, Indigenous, multi-racial, and people of color, people who speak a language other than English, and people living with disabilities, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services. Reaching these audiences may occur through organizations providing services or advocacy, such as:

- Equity thought leaders; community-based organizations and faith-based organizations.
- Community Engagement Liaisons.
- Senior centers.
- Transit providers.
- Ride share services for people experiencing disabilities.

**Ethnicity and language needs** – The I-205 corridor population is 78 percent white (about 1.5 mile radius around the roadway from the Columbia River to where it connects with I-5). In the I-205 corridor, approximately 13 percent of the population along I-205 identify as Hispanic or with Latin American roots and 9 percent of the population identify as Asian in the I-205 corridor. This is a higher proportion than the rest of the region.

Spanish is the most common language spoken at home besides English throughout the region and is spoken by about 5% of the regional population. Other commonly spoken languages include Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Japanese and Arabic. The proportion of linguistically isolated households is slightly higher along the entirety of the I-205 corridor than the rest of the state/region.

**Income** – Slightly over one third of residents in the region earned \$50,000 per year or less. The 2013-2017 median income for households in the Portland metro area is about \$66,657. The Federal poverty level for 2017 was \$24,600 for a family of four. Higher median incomes are concentrated south and east of I-205 (Happy Valley and parts of West Linn).

**Disability** -- In the region, just over 10% of residents live with a disability. The most common types of disabilities along the highway corridors include ambulatory (5-6 percent), cognitive (5 percent) and independent living difficulties (4-5 percent).

*Note: Demographic data is based on the U.S. Census prior to 2020. It is for informational purposes to guide engagement planning only. Additional analysis will be conducted as part of the environmental review process.*

## INCLUSIVITY STRATEGIES

Barriers	Strategies to Address
People with limited English proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate project fact sheet into languages commonly used by corridor residents at home.</li> <li>• Translate key pages to languages commonly used by corridor residents at home.</li> <li>• For less commonly used languages, use online translation tools to provide access to materials in languages other than English, as needed, while recognizing the limitations of these tools.</li> <li>• Engage speakers in discussion groups in their native languages.</li> <li>• Provide translators at workshops and open houses.</li> <li>• Project staff attend events with multi-lingual focus.</li> <li>• Include Title VI standard language for translation in all materials.</li> </ul>
People without internet connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make printed materials available at meetings, tabling events, interviews, open houses and committee meetings.</li> <li>• Provide options for in-person feedback, telephone feedback and postal mail.</li> </ul>
People who do not attend public meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize public meetings in online materials.</li> <li>• Provide online or phone-accessible surveys.</li> <li>• Use online open houses, and digital and printed materials to reflect decisions made in a timely manner.</li> </ul>
People who do not trust government entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have most in-person meetings led by third party facilitators; clearly communicate who is on the project team and who will make decisions (e.g. ODOT or OTC).</li> <li>• Work with trusted partners such as community engagement liaisons or community organizations to deliver information in culturally-relevant and respectful ways.</li> </ul>
People living with a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all in-person and virtual venues are ADA accessible.</li> <li>• Ensure web content follows American Foundation for the Blind and Section 508 recommendations.</li> <li>• Provide meeting accommodations and ASL interpretation upon request.</li> </ul>

## FOCUSED STRATEGIES

### Community Engagement Liaisons

Central to a successful equitable engagement effort is a partnership with professional community engagement liaisons. The Toll Program will contract with the Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) Program and community-based organizations who specialize in grassroots outreach and organizing in their respective communities to engage the following

communities: People with disabilities, Black and African American, Native American, Vietnamese, Chinese, Latina/Latino/Latinx and Slavic communities.

The community liaisons are respected members of a specific ethnic, cultural, language, demographic, or geographic community who can act as a trusted ambassador between that community and the Toll Program, facilitating meaningful representation of that community and their interests within the public process.

The community liaisons will support engagement by:

- Identifying historically and currently excluded and underserved communities affected by the Project, including Title VI and Environmental Justice Populations.
- Using grassroots outreach tools such as social media, tabling, phone calls, texts, media outreach or other creative methods to distribute project information and encourage participation in public comment periods or public events (e.g. open houses).
- Answering project-related questions and serving as a connection between communities and project staff.
- Attending and providing interpretation services at public events.
- Planning, recruiting participants for and implementing informal discussion groups with project staff.

