

Revised Project Description and Purpose and Need

Date	November 2023
Subject	Revised Project Description and Purpose and Need

Introduction

In February 2023, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) in partnership with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), issued an Environmental Assessment for the I-205 Toll Project (Project) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Project proposed variable-rate tolls¹ on the Abernethy Bridge and Tualatin River Bridges to raise revenue for construction of planned improvements to I-205, including seismic upgrades and widening, and to manage congestion. The Environmental Assessment evaluated the effects of tolling and the toll-funded I-205 improvements on the human and natural environments.

In response to Governor Kotek’s May 2023 directive to delay toll collection on I-205 and I-5 until 2026, ODOT prepared an updated finance plan for Urban Mobility Strategy projects (ODOT 2023). The new finance plan calls for a reduced scope I-205 Toll Project, with tolling only at the Abernethy Bridge.

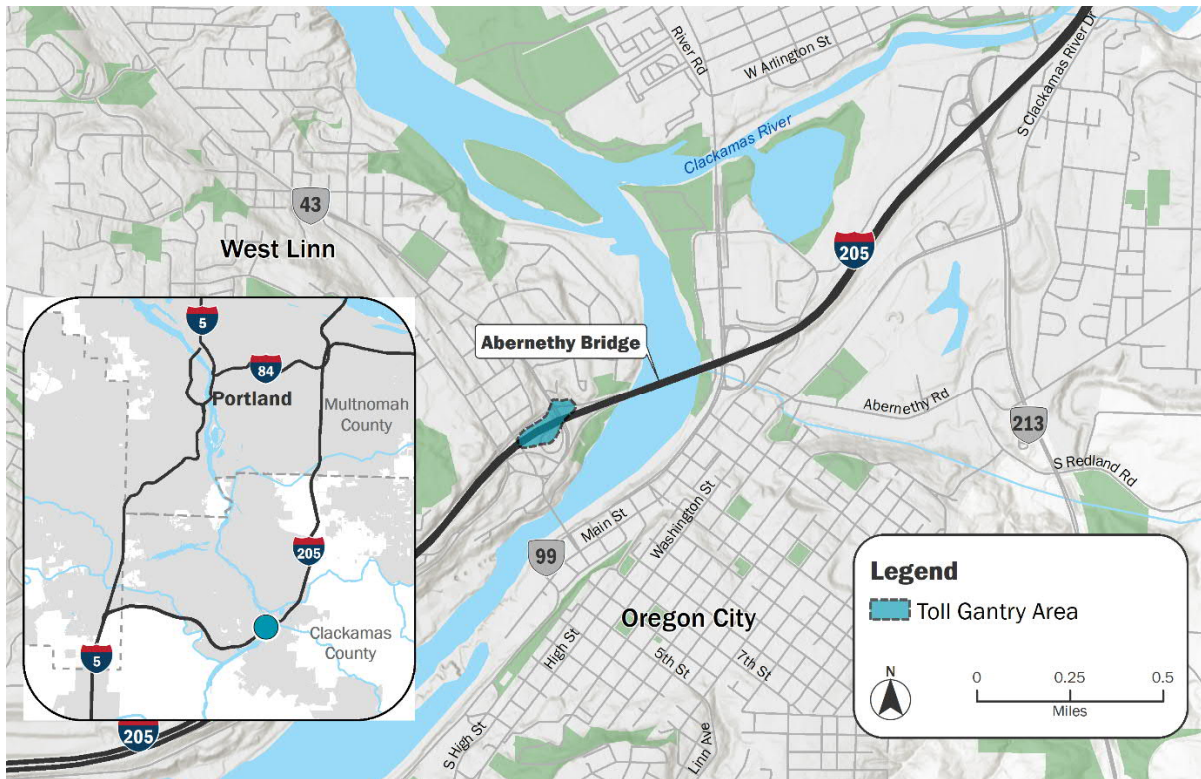
ODOT, in partnership with FHWA, is developing a Supplemental Environmental Assessment to evaluate the environmental effects of the revised I-205 Toll Project. The following sections provide a description of the revised Project (which will be referred to as the Revised Build Alternative in the Supplemental Environmental Assessment), as well as the revised Purpose and Need and the Goals and Objectives for the Project. ODOT and FHWA currently plan to publish the Supplemental Environmental Assessment for public comment in summer 2024.

Revised Project Description

The revised Project (Revised Build Alternative) is the implementation of tolling at the Abernethy Bridge (see Figure 1). Under the Revised Build Alternative, drivers of vehicles on I-205 would be assessed a toll for crossing the Abernethy Bridge (between OR 43 and OR 99E). Toll gantries and supporting infrastructure would be located entirely within the existing I-205 right-of-way at the OR 43/I-205 interchange.

¹ Variable-rate tolls are fees charged to use a road or bridge that vary based on time of day and can be used as a strategy to shift demand to less congested times of day.

