

# Community Engagement Report Out: July - August 2023

## Statewide Toll Advisory Committee (STRAC) September 2023 Meeting Materials

*Date Updated: September 15, 2023*

ODOT is continuing conversations across greater Portland to build a toll program that works for communities. In July and August, ODOT held eight discussion groups in partnership with the Community Engagement Liaison (CEL) program. CELs facilitated conversations with Vietnamese, Chinese, Latinx, Black and African, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Slavic, people living with disabilities, and Tribal or Native American community members.

**Community Engagement Liaisons** are active community leaders who provide interpretation, translation, and engagement services for toll projects. ODOT has held **41** discussion groups with liaisons since the start of the Oregon Toll Program.

We talked with community members about plans for toll accounts, payment options and process, data privacy, and discounts and exemptions. Participants then shared ideas about how to make it easy to sign-up for an account, update information, and pay bills on time.

## What We Heard

**Pre-paid toll accounts:** We shared that if you signed up for a toll account and put money in your account, you would get the best deal. We asked participants if this is something they would consider doing.

- Interest in signing up for pre-paid toll accounts to save money and avoid surprises.
- Provide in-person toll account services in different languages.
- Interest in setting up automatic payments rather than preloading the toll account with funds.
- Provide reminders to replenish funds when the toll account balance is low.
- Concerns about protecting bank and credit card information.
- Provide in-person locations to replenish toll accounts and make payments.
- Frustration that the pre-paid toll account option is the best deal.
- Questions about when funds in a toll account would expire.



**Toll account data:** We shared ODOT's draft plan for collecting data and asked participants about the best ways to keep information up to date on toll accounts.

- Provide pop-up reminders to update your account information quarterly or when replenishing funds.
- Send text and email reminders to update account information.
- Offer a mobile app to manage account information.
- Automatically update accounts when information with the DMV changes.

**Toll accounts:** We shared that we are looking into multiple ways customers can register for an account and pay their toll bill, including with cash, in person, online or by mail. We asked participants about the best ways to encourage community members to sign up for accounts.

- Partner with community organizations to help get people signed up for toll accounts. Provide compensation for these services.
- Offer incentives, like free trips, to sign up for a toll account.
- Offer locations for people to sign up that they visit frequently, like grocery stores, churches, and community gathering spaces.
- Provide signage on the highways about how to sign up for a toll account and pay your bill.
- Mail information in different languages to help people register for a toll account.
- Share information using short videos, in addition to written formats.
- Ensure websites, apps, and materials meet accessibility guidelines.
- Use social media accounts, including culturally specific accounts, to share information.

