

# Regional Mobility Pricing Project

## Spring 2022 Engagement Report Appendix

Community-based Organizations Discussion Group Summary

August 2022



**Urban Mobility**  
STRATEGY



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## Community-based Organizations Discussion Group Summary

**August 2022**

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



WSP USA  
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1600  
Portland, OR 97204



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# 1 Community-based Organizations Discussion Group

This document includes details about ODOT’s discussion group with community-based organizations that took place on May 3, 2022 as part of the RMPP Phase 2 Engagement.

## 1.1 Discussion Group Summary

### Participants

Attendee	Organization
Emmanuel Williams	Black United Fund of Oregon
Kim McCarthy	Community Alliance of Tenants
Blanca Gaytan Farfan	East County Rising
Bryna Cortes	Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Delfina Andrade	Oregon Latino Health Coalition
Donovan Scribe	Community Alliance of Tenants
John Whitman	Ride Connection
Paul White	Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives

### Interactive Questions

The first interactive question was about the different modes of transportation the participants most frequently use.

#### How do you usually get around Portland? (walk, bus, bike, car, light rail)?

Response	Walk	Bus	Bike	Car	Light Rail	Rideshare
1			X	X		
2				X		
3	X	X	X	X		
4				X	X	X
5	X	X				X
6	X	X	X	X	X	
7	X	X			X	X
8	X					

The second interactive question was about what the participants were hoping to get out of the meeting. They were given six options to choose from: hear updates about the Urban Mobility Office projects; learn more about how to engage and participate; ask questions to ODOT staff; share comments and feedback; hear from other Community Based Organizations; and the option to share any other hope for the discussion.

#### Responses:

- I want to hear about project updates. I was surprised to hear this was moving forward last time. I'm interested to see what has changed and progressed since the last time we met.

- I would like to hear from other CBOs.
- I want to hear updates about the Urban Mobility Office (UMO) projects, learn more about how to engage and participate, and share comments and feedback.
- Hear from other CBOs.
- I would like to hear updates about the UMO projects, learn more about how to engage and participate, ask questions to ODOT staff, share comments and feedback, and hear from other CBOs.
- Hear updates about UMO projects, learn more about how to engage and participate, ask questions to ODOT, and share comments and feedback.

### **Discussion Group Questions**

During the presentation, the following question was asked.

**Question:** Do any of the CBOs in attendance serve Clackamas County?

- A portion of Clackamas County is served by East County Rising.

During the group discussion, the following questions were asked.

**Question:** What potential barriers could exist for people experiencing low incomes to participate in a low-income toll program?

- I anticipate that you will see people using the road along the tolled highways to go north. With the toll being electronic, will you receive something in the mail? Will it have a fine? Will it be translated? One parking ticket can send a low-income family into a tailspin.

*Response: Hannah Williams, ODOT, noted that Lucinda Broussard, ODOT Tolling Program Director, has said we want to design a program with customer service in mind. The idea that a person would receive a large fine for not paying a small toll, or for not even knowing they had a bill, is not our intent and we are working to figure out what measures will need to be in place so that doesn't happen. We also want to focus on customer service by having real people available to answer questions and concerns, and how we can partner with other programs to make sure needs are met.*

*Response: James Paulson, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee. We are spending a lot of time at EMAC to be sure that this isn't a punitive system. A priority for the EMAC is to develop a compliance system that doesn't punish people who are experiencing different life challenges.*

- Finding out about the program, trusting groups to opt-in to programs, and knowing toll-free options will be barriers. You should make sure there is support for folks who are penalized and that fines/penalties are not extremely damaging.

*Response: James Paulson, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee: Communication will be one of the key pieces, before the toll is out, we need to know the best ways to communicate with people to put together and disperse messages.*

**Question:** Can you share any best practices that you have developed through partnership with other programs?

- We have a specialist who works with TriMet to provide passes to make sure that is something that is established, so that way people who use the program know about these options and information. In addition, they shared that:
  - A lot of language materials are being sent out and shared. There should be a big campaign around announcements and focus groups to give feedback on successful messaging. This was done for Drivers Licenses for All.
  - Have toll free or discounted for HOV lanes. Have opportunities for tolling support for small business, contractors, and those who are needing to rely on these routes for work related activities. For example, this could look like daily toll caps. Have support for public transportation options and work on expanding public transportation options. Make sure a portion of the toll is dedicated to building/expanding bus/train options. Make some lanes only open to bus transit during certain hours. Have multiple options for payment.

*Response: Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee: Thank you for sharing the work about Driver's Licenses for All, this is something that could be helpful. There needs to be more community engagement with various opportunities. Not a lot of people are hearing about this, it's new for folks. We want to do our part to go out into these communities and had to pivot to virtual engagement with the pandemic. Now that things are opening up, there are so many opportunities. This is a good time for CBOs to share with their members about what is going on. There is a fear about the information being shared and a lack of trust. Having cultural messages is important, we want to make this a safe process.*

- I work with Latino communities, I've talked to people who have big businesses, and they are surprised that they haven't heard anything about this. The Latino community works a lot for construction, so they get involved in these projects and we wonder why we don't know about this project. People working in construction will be impacted, they could get paid for it. People are cynical, they think it's just to get money from us. How can you get project information to people? Why can't money be given to organizations to distribute information? I'm still in shock, how is it going to happen if we don't have toll booths? I want to know more about this.

