

# Regional Mobility Pricing Project

## Executive Summary for the Engagement and Comment Summary for the Scoping Period: November 2022 – January 2023

April 2023



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## Executive Summary

In November 2022, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) initiated a 50-day scoping period for the Regional Mobility Pricing Project (Project) Environmental Assessment. Due to the multiple holidays that fell within the scoping period, ODOT provided a longer comment period than is typical. ODOT and FHWA invited participating agencies, consulting tribes, and the public to give their input at the beginning of the environmental analysis, called “scoping.” The purpose of scoping is to invite public, tribal, and other stakeholder input on the range—or “scope”—of community and environmental issues to study.

This report summarizes scoping input received from nearly 4,500 comments from November 18, 2022, to January 6, 2023. Scoping input will inform updates to the Draft Purpose and Need Statement and Proposed Action. ODOT and FHWA will also consider scoping input to shape the specific approaches for how they will study community and environmental topics during the environmental analysis and project development.

### About the Project

The Regional Mobility Pricing Project would manage travel demand and traffic congestion on I-5 and I-205 in the Portland metropolitan area through congestion pricing. Congestion pricing is a key tool in ODOT’s urban mobility strategy to reduce traffic jams and provide safer and more predictable trips for travelers. Through planning, public input, and analysis over the past several years, ODOT and FHWA developed a [draft Purpose and Need](#) for the Project as well as a project concept, or [Proposed Action](#).

### Engagement Approach

During the scoping period, the Project Team shared Project background materials, conducted outreach, and participated

Figure ES-1 Map of the Regional Mobility Pricing Project and I-205 Toll Project



#### WHAT IS CONGESTION PRICING?

The term "congestion pricing" describes a type of variable-rate tolling that improves mobility, travel times, and reliability by charging a higher price during peak traffic periods and at congested locations. The higher fee (or “toll”) encourages some drivers to use other travel options such as carpools or transit or change their travel time to other less congested times of the day or to not make the trip at all. Even a small percent of drivers choosing not to drive during rush hour allows for faster and more reliable travel. Congestion pricing is in use around the United States and the world as an effective congestion management tool.

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in public meetings and events to share information about the Project and comment opportunities. These activities provided an opportunity for the public, tribes, and agencies to provide their input on the following:

- The [Draft Purpose and Need Statement](#), which includes the Project goals and objectives.
- The [Proposed Action](#), which describes the congestion pricing concept to be studied.
- The [community and environmental resources](#) to be evaluated in the upcoming environmental analysis.
- [Other planning studies and supporting documents](#) that were developed during the initial planning phase of the Project in 2021 and 2022.

Methods and outcomes for outreach and engagement are summarized in Table ES-1. The table includes the number of people engaged throughout the scoping period (November 18 – January 6), unless otherwise noted. During the scoping period, the Project Team also applied strategies to inform and involve historically and currently excluded and underserved communities, as summarized in Section 4, including a continued partnership with community engagement liaisons and translation and interpretation.

**Table ES-1 Engagement Activities by the Numbers**

Activity	Total Engagement <i>(approximate)</i>
<b>Public Outreach</b>	
Public webinar viewers <sup>1</sup>	288
Scoping webpage visits	7,223
People engaged at briefings <sup>2</sup>	108
People engaged at tabling events <sup>3</sup>	185
Project video views <sup>4</sup>	801
Project fact sheets views	113
<b>Partner Agency Outreach</b>	
Participating Agencies invited to participate and comment	33
Tribes invited to participate and comment	8
Partner agency webinar participation	55
<b>Advertising and Notification</b>	
ODOT social media post views	155,289
Print and online advertising impressions	347,803
Recipients of project email updates	26,551
Recipients of outreach toolkits	300
Project-related media stories	15

<sup>1</sup> Includes participants in the webinar, livestream views, and views of the webinar recordings.

<sup>2</sup> Includes briefings in the months prior to the scoping period when scoping information was shared.