In person or online discussion groups will be informal, guided conversations with invited participants from identified communities. Key meeting characteristics include:

- Agenda, facilitation style and materials that aligns with specific cultural needs.
- Meetings will be about 1.5 hours in length and be conducted mostly in the native language of participants.
- Use of clear, visually focused, and easily accessible materials and content to promote consistent understanding of project information.
- Use of a discussion guide to promote thoughtful and engaging conversations that aid provide development.
- Use of participation incentives such as gift cards to acknowledge the time and expertise given to the meeting.

### **Outreach and partnership with community-based or faith-based organizations**

The Toll Program will work to promote ongoing conversations and partnerships with local organizations that support, advocate for or provide services to historically or currently excluded or underserved communities. This approach aims to foster relationship building by collaborating with organizational and community leadership to connect with the intended audiences at times and locations where they already meet or work.

### **Methods:**

- Presentations: Providing an update to a group or organization at a regularly scheduled meeting.

- Briefings: A meeting scheduled with one person or a small group of people from an organization to share information and gain feedback.
- Toolkits: A “toolkit” will be created and regularly updated for specific engagement periods to support connections and outreach. It will include relevant project information and materials, such as fact sheet or newsletter text, sample social media text, notification flyer, and a comment form or link to a survey.  
Online discussion groups to promote thoughtful and engaging conversations that aid provide development.

### **Translation of Materials**

As part of its equitable engagement approach, the Oregon Toll program will ensure access to information related to focused engagement methods (i.e., discussion groups and community workshops) with translation.

The ODOT Limited English Proficiency Plan refers to a 5 percent threshold of affected community for translation. The Toll Program is committed to a 3 percent threshold instead for translation decisions, exceeding Federal guidance and requirements, to meet equitable engagement objectives.

All written and posted informational English language materials will contain language in four languages offering translation upon request. (See the end of this document for the standard language in Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian and Chinese.)

Key materials that provide project-level information in a format that can be scaled and widely distributed should be made available in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian. These include:

- Factsheet.
- Notices for public engagement opportunities.
- Engagement surveys.

As part of its equitable engagement approach, additional materials related to focused equitable engagement methods (i.e., discussion groups and community workshops) may be translated. The following list of materials may be needed for focused engagement methods.

- FAQs.
- Project updates (i.e., e-newsletters, mailers, social media postings).
- Web pages.
- PowerPoint presentations.
- Notification toolkits with copy for community based organizations to share with their networks.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Robust and meaningful public engagement requires identifying the right tool for the right audience at the right time. With continuing social distancing guidelines due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be more reliance on digital tools.

For each historically and currently excluded and underserved community that ODOT engages with, the community’s needs, priorities, and power structures will be assessed. For these audiences it is especially important to deliver information in a way that allows people to see themselves among those who will receive benefits and are part of the decision-making equation.

The Oregon Toll Program will be thoughtful and intentional about the tools that may need to be employed to meaningfully engage with certain communities and groups, such as:

- Equity thought leaders and community-based organizations.
- Environmental justice community.
- New Americans, including immigrants and refugees, as well as people with Limited English proficiency.
- Community elders and senior center users.
- Transit dependent individuals.
- People living with disabilities who may depend on ride-share services.

With this in mind, the Oregon Toll Program’s communications and engagement tools are divided into three categories:

- **Tools to share information:** Project staff deliver information to audience groups; one-way communication with the primary goal of informing.
- **Tools to collect and compile input:** Project staff deliver new information about project choices and ask for input or feedback from audience groups to help improve future decisions. The primary goal is to consult with stakeholders.
- **Tools to bring people together:** Project staff host or engage in activities where there is multi-way communication and relationship building to promote involvement and collaboration by stakeholders to advance project development.

Below are the various tools and tactics used by ODOT to engage with historically and currently excluded and underserved communities, based on needs, priorities, and power structures.

Tactic	Engagement category/goal	Audiences
<p><b>Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC):</b>                      A committee of people with professional or lived experience in equity and mobility was formed to advise the OTC and ODOT on how tolls on the I-205 and I-5 freeways, in combination with other demand management strategies, can include benefits for</p>	<p>Involvement and collaboration to advance project development</p>	<p>People historically or currently excluded or underserved by transportation projects; local agency partners; community-based organizations</p>

