

Oregon Toll Program

June 6 CBO Discussion Group Meeting Summary

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| Acronym/Abbreviation | Definition |
|----------------------|--|
| CBO | Community-Based Organization |
| EMAC | Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee |
| ODOT | Oregon Department of Transportation |
| RMPP | Regional Mobility Pricing Project |
| STRAC | Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee |

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Meeting Overview

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|---|--|
| Subject | Community-Based Organization Discussion Group |
| Date and Time | June 6, 2023 5-6:30 p.m. |
| Location | Virtual Zoom Meeting |
| Attendees | 11 |
| Staff, Presenters, and Committee Members | Erika McCalpine, ODOT Hannah Williams, ODOT Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West Amira Streeter, Kearns & West Ellen Palmquist, Kearns & West Ariella Dahlin, Kearns & West Gillian Garber-Yonts, Kearns & West Grant Simmons, Kearns & West Jessica Dover, Community Engagement Liaisons (Interpreter) Adam Torres, Equity and Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC) Dr. Phillip Wu, Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee (STRAC) and EMAC Sean Philbrook, STRAC Shatrine Krake, STRAC |

Participants

| Attendee | Organization |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Andrew Campbell | Word is Bond |
| Crystalyn Black | Urban League of Portland |
| Daisy Ulloa | Latino Network |
| Emmanuel Williams | Black United Fund of Oregon |
| Erick Allen (EA) | Urban League of Portland |
| Jacob Loeb | 82 nd Avenue Business Association |
| Jawad Khan | Muslim Educational Trust |
| Jawad Khoja | Muslim Educational Trust |
| Larry King | Exceed Enterprises |
| Luis Huerta Hernandez | Latino Leadership Northwest |
| Stephanie "Bastet" Lynch Taylor | Black Community Portland |

Materials

- Agenda

Event Summary

The Community-Based Organization (CBO) Discussion Group began at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, June 6, 2023. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Inform and build relationships with CBOs.
- Provide a brief update on the Toll Program and focus on rulemaking discussion questions.
- Close the feedback loop with attendees from the March discussion group and be intentional about follow-up.
- Share opportunities for further engagement
- Have tolling advisory committee representatives hear community feedback directly from CBOs.

ODOT invited representatives from CBOs serving equity-framework communities.

The virtual discussion was facilitated by Erika McCalpine, ODOT, and included live interpretation in Spanish. The meeting opened with a presentation from Hannah Williams, ODOT, on the Regional Mobility Pricing Project (RMPP), the I-205 Toll Project, and toll rulemaking. Following the presentation, Amira Streeter, Kearns & West, facilitated questions on the toll program. Hannah Williams shared additional information about enrollment and enforcement topics before Erika McCalpine directed participants to join break out rooms for group discussions.

Oregon Toll Program Update

Hannah Williams presented updates on RMPP and the I-205 Toll Project, the Low-Income Toll Program, how tolling will work, and the Statewide Toll Rulemaking Advisory Committee (STRAC). There was a short question session after the presentation. Participants asked the following questions:

- Question from Andrew Campbell: Will funds be available for CBOs to partner with ODOT?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: Explained that there is an ongoing need to work with CBOs and that ODOT is trying to figure out which services CBOs are interested in providing. Share that an evaluation would be distributed following the meeting to indicate which types of services CBOs are interested in partnering with ODOT to provide.

- Question from Stephanie Lynch Taylor: How many times could someone be tolled driving down I-5? After you're tolled once, are you good for the entire roadway?

Response, Hannah Williams, ODOT: For the I-205 Toll Project, there is a toll on the Abernathy Bridge and the Tualatin River Bridge. For RMPP, congestion pricing, using variable rate tolling, will be used along parts of I-5 and I-205 will be tolled. We don't know yet where toll gantries will be located.

- Question from Shatrine Krake, STRAC: Will the RMPP environmental assessment be open for public comments like the I-205 environmental assessment?

Response, ODOT: Yes, there will be a public comment period. In late 2023, FHWA and ODOT will share the Draft Environmental Assessment for public review and comment.

ODOT will continue to provide ongoing project updates and opportunities for involvement.

Break Out Room Discussions on Enrollment and Enforcement

Participants discussed the following questions on toll account enrollment and data privacy and enforcement. Key themes that emerged from the discussion groups are included below.

Question: What are the best ways we can encourage you and the communities you serve to sign up for accounts?