<sup>3</sup> Includes events from the months prior to the scoping period when scoping information was shared.

<sup>4</sup> Includes total views through February 2023.

## Key Takeaways

These outreach and engagement activities resulted in nearly 4,500 comments submitted during the scoping period through the scoping comment form, the Oregon Tolling online comment form, email, voicemail, and letters.<sup>5</sup> Many commenters provided broader feedback about the Project or the Oregon Toll Program in general. A few commenters, particularly Participating Agencies, provided specific feedback on Project elements or the environmental analysis.

More general comment themes include:

- Concerns about the proposed Project and requests for more detailed information, including anticipated rates.
- Doubt that the Project would effectively reduce congestion and is the right solution to raise revenue.
- Skepticism and questions about the need for, and plans to use, Project revenue.
- Concerns about financial and economic impacts from congestion pricing.
- Concerns with traffic rerouting off I-5 and I-205 and potential impacts to local communities.
- Questions and concerns about how people experiencing low incomes may be more heavily impacted by congestion pricing compared to middle- and high-income earners.
- Belief that the proposed Project would have disproportionate impacts on communities that rely on I-5 and I-205 and may affect certain groups more than others.
- Questions and concerns about the decision-making process to date and how public input has or would meaningfully shape the proposed Project.

Key themes specific to Project elements and the environmental analysis include:

- **Project Purpose and Need.** Some agencies and stakeholders expressed interest in modifying the Project purpose to be focused on reducing vehicle miles traveled and managing travel demand.
- **Proposed Action.** Many commenters expressed an interest in not implementing congestion pricing. Some commenters also requested that the Project not price all lanes and that congestion pricing be implemented on key locations on I-5 and I-205 rather than the entire lengths of these roadways.
- **Community and Environmental Topics to Study in the Environmental Analysis.** Commenters expressed interest in a robust analysis on several topics, including financial and economic impacts, rerouting impacts, and equity, greenhouse gas, and air quality.

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<sup>5</sup> Letters included written documents sent electronically that were on formal letterhead.

## Next Steps

The purpose of this report is to summarize and document all comments received during the Project scoping period. ODOT and FHWA are reviewing and considering these comments to inform the environmental analysis. Specific changes ODOT and FHWA are making include the following:

- Addressing input from commenters, including Participating Agencies, that the project needs to encourage reductions in vehicle miles travelled in the region. Revisions to the **Purpose and Need Statement** will clarify the intent of the project to manage travel demand and congestion and that a successful outcome of this would be a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.
- Addressing comments that the project, as currently proposed, is overly complicated as well as skepticism that it will effectively manage traffic congestion. Revisions to the **Proposed Action** include adding more detail on the congestion pricing fee structure that will be used in the upcoming NEPA analysis. These details are intended to provide greater transparency and make it easier to explain how the project will effectively manage traffic and how people would experience the project once implemented. Adding details on the fee structure also addresses comments that said pricing locations should focus on the most congested segments of the interstate highways.

ODOT and FHWA are also developing **environmental study methods** to incorporate a variety of feedback on how to analyze project benefits and adverse effects for the Environmental Assessment. For example, ODOT and FHWA are developing comprehensive transportation study methods that examine safety and rerouting in response to concerns about diversion to local streets and the associated effects in local communities. The Project Team will share information about the specific ways they have considered and incorporated comments into the project later this year and through publication of the environmental document. ODOT will also share responses to other common questions and concerns to help explain what they have heard from the public and stakeholders, what information is available, and the process for analysis and decision-making on these topics.

ODOT and FHWA will analyze the effects of the proposed project and publish the results for review and comment in an Environmental Assessment, expected in late 2023. Solutions, or mitigations, will be proposed as needed to address impacts. The Environmental Assessment is an important step to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and obtain a federal decision about congestion pricing on I-5 and I-205. As the Regional Mobility Pricing Project moves forward, the Project Team will continue to share Project updates, host outreach and engagement activities, and provide opportunities for feedback.