



I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Low-Income Toll Study

Project Update – Introduction

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I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Low-Income Toll Study

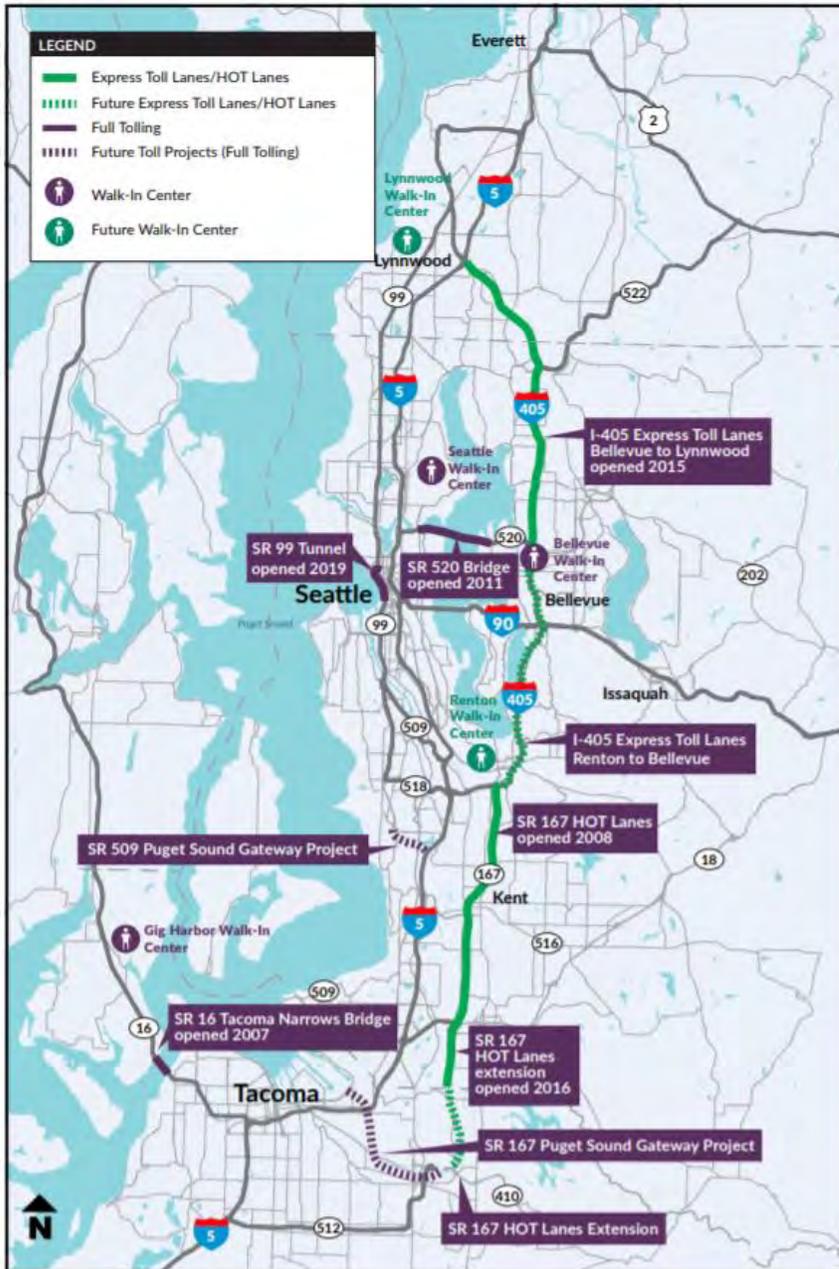
- The Legislature directed the WSTC to undertake the study in the 2019 Legislative session. A final report is due by June 2021.
- The study is to assess the impacts of tolling on low-income drivers of the I-405/ SR 167 ETLs and recommend possible approaches to mitigating such impacts.



I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Low-Income Toll Study

- This study will include the following:
 - National scan of implemented and considered low-income tolling programs.
 - Research of existing capacities for implementing a low-income toll program for the facilities, and of existing financial and performance commitments.
 - Assessment of low-income populations who use the I-405 / SR 167 ETL facilities, and their potential benefits / challenges from a low-income toll program.
 - Evaluation of impacts on tolling policies, traffic performance, revenues, costs, operations, and enforcement.
 - Final report with recommendations to the Legislature.



