

Feedback Received To-Date on Toll Operations: STRAC Meeting #2 Materials

Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee

The following are excerpts from EMACs "[Shaping an Equitable Toll Program: Recommendations to the Oregon Transportation Commission](#)" document that pertain to topics raised in the outline for draft rules:

Foundational Statements

- Tolling must be a 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.
- Equitable benefits that are offered in Oregon must extend into Southwest Washington.

Recommended actions

Provide ongoing funding for community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve communities identified in the Oregon Toll Program's Equity Framework and that are impacted by tolling to support the following transportation-related activities including, but not limited to:

- Compensation for community members to participate in tolling-related transportation planning activities, projects, or committees.
- Toll education programs and ongoing engagement to inform the toll program.
- Increase enrollment in the Oregon Toll Program account holders and access to the low-income toll program.
- Include CBOs in the monitoring process to identify and help prioritize actions to address neighborhood health and safety issues caused by increased diversion of freight or longer-trips from tolling.

Operations

- Build into the system where voices from Equity Framework Communities are included in the decision-making process for future toll rate adjustments.
- Commit to offering additional time to pay a toll bill without incurring fines, and study options for effectively doing so. Tolling should not contribute to more financial indebtedness for people experiencing low incomes.
- Ensure the process of applying for exemptions, discounted rates, or credits considers varying degrees of technological competency and access. ODOT should account for internet reliability in rural areas and how that could affect access to online services (e.g., loading transponders, applying for exemptions).
- Design the system to be clear and easy to use for everyone, including non-English language speakers. Collaborate with trusted organizations and individuals within Equity Framework Communities to overcome historical and current barriers of trust, language, and financial impacts, including obtaining a transponder and understanding the toll rates for location and time of day.

Low Income Toll Report

The following is a list of “implementation practices” that were identified in the [Low Income Toll Report](#) and were based on EMAC’s recommendations and the analysis of practices to promote inclusion, accessibility, and enrollment, the following practices outline key considerations for developing the system to support the low-income toll program:

- Support a monitoring, review, and adjustment process for the low-income toll program that includes community voices and a process that is aligned with the Oregon Toll Program’s Equity Framework.
- Offer education opportunities, additional time to pay toll charges, and multiple notices of account balances, and/or set a maximum penalty amount.
- Consider equity implications in the process for penalties that users are subject to for toll violations (i.e., initial penalty followed by a failure to comply penalty).
- Further work is needed to identify the administration cost and operational viability for each of these practices. This information is necessary to guide the selection of options that advance equity and are cost effective.

- Provide free transponders and work with community-based organizations to help enroll people.
- Do not require a minimum dollar amount of balance to load or maintain the account.
- Provide a cash-based option for toll payment.
- Conduct extensive marketing, promotion, and engagement with community-based organizations that begins at least 6 months before tolling starts. Post signage to help travelers make informed decisions.
- Create an in-person and online enrollment process that accommodates participants with disabilities, who have limited technology access or training, who speak languages other than English, and who live far away from existing service centers.

Community Engagement from Toll Project Outreach

Customer Accounts

- Concern for procedural burdens. Support for multiple options for setting up and maintaining accounts including:
 - Online
 - Cash-based
 - App
 - Through partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Accounts should be easy to access and understand. The public and community groups have requested the following:
 - Materials and help in multiple languages
 - Visual and video format instructions or support
 - Materials, instructions, and support in formats helpful to people experiencing a disability
 - Help centers that offer support in multiple languages, meet the needs of differently abled populations, and that are staffed or supported by members of trusted CBOs
- Accounts should be secure and customer data should be kept private and not shared.

- Consideration for how large and small local businesses will be able to set up business accounts.
- Request for transponders to be sent in the mail rather than require an office visit to obtain a transponder.

Payment Processing and Toll Transactions

- Recommendations for community resources, such as translated information and assistance regarding how to pay the tolls.
- Provide support for those who can't make toll payment and avoid impacts from fines or penalties.
- Concern about the ease of use for tourists and recreational or infrequent drivers.
- Consider incentives for pre-paying for tolls, setting up online accounts, and ordering transponder.

Civil Penalties, Administrative Fees, and Dispute Provisions

- Interest in toll enforcement and what will happen if toll fees are not paid, or who will pay for the ticket if the driver is not the registered owner.
- Questions and concerns around enforcement. For example, would someone be ticketed if they did not have a tag, how it would influence traffic stops, and how it would be reflected on their driving record or affect their drivers' license.
- Considerations towards undocumented members of our community.
- Need to communicate that those that are licensed but undocumented will not face any other consequences related to the tolls.
- Considerations for what happens in the event on non-payment.
 - Will fees increase per each request for payment.
 - Will there be any implications for driving records.
- Concerns about being tracked.

- Concerns about community and personal safety when interacting with public safety and enforcement systems.
- Concern about the impact of charging damaging fees to people already financially burdened by paying tolls.