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Tactic	Engagement category/goal	Audiences
populations that have been historically or currently excluded or underserved by transportation projects. <i>Timing: 2020-2022</i>		
<b>Workshops and events:</b> Project staff present information and gain feedback about project development at in-person or online gatherings. Can be co-hosted with local community organizations. <i>Timing: Tied to development of mitigation strategies and preferred alternative</i>	Consult and involve audiences to advance project development	People historically or currently excluded or underserved by transportation projects who depend on I-205; community-based organizations
<b>Equity discussion groups:</b> Community engagement liaisons or community organizations host i discussion groups with specific community representatives from communities of color to gain input on equity and mobility strategies. <i>Timing: Tied to development of equity and mobility strategies, toll policies.</i>	Consult and involve audiences to advance project development	People historically or currently excluded or underserved by transportation projects
<b>Personal relationships:</b> Community liaisons and EMAC members answer questions received from their communities about the project and serve as a connection to project staff and decision makers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when in-person outreach by project staff is more limited. <i>Timing: Throughout project development</i>	Consult and involve audiences to advance project development	People historically or currently excluded or underserved by transportation projects
<b>Briefings and presentations:</b> Project staff meet with people who represent stakeholder interests expected to be affected by the project to provide information, build project awareness, identify challenges or opportunities. Can be held virtually or in-person to meet communities where they are. <i>Timing: Throughout project development</i>	Consult with stakeholders to help improve future decisions.	Community-based organizations; equity thought leaders; service organizations
<b>Online open house/surveys:</b> Information is presented to gain feedback about project design and preferred alternative. Surveys will be translated to multiple languages. <i>Timing: At official public comment periods; Mid-2022</i>	Consult with stakeholders to help improve future decisions.	All
<b>Stakeholder interviews:</b> Project staff meet individually with community leaders to gain focused and personal input for project planning. <i>Timing: Early 2020 (equitable engagement strategies)</i>	Consult and involve audiences to advance project development	Equity thought leaders; community-based organizations
<b>Printed materials and website, including materials translated into languages other than English:</b> Present project purpose, benefits, design, ways to contact project staff, ways to participate or get more information. <i>Timing: Throughout project development; comprehensive update slated for spring 2021</i>	Share project information	All
<b>Social media:</b> Project staff, community liaisons, community organizations, agency partners will promote project information with free and paid posts across various social media platforms. Social media	Share project information	All

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Tactic	Engagement category/goal	Audiences
<p>may be used to notify audiences of public comment opportunities or to promote project awareness. Providing project updates and feedback channels through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms provides engagement opportunities for youth, communities of color, people who primarily engage with social media to consume news and people without stable or conventional internet access on a computer. Use of social media is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic when social distancing limits in-person interactions.  <i>Timing: Throughout project development to build awareness of tolling in general and toll project; paid advertising will be used during official comment periods</i></p>		
<p><b>Outreach to ethnic media outlets:</b> Project staff or community liaisons will deliver information or participate in interviews in multiple languages to build awareness of project developments.  <i>Timing: Throughout project development and particularly at in early-mid 2021 and official public comment periods</i></p>	Share project information	People historically or currently excluded or underserved by transportation projects
<p><b>Online tools, including e-newsletter, texts:</b> Regularly share project news and updates and ways to participate through opt-in delivery channels.  <i>Timing: Throughout project development</i></p>	Share project information	All
<p><b>Toolkit for community organizations:</b> Share written information about the project either in printed or electronic form to distribute to their networks. Toolkit can include: sample social media posts, sample newsletter text, flyers, fact sheets or other materials. This strategy engages the public through “trusted messengers” – individuals and organizations that community members already know and regularly obtain information from. Community organizations, especially those serving people who speak languages other than English, are best equipped to provide information to their networks.  <i>Timing: At least twice per year and associated with awareness-building efforts and public comment periods.</i></p>	Share project information	Community-based organizations; equity thought leaders; service organizations; members of Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee
<p><b>Fairs, festivals, and tables at community events and locations:</b> Staff information tables at fairs and festivals throughout the project area primarily during warm weather months to distribute information about the project and alert community members to public input opportunities. Examples include: farmers markets, school functions, church or religious center functions, community centers, and while engaging in traditional commerce, such as shopping at a local grocery store.</p>	Share project information	All

Tactic	Engagement category/goal	Audiences
<i>Timing: Summer 2022 (when public health guidance allows)</i>		
<p><b>Direct outreach and mail:</b> Flyers and mailers with project information and public input opportunities will be distributed through U.S. Postal Service or through canvassing businesses or service organizations near the project.</p> <p><i>Timing: In advance of community workshops and formal comment periods</i></p>	Share project information	People who live close to the project area, service providers in the project area; people without internet, people who do not attend community meetings

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