

Meeting #6 Summary: Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee (STRAC)

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) convened a committee of people from across the state to help develop Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) that will advise ODOT on how customers will interact with and use tolling systems as well as how toll rates will be set and adjusted. The STRAC held a joint meeting with the Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC), where the committees began discussion topics that will be considered in “Part 2” of the rulemaking process. “Part 2” topics include the Low-Income Toll Program, vehicle rates, discounts and exemptions, and rate setting and adjusting.

The meeting was held virtually and hosted over Zoom. The meeting was live-streamed via YouTube and closed-captioning was provided.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Deepen an understanding of the rulemaking Part 2 topics (low-income tolls, discounts exemptions, vehicle rates by types, toll rate setting and adjustment), by reviewing and discussing past feedback, decisions, regulations, and existing practices from other toll programs.
- Discuss the opportunities, challenges, tradeoffs, and questions for these topics.
- Review the draft rules outline, and the regulations and policies that inform it.
- Clearly understand the roles of the toll committees in the next steps of rule development.

Meeting Attendance

The meeting recording is on the Oregon Toll Program’s [YouTube channel](#). The meeting was live streamed on YouTube and has 91 views as of August 1, 2023.

STRAC Project Team

- Travis Brouwer
- Phil Miller
- Garet Prior
- Kelly Bruce
- Hannah Williams
- Jamie Damon
- Madeline Kane
- Grant Simmons
- Amira Streeter

Committee Members

STRAC

- Elizabeth Mazzara Myers
- Ethan Hasenstein
- Marie Dodds
- Commissioner Nafisa Fai
- Park Woodworth
- Dr. Philip Wu
- Sean Philbrook
- Shannen Knight
- Jeff Spiegel
- Lanny Gower
- Lauren Poor
- Michael Card

Absent:

- Shatrine Krake
- Sharla Moffett
- Marc Ortega Kilman-Burman
- Omar Cruz

EMAC:

- Jessica Stanton
- Rochelle Brahall
- Chris Lepe
- Olivia Holden
- James Paulson
- Jeff Christian
- Adam Torres

Opening

Introduction & Welcome

Jamie Damon, facilitator, opened the meeting and welcomed attendees and viewers. She provided instructions on accessibility tools and how the public can submit their comments. Jamie asked each STRAC member to introduce themselves and the communities they represent. She then reviewed the agenda, and shared meeting guidelines and objectives. To center the committees, Jamie asked the members to answer a trivia question: “There is a toll facility in Europe which is named after the original toll charged. What facility is it? STRAC and EMAC members were asked to put their answers in the chat. The answer is the “Ha’Penny” bridge in Ireland.

Travis Brouwer provided welcoming remarks and highlighted the importance of STRAC and EMAC members’ role in developing the administrative rules. Travis also noted that the topics the EMAC and STRAC are discussing are complex and important.

Tolling Update

Travis Brouwer provided an update on the Urban Mobility Strategy (UMS) Finance Plan, including the total program costs and priorities. He also provided an overview of the implementation reports that will be submitted to Governor Kotek by December 15, 2023.

Travis then highlighted the Low-Income Toll Program and explained that the STRAC is helping to determine how the program will be implemented, ODOT’s commitment to the program, and the direction that will be provided by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC).

The STRAC and EMAC then had an opportunity to ask questions.

Question: A STRAC member asked how the timeline for Phase 2 of the I-205 improvement project will be impacted.

Response: *Travis responded Phase 2 is on hold. He noted that construction costs have increased and other funding sources will need to be identified. He also shared that funding is allocated for the Abernethy Bridge and the Rose Quarter.*

Question: An EMAC member asked if the revenue generated through tolling will be spent in the areas where the tolls are collected or if the funds will be spent regionally.

Response: *Travis responded that tolling would fund projects identified through the Regional Mobility Pricing Project. He explained that ODOT does not yet have an estimate for toll revenues, but that tolls will be spent in the tolling corridor.*

Where We've Been and Where We're Going

Garet Prior provided a brief overview of Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs), and explained the relationship between law, rules, and procedures. He noted that there are current rules governing tolling that need to be updated, and he outlined the process for rulemaking.

Garet shared EMAC's purpose statement and the roles of each of the two committees.

Garet then presented the rulemaking process timeline to provide context for how the STRAC's work fits into the larger process. He shared the timeline for the OAR development and the engagement that will be occurring throughout the rulemaking process.

Jamie Damon then reviewed the STRAC engagement process and explained that this meeting is a "Level 1" meeting. The "Level 1" meeting objective is to provide an overview of the Part 2 topics, explain past decisions and guidance, and to demonstrate the tradeoffs. The goal is to gather higher-level issues, questions, and comments.

What We've Heard

Introduction

The project team shared highlights of the feedback received from the public on the topics the STRAC will be addressing in the coming months.

Summary of Feedback

- Hannah Williams presented the types of engagement and input gathering that has occurred to this point and highlighted the engagement that has gone into informing the work of the EMAC and the Low-Income Toll Report. She also shared a brief overview of the community and equity-focused engagement that started in 2020.
- Hannah then explained the complex landscape of feedback received to date and how the feedback is related to the Part 2 topics.