Key Themes:

- **Provide CBOs with incentives, compensation, and contracts to share information and get people signed up for accounts.** CBOs are trusted by and accessible to the communities they serve, making them excellent resources to share information about tolling and sign people up for accounts. Participants noted that offering enrollment through CBOs as early in the program as possible could help ODOT enroll more people.
- **Use individual incentives to get people signed up early.** Providing a discount (one-time or annual) or waiving fees for the first three months to one year of the Toll Program could increase the number of people who sign up early. CBOs shared an example of TriMet handing out pre-loaded HopCards.
- **Recommend using financial assistance programs to assist people facing financial difficulties.** CBOs suggested providing income-based payment plans, fee waivers, or discounted rates for qualifying individuals.
- **Partner with the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to sign up for accounts.** CBOs were supportive of offering kiosks and other ways to sign up for a toll account at the DMV.
- **Tradeoffs with in-person and virtual sign-up options.** CBOs recognized the value of signing-up for an account online with a credit card. Participants shared that physical payment options, like a HopCard, may be more convenient for some customers and can help protect someone's identity.
- **Offer sign-up locations in Vancouver.** Participants shared that many customers may live in Vancouver. Offering sign-up locations in Washington and Oregon will be important.

Question: What communications materials or community resources do you think we should use to reach your community to share information about tolls and get people signed up for an account?

Key Themes:

- **Host community summits or outreach workshops to build trust and prevent misinformation.** CBOs suggested planning virtual and in-person events (not hybrid) with interpreters available to share information. Individuals that attend the summit or workshop could become ambassadors for the Toll Program.
- **Provide materials in multiple languages.** CBOs stressed the importance of providing materials that are accessible and available in multiple languages.
- **Share information in digital and physical spaces.** CBOs noted the value of providing information digitally on social media and streaming platforms and providing QR codes on

printed materials to easily access additional information. CBOs also stressed the importance of providing information at places community members frequently access including libraries, community centers, neighborhood associations, events, and rest stops.

Distribute information through schools and colleges. CBOs recommended distributing information through educational institutions to reach both students and parents.

- **Tolling will take time to implement.** CBOs shared that it will take time for the community to understand how to set up an account and pay a toll.

Question: What are ways to get and keep up-to-date information on tolls accounts for the communities you serve?

Key Themes:

- **Offer in-person locations to update information.** Participants recommended allowing customers to update their information at the same places they can sign up for an account or pay a fee. This could include CBOs, kiosks, services centers, and other in-person locations.
- **Provide reminders to update your information.** CBOs shared creative solutions for reminding people to update their information when they move or sell their car. For example, including a reminder to update your address in a welcome packet.

Question: We're ultimately looking to prevent collections but in cases where someone doesn't pay their bills we have rules for enforcement. What could be added or changed to improve accessibility and equity in this process?

Key Themes:

- **Concerns about withholding DMV registration.** CBOs shared that withholding DMV registration may adversely impact underrepresented and marginalized communities. They recognized that withholding registration is a tool for enforcement and highlighted the need to build trust with the community. CBOs urged ODOT to find ways to balance the needs of the system with the interests of the people.
- **Offer payment plans.** CBOs recommended offering payment plans for customers that cannot afford to pay all their toll bills at one time.
- **Waive enforcement fees.** Participants recommended waiving fees if customers take an educational class on how to sign up for an account and pay toll bills. The classes could be offered online or in-person.
- **Provide information about how and where to sign up with the toll bill.** CBOs stressed the need to pair bill collection with education on how to sign up for an account.

Participants asked the following clarifying questions during the discussions:

- Question: Will Washington residents have to pay the toll?

Response, ODOT: Anyone using Oregon roads and/or bridges that have tolls will receive a bill for a toll.

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- Question: Will someone have to pay late fees if they do not pay their toll on time?

Response, ODOT: Several fees could be accrued if someone does not pay a toll on time. Fees will be set during the rulemaking process.

- Question: Can ODOT work with the DMV to suspend someone's license if they don't pay?

Response, ODOT: ODOT is considering the following factors before escalating to collections, penalties, or DMV registration hold: the number and cost of unpaid tolls or fees, enrollment in the low-income toll program or financial hardship, other hardship reasons (medical emergency, bereavement, military service, etc.).

Next Steps

Hannah Williams shared opportunities for further engagement.

- ODOT is looking for CBO events to attend this summer and will pay for a table.
- ODOT is conducting interviews with CBOs to gather feedback on important community resources and to understand how to best engage with communities moving forward. Invitations for interviews will be sent out in June.
- ODOT will host additional CBO discussion groups on low-income discounts and exemptions late summer and fall 2023.
- The RMPP Draft Environmental Assessment public comment period is anticipated to take place in fall/winter 2023.
- CBOs and the public will have the opportunity to share input on draft rules during the rulemaking public comment period and public hearing in December 2023 and January 2024.

Closing

Erika McCalpine and Hannah Williams thanked the attendees for their participation and closed the meeting.

Post Meeting Materials:

- Evaluation
- Answers to questions posed in the discussion
- Presentation