**Question:** Does your organization help people experiencing low-income enroll in other programs? If so, how does it work, and are there any best practices?

- We do screenings, which could be a conduit for qualifying people for programs, if that information is allowed to be shared. We also have a resident services department that could help in educating people and can work with churches and community centers to help spread the word about upcoming programs. I moved here from Key Largo, Florida, so I'm very acquainted with tolling by toll booth, transponders, or by license plate. Portland needs this, I'm 100% in favor. It will be hard in the beginning, but once it's fully established it's just a part of daily life. Communication can also be a barrier as not all people have access to a phone or computer.
- I was shocked to hear about it, and so are the people I share this with. Housing in Portland is about half a million for the average home price, so the addition of tolling will be a shock. I think we do need to connect with organizations like mine, so we can speak to our clients and get the

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message out in conjunction with you all. Folks need to hear it from their communities. Providing CBOs with funding is necessary for us to participate.

*Response: Hannah Williams, ODOT: It's important that we partner with CBOs, if funding helps to build capacity of CBOs to help participate in this process, that would be a very important consideration. A few projects have funding to pay CBOs for engagement. I am looking for help to get conversations going and build a contract mechanism that works for CBOs and the project. Please let us know if this is of any interest. We truly need help with education and communication*

- Has the Oregon Legislature considered an income tax credit for tolls paid yearly?

*Response: James Paulson, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee: I think it would be too hard to get any new taxes passed in Salem.*

- Getting the word out would be a barrier, not everyone has a smart phone or email. We have a lot of seniors.

*Response: Dr. Philip Wu, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee: Project Access Now has been a hub for different community services and could be a potential avenue to build points of access to information and specific services connected to tolling.*

*Response: James Paulson, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee: At EMAC we have talked about needed funding in advance so we can get the word out and other considerations which need to be addressed before tolling starts.*

- We don't do direct service, but as a result of COVID, we have information about what is needed to apply for rental assistance programs and the application process needed for low-income programs. A lot of community members couldn't do it on their own, so we helped break down the process and shared it with other folks in the community doing direct access support. There were a lot of pending applications so a lot of families across the state were wondering if they were going to be approved. Keeping in mind, what is going to make it easier for community members and reviewers of applications? How are you going to keep community members in the loop about their application process?

We helped to compile information, and the housing agency did the rental assistance and application review. It is helpful to have platforms to assess how many applications are submitted and how many are partially completed due to difficulties. My concern is how many steps will people need to go through in order to submit an application.

- I think starting to put up billboards with different languages announcing, "toll coming soon" and a hotline with information might be helpful in addition to connecting with CBOs.

**Question:** How supportive would you be of a slightly higher toll rate if it meant increased investments for community identified priorities, such as improved sidewalks or transit facilities near the tolled highways?

- I'm for it, but I'm not someone who struggles to pay a toll. If we do have low-income programs that could be fine. In the past two years things have slipped, and there is a lot of work to be done to restore the area to what it once was. I'm supportive of something that would help this. We have to prove that money from tolls is going to go to what we say it's going to do.

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- Are you asking to raise tolls higher to put money back into community? No. There is no reason for that, Portland had a surplus last year. The toll is already going to hurt communities that you would be trying to help. The money wouldn't go back to people that need it the most. If the goal is for that funding to go to folks that need the most help, the only way to do that would be to give them exemptions. That way you are only taking money from those who can afford it (an extra \$10-15 per week) which would go towards the low-income folks.
- How are larger businesses in these areas (and particularly those benefiting from lower congestion) being particularly taxed to support these efforts? I wonder how they are being required to support their employees' access to public transportation or other sustainable means.
- How do we make sure those that are really benefiting, like large organizations, are pulling their weight? Some additional ideas could be providing discounts for HOVs and other ways to encourage more carpooling, supporting folks with larger families, and tolling support for larger businesses. There could also be support and expansion for public transportation options. An extra fee should go to expanding bus and train options. When we talk about justice for communities it includes public transportation expansion. Some lanes should only be open to bus transit during certain hours, sometimes the bus takes a long time since it's not given priority. There could also be forms of compensation to encourage people to take the bus. There should also be multiple options for payment.
- I want to see more data about the incomes of who is currently crossing the bridges, including who are their employers, how much do they pay, how much can their employees afford, and does public transportation even service those areas? Are TriMet and ODOT committed to creating other modes of travel while creating these tolls? I am worried about the impact of fines and tickets in terms of finances and impeding access to future resources. TriMet is difficult to navigate for everyone now that it is mostly cashless. We need to learn from that and do better. I think that we need more partnerships with convenience stores to share information. Sharing information could happen at the DMV, DEQ stations where car emissions are checked, pull offs like gas stations prior to tolls for purchase of the toll, and communications with car rental companies. Will low-income people pay more if they do not have the sticker because of the administration costs of the letter? I think that the key employers should be partners and help their employees get information and subsidize.

*Response: James Paulson, Equity Mobility Advisory Committee: I have been asking for the same data.*

- I just would like to emphasize the need to have non-car-centric forms of transportation to support our communities.
- It'd be great to get an email with engagement links and graphics to send out to community members.