Panel Discussion

- Jamie Damon then introduced the STRAC and EMAC members who would be a part of a panel discussion. For the panel, each panelist had an opportunity to share the feedback they have been hearing in the communities they represent, then the panelists had an opportunity to ask each other questions and respond. After the panel discussion, the rest of the committee members were invited to ask questions and share insights. The panelists and committee members shared the following:

STRAC Members:

Mike Card, Combined Transport. Mike offered the perspective from the trucking community and rural areas. He shared that a priority for the trucking community is revenue generation with the assumption that the revenue will be spent on road improvements. He also noted concerns about ODOT establishing multiple, often conflicting, priorities for tolling projects, and the challenge to meet multiple priorities. Mike suggested tolling everyone equally, to help pay for improvements on roads we all use. He emphasized that ODOT's focus should be collecting revenue for road improvements. Any consideration of exemptions, discounts or other modifications should be addressed by the legislature. He noted that additional freight expenses will eventually be passed onto customers

Elizabeth Mazzara Myers, Westside Economic Alliance. Elizabeth shared the perspective from a wide range of businesses throughout the Westside of the Portland metropolitan area. A major priority of the community she represents is to grow a healthy economy, and that tolling should not be a mechanism for limiting that growth. She encouraged ODOT to consider the needs of shift workers in the building trades and others with non-traditional work hours who are not able to access different travel modes or travel at different times.

Ethan Hasenstein: Knife River Corporation. Ethan explained that he represents the construction and heavy vehicle community. He shared that raising revenue for road improvements and a clear enforcement system are his community's main priorities. He said that his community supports revenue diversification, infrastructure improvements and tolling everyone equally.

EMAC Members:

Phil Wu: Phil Wu sits on both the STRAC and the EMAC. He shared that there are many people, not limited to any one geographic region, that will be economically impacted by tolling. He suggested applying a sliding scale to ODOT's approach for providing low-income discounts. He noted that equity can be included in the tolling program without making the system complicated.

James Paulson: James shared perspectives from the workforce and youth communities. He explained how lower income workers and youth have many unique challenges including inability to control their schedules, working multiple jobs, childcare, and access to public transportation. He also shared that tolling will impact youth in the community as they use the freeways to get to school, work, and training. Tolling is an additional barrier that could impact our future workforce. He suggested making the program simple and providing discounts for youth and low-income workers similar to how TriMet provides subsidies to riders.

Jessica Stanton: Jessica is the facilitator for the EMAC. She shared that throughout the EMACs work they have consistently heard that people are worried about the personal costs of

tolling and the request to keep rates low. She suggested that robust enrollment and participation is needed to support the Low-Income Toll Program and the importance of working with community partners

Committee Members:

Lauren Poor: Lauren works for the Oregon Farm Bureau and noted that unlike freight, farmers cannot pass additional costs to customers. She suggested different rates for different license types (e.g. farm vehicles, disabled veterans).

Marie Dodds: Marie represents commuters and stressed the importance of a robust education campaign on how transportation funding and tolling will work for the public.

Olivia Holden: Olivia works for the City of Vancouver and asked how southwest Washington will be impacted. She suggested providing more clarity about the impacts to help educate the public.

Sean Philbrook: Sean shared bi-state concerns and noted that freight, business, and employees need to be considered.

Garet Prior on behalf of Shatrine Krake: Shatrine represents the West Linn Chamber. She wanted to underscore small businesses in understanding the impact of tolling on them. She suggested a 6 month no toll period for certain groups.

Shannen Knight: Shannen is a small business owner and highlighted how business expenses and the cost of goods have increased and suggested providing credits to business owners.

Working Together Across Differences

Jamie Damon explained that the STRAC is beginning to discuss complex topics for which many groups and communities will have different perspectives. To help prepare the committee to be able to hold productive conversations around these topics, she presented concepts and tools for working together across differences.

Jamie presented the importance of focusing on interests rather than positions in helping to find creative solutions. She brought back a slide that Erika McAlpine presented at the first STRAC meeting that explained the differences between equality, equity, and justice, and framed what these concepts might look like for the STRAC. She explained the approach of Targeted Universalism in the STRAC process and provided tools for understanding and working through challenging conversations including active listening and inquiry. She asked the STRAC and EMAC to reflect on the following questions:

- When have you had a positive experience navigating complex decisions in your work/life? What helped make it a success?
- How can those lessons learned or the tools we just discussed help us navigate the challenges we identified earlier?

Regulations, Policies, Existing Practices, and Challenges

Garet Prior shared that to help move the rulemaking process forward, ODOT has been reviewing existing toll regulations, rules, and policies in Oregon and in other states. He explained that Oregon regulations, rules, and policies will be re-organized and updated.

Phil Miller then shared key messages about how tolling will be administered.

Garet and Phil shared examples about how other states have addressed toll discounts, exemptions, lower-income customers, rate setting and adjustments, and classifications for freight.

Jamie Damon asked that the committees consider the following question:

- Of the existing practices that we discussed, what do you think would work best for Oregon?

Looking Ahead & Next Steps

Jamie Damon explained that the STRAC will continue to work towards developing draft rules and that the feedback received today from STRAC and EMAC members will help to inform their development.

Garet Prior then reshared the rulemaking timeline and highlighted the processes that will occur in the STRAC, in public engagement, in the agency, and with the OTC.

Jamie then shared the topics for discussion at the upcoming “Level 2”, and “Level 3” meetings. Garet previewed the information that will be shared during the meetings, and highlighted the coordination that will happen between the two committees.

Community Engagement Update

Hannah Williams provided an overview of upcoming committee meetings for the Regional Toll Advisory Committee (RTAC), the OTC, and for EMAC. She also shared upcoming community events and recent engagement activities.

Committee Report Outs

Dr. Philip Wu and Gareth Prior on behalf of Commissioner Nafisa Fai provided updates about the work of the EMAC and the RTAC.

Gareth Prior provided an update on tribal government-to-government consultations.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Jamie Damon shared that the next STRAC meeting is on September 22, 2023, from 9:00am to 12:00pm. She noted that STRAC members will receive a meeting evaluation form, and that there will be no August meeting.

Travis Brouwer thanked STRAC and EMAC members for their valuable feedback and dedication.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.