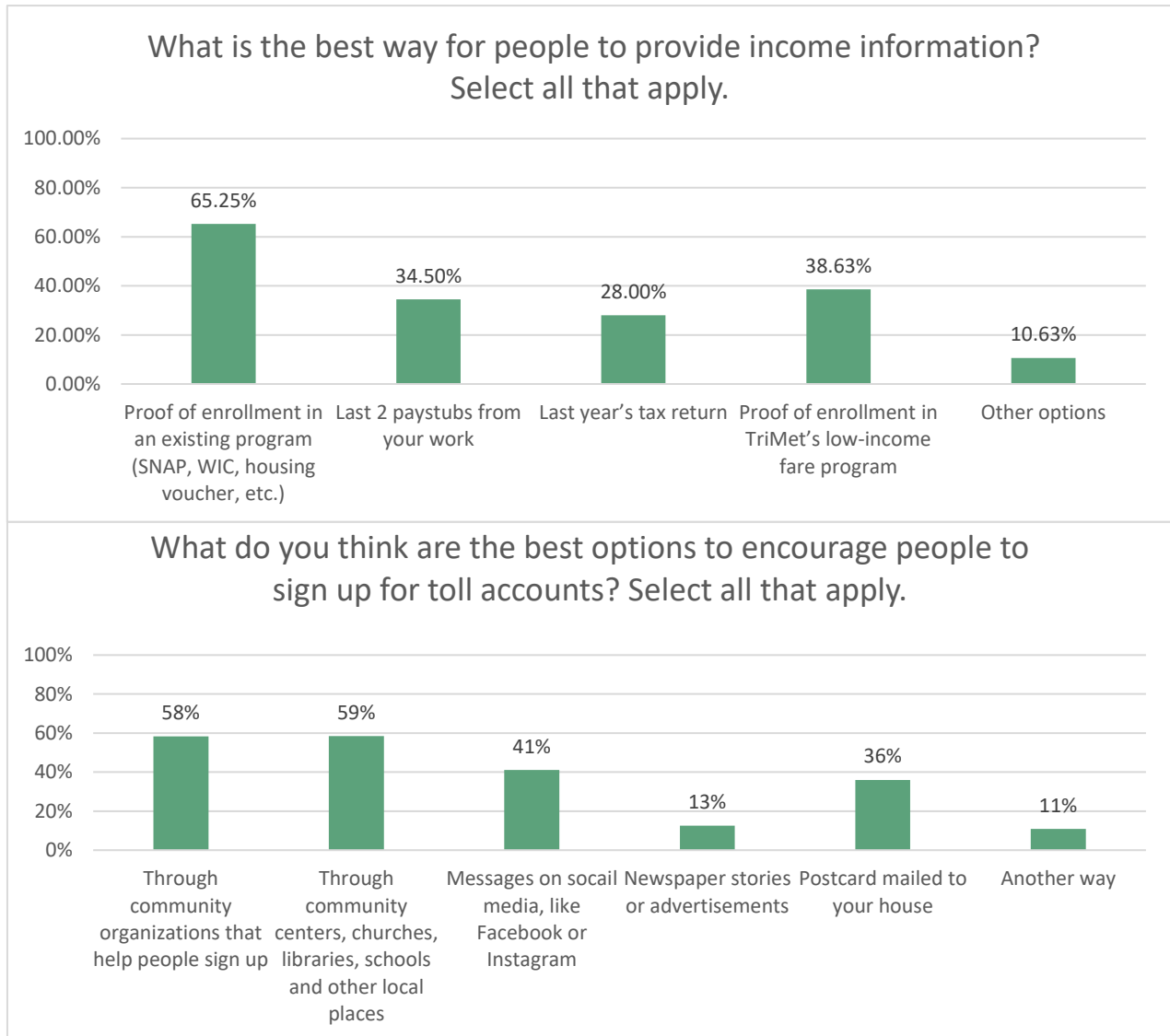
**Discounts and exemptions:** We shared ODOT's draft plan for discounts and exemptions and asked participants about the best ways to provide income information.

- Questions about how to apply a discount to different vehicles for individuals using rideshare services.
- Concerns that people who are undocumented do not qualify for programs used to provide income information, like SNAP.
- Provide more details on how data will be protected.
- Interest in using government assistance programs, Medicare and Medicaid, bank statements, employee verification letters, and paystubs to qualify for a discount
- Preference for using enrollment in existing programs to qualify for a discount
- Concerns about the lack of verification options for people that are undocumented or unable to work.
- Interest in distributing vouchers for people that are undocumented.
- Interest in providing exemptions for members of Federally Recognized Tribes, refugee and immigrant communities, and people living with disabilities.

**Toll payment process:** We shared ODOT's draft plan for collecting payments and asked participants about the best communication methods to let people know about payment options.

- Employ customer service agents that speak different languages.
- Provide notices and bills in multiple languages.
- Send text and email reminders to pay toll bills.
- Concerns about receiving a surprise toll bill in the mail when someone borrows a car.

- Post on social media to remind people to pay toll bills.
- Concerns about using phone calls as a primary method of contact due to phone scams.
- Concerns that unpaid tolls could jeopardize citizenship status.



## How We Are Responding

This feedback is being shared with the Statewide Toll Rules Advisory Committee (STRAC) and ODOT staff to inform the rulemaking and operations approach for tolling. To-date, the following solutions have been developed to respond to community feedback:

- Low-income toll program on day one of tolling.
- Pay online, by mail, or in-person with credit, cash, or check.
- Multiple options to enroll and in-person and assistance available in many languages.
- Addresses and photos of license plates and vehicles will only be used for billing.