Figure 1. I-205 Toll Project Area



Purpose

The purpose of the Project is to use variable-rate tolls at the I-205 Abernethy Bridge to raise revenue for reconstruction of the bridge and to support congestion management.

Need

Additional Funding is Needed for Reconstruction of the Abernethy Bridge

In May 2023, Governor Kotek directed ODOT to delay toll collection on I-205 and I-5 until January 1, 2026. This directive affected ODOT's plans for funding projects included in its Urban Mobility Strategy, including Phase 1A of the I-205 Improvements Project and the I-205 Toll Project, and required ODOT to shift more of the available HB 2017 resources to fully fund reconstruction of the Abernethy Bridge and cover the Phase 1A project's cash flow needs. In addition, cost estimates on the I-205 Phase 1A project have grown, and higher interest rates on municipal debt have reduced expected proceeds from bonds backed by HB 2017 funds.

By 2025, ODOT estimates that the costs incurred for Urban Mobility Strategy projects will use up all available HB 2017 funds and other available resources and will require additional funding to complete construction of Phase 1A. To cover this gap, ODOT will need an additional source of funding, such as tolling, or will need to cut funding from projects included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to pay back short-term borrowing (ODOT 2023).

Traffic Congestion at Abernethy Bridge and on Adjacent I-205 Segments Affects Reliability

Northbound I-205 from I-5 to the Abernethy Bridge has been identified as one of the region's top recurring bottlenecks during the evening commute. In 2017, this section of I-205 experienced 3.5 hours of congestion in the evening, from 2:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. Southbound I-205 from OR 213 to the Abernethy Bridge experienced over 3 hours of congestion in the morning, from 6 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. (ODOT 2018). Congestion conditions contribute to travel-time predictability issues, which result in substantial delays to passenger and freight traffic and make it more challenging for travelers to get to work and other appointments on time.

Goals and Objectives

The Project's goals and objectives are desirable outcomes beyond its purpose and need. The following goals and objectives reflect input collected during summer-fall 2020 engagement related to tolling on I-205 and from the Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis Policy Advisory Committee, partner agencies, the Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee, and other Project partners. Some goals and objectives have been refined since the 2023 Environmental Assessment to reflect the reduced Project scope.

- Goal: Provide benefits for historically and currently excluded and underserved communities.
 - Maximize benefits and minimize burdens associated with implementation of the Project.
 - Support equitable and reliable access to job centers and other important community places, such as grocery stores, schools, and gathering places.
 - Support equitable and reliable access to health-promoting activities (e.g., parks, trails, recreation areas) and health care clinics and facilities.
 - Design the toll system to support travel options for people experiencing low incomes.
- Goal: Limit additional traffic diversion from tolls on the Abernethy Bridge to adjacent roads and neighborhoods.
 - Design the toll system to limit rerouting from tolling.
 - Design the toll system to minimize impacts on quality of life factors, such as health, noise, safety, job access, travel costs, and environmental quality for local communities from traffic rerouting.
- Goal: Support safe travel regardless of mode of transportation.
 - Enhance vehicle safety across the Abernethy Bridge by reducing congested conditions.

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- Support safe multimodal travel options (e.g., pedestrians, bicycles, transit, automobiles) on roadways affected by tolling.
- Goal: Contribute to regional improvements in air quality and support the State's climate change efforts.
 - Support reduced vehicle air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions in the Portland metropolitan area through reducing congestion, resulting in more consistent vehicle speeds, less vehicle idling, and fewer overall motor vehicle emission hours on I-205 and on local roadways affected by tolling.
 - Reduce localized air pollutants through reduced congestion and improved travel efficiency, particularly in community areas where pollutants may be concentrated due to traffic congestion.
- Goal: Support multimodal transportation choices.
 - Support shifts to higher occupancy vehicles (including carpooling) and other modes of transportation (e.g., transit, walk, bike, telework).
 - Collaborate with transit providers to support availability and enhancements of transit and other transportation services along I-205, especially for historically and currently excluded and underserved communities.
- Goal: Support regional economic growth.
 - Provide for reliable and efficient regional movement of goods and people along I-205.
 - Provide for reliable and efficient movement of goods and people on local roadways affected by tolling.
 - Improve regional access to jobs and employment centers, especially for historically and currently excluded and underserved communities.
- Goal: Support management of congestion and travel demand.
 - Design the toll system to improve efficient use of roadway infrastructure and improve travel reliability.
 - Design a toll system that can be expanded in scale, integrated with tolling on other regional roadways, or adapted to future toll system applications.
- Goal: Maximize interoperability with other transportation systems.
 - Design a toll system that is interoperable with other transportation systems in the region.

References

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). 2018. *Portland Region 2018 Traffic Performance Report*.

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). 2023. [Urban Mobility Strategy Finance Strategy](#).