



Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis

Public comment summary

May 1 – June 18, 2018

Purpose of this report

This report summarizes public feedback received as part of the Portland Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis between May 1, 2018 and June 18, 2018.

Oregon House Bill 2017—"Keep Oregon Moving"—directed the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) to develop a proposal for implementing value pricing on I-5 and I-205 in the Portland metro area. Value pricing, also called congestion pricing or variable rate tolling, uses fees or tolls to manage congestion, resulting in faster, more reliable and predictable trips.

At the OTC's direction, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) formed a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) to analyze the feasibility of implementing congestion pricing on I-5 and I-205. The PAC was composed of 25 representatives from local, state, regional and federal agencies; the business community; transportation and environmental advocacy organizations; and environmental justice organizations. The PAC met six times between November 2017 and June 2018 to learn about congestion pricing, review the results of technical analysis, and prepare a recommendation to the OTC regarding: where pricing could be implemented; what types of pricing should be considered; and strategies for mitigating potential undesired impacts.

Throughout the feasibility analysis, ODOT conducted public outreach to hear comments, concerns and questions from the community. Engagement activities during this period included one PAC meeting. Members of the public had the opportunity to provide comment via email, an online comment form, mail, a voicemail line or in-person at the PAC meeting. Results of previous community engagement as part of the feasibility analysis are summarized in the following reports:

- [Winter 2017-2018 Community Engagement Summary Report](#)
- [Title VI/Environmental Justice Engagement Summary Report](#)
- [Spring 2018 Community Engagement Summary Report](#)

Analysis methodology

Between May 1 and June 18, 2018, 73 comments and letters were submitted via email to the PAC inbox, the general Value Pricing email inbox, via the online comment form or verbally at PAC meeting #5. The commenters represent members of the public, as well as some elected officials who submitted formal letters to the PAC. A few of the letters received were form letters signed by multiple individuals.

Demographic information was not collected during this comment period. Most commenters did not disclose where they live, though some did mention this voluntarily in their comments.

After June 18, the project team read comments and categorized them by topic. The project team applied a “code,” or descriptive tag, to comments according to the topics mentioned in the communication (see Table 1 for complete list). Most comments discussed multiple topics, and in these cases, the project team applied all relevant codes. Team members applied each topic code only once per comment. The following summarizes the results of this content analysis.

Key Themes

The top five themes represented in the comments are consistent with top themes heard since the first winter outreach period for the project in 2017. These include the fairness of congestion pricing; where and how revenue will be used and how existing transportation funding is spent; the relationship between pricing and transit; opinions about roadway and transportation system expansion; and trust in government.

During this period, the number of comments associated with the most common topics was greater than in past comment periods, indicating more commenters are talking about similar themes. This suggests the public conversation is narrowing as people become more informed about the project.

Other key takeaways:

- Views are mixed as to whether congestion pricing will effectively ease congestion. Some feel pricing is important to implement to address our region's growing congestion challenges, while several others disagree that value pricing will reduce congestion without additional lane capacity
- Fairness comments take on two forms: lack of unpriced alternatives and a perception that charging for existing (i.e. already paid for) roadways is unfair
- Many commenters who identified themselves as Southwest Washingtonians said they do not find tolling fair because they already pay Oregon income taxes. However, in Oregon, income taxes are not used to fund transportation improvements

In the table below, the number of comments associated with each code is summarized. Illustrative quotes are provided for codes that were mentioned in more than 10 comments.

Table 1: Topics of greatest interest

Topic	Number of comments coded	Percentage of comments	Major points made
Fairness	25	34%	<p>"We've already paid for the roads."</p> <p>"Clark County residents don't have a say, and yet we will be paying the tolls."</p> <p>"I don't have other road or transit choices."</p>
Revenue and taxes	20	27%	<p>"Identify and fund specific planned regional system improvements."</p> <p>"Whatever funds are raised need to be designated to the additional lane on I-205."</p>
Transit	20	27%	<p>"You've chosen to spend billions to create and support mass transit which has done little to impact traffic."</p> <p>"Ultimately, this should be a focus on looking at mass transit, instead of adding lanes or reducing the number of cars."</p>
Expanding existing roadways	19	26%	<p>"It's too late to bring in tolls without adding capacity."</p> <p>"If congestion pricing revenue is lockbox earmarked for new ROAD construction, well, then that might change my opinion."</p>
Trust	14	19%	<p>"I pay way more in taxes than I ever have and with all the people moving here, I don't see how funding should be a problem."</p> <p>"I feel this is veiled effort to get more tax money."</p>
Mitigation strategies	13	18%	<p>"Using revenue to pay for more express buses, reduced tolls or incentives for expanded carpooling."</p>
Diversion	12	16%	<p>"Tolling will put an undue burden on those who live near the interstate. Drivers heading south to downtown would get off at Rosa Parks and take Interstate Ave."</p> <p>"Many streets are already dangerously congested as Waze and Google Maps divert highway traffic onto neighborhood streets."</p>
Congestion observations	11	15%	<p>"The lanes, at the busiest times, from south of Rosa Parks to the bridge are already backed up so far that I cannot imagine anyone wanting to pay to use a lane that moves minimally or not any faster."</p> <p>"Everyday experience demonstrates both I-5 and I-205 do not have enough capacity to meet travel demand. The impact this has on travel region-wide and state-wide is clear."</p>

Equity	10	14%	See complete comments
Project scope and public engagement	10	14%	See complete comments
Personal financial impacts	8	11%	See complete comments
Adding additional roadways	7	10%	See complete comments
General economic impacts	7	10%	See complete comments
Congestion impacts	6	8%	See complete comments
Environmental impacts	5	7%	See complete comments