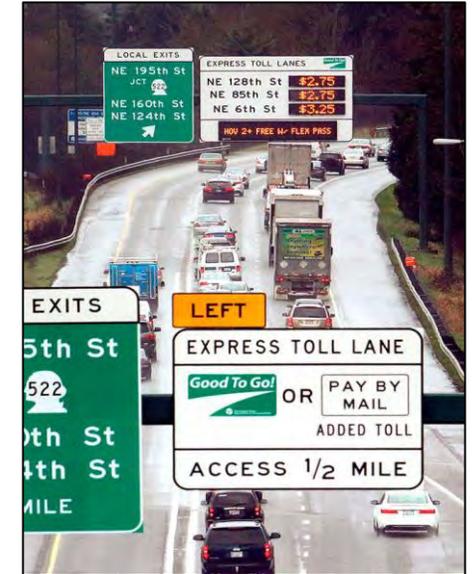


I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes

- Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) include two of the five existing state toll facilities.
- I-405 ETLs opened in 2015 from Bellevue to Lynnwood.
- SR 167 HOT Lanes / ETLs opened in 2008 from Renton to Auburn, with southern extension opening in 2016.
- By about 2025, ETLs will be extended on I-405 from Bellevue to Renton and on SR 167 to Puyallup, creating about 50 mile ETL corridor.

I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes

- Toll Rates
 - Change dynamically based on congestion, with intent to keep traffic flowing smoothly.
 - In effect 5am-7pm each weekday on I-405 ETLs and from 5am-7pm daily on SR 167 ETLs, except for designated holidays.
 - Range between \$0.75 – \$10.00 on I-405; \$0.50 – 9.00 on SR 167.
 - Average toll rates (June 2019) are \$4.50 on I-405; \$3.90 on SR 167.
- HOV Policies
 - I-405: HOV 3+ are toll-free at all times, while 2+ are toll-free only during off-peak hours (weekends and 9am-3pm on weekdays).
 - SR 167: HOV 2+ are toll-free at all times.



Study Milestones



- Jan/Feb 2020: Begin research and assessment of low-income programs
- May 2020: Status report to WSTC
- July 2020: Mid-Study status report by consultants
- **October 2020: Selection criteria presented to WSTC for input.**
- Dec / Jan 2020: WSTC selects toll program options for further consideration.
- Winter / Spring 2021: Update to Legislature and presentation of preliminary report to WSTC.
- June 2021: Final Report presented to WSTC and Legislature.

Low-Income Toll Program Study for I-405 & SR 167 Express Toll Lanes

Presented to:



Proposed Selection Criteria and Program Options
Gabor Debreczeni, Project Manager
October 20th, 2020



- This study evaluates “discounted tolls and other similar programs for low-income drivers” on the I-405 and SR 167 corridors, considering the benefits and detriments of such programs to low-income drivers, other corridors users, other local residents, and the potential implementing agencies of such a program.
- This presentation includes discussion of:
 - **Proposed low-income program options**, including both discount components and non-discount ancillary components.
 - **Suggested metrics and scoring scheme** to select discount components for two program options that will undergo a more rigorous evaluation as a part of this project’s Task 7.

| Project Phase | Relationship to Options and Metrics |
|---------------|--|
| Tasks 1 – 2 | Research and interviews that suggested the metrics, program options, and frameworks considered for present task |
| Task 3 | Agency workshops that suggested further locally important metrics for consideration and narrowed list of program options |
| Task 4 | Gathering of knowledge of financial aspects, will be used primarily for scoring in Tasks 6 – 7 |
| Task 6 | Selection of program options to be scored, and selection and weighting of metrics , to lead into scoring of program options |
| Task 7 | Two chosen programs based on Task 6 scoring to be evaluated in greater detail |



- The proposed low-income tolling program options have two components:
 - A discount component, **to be scored and narrowed.**
 - Ancillary components being recommended that apply to all program options.
- These program options are the result of two stages of analysis:
 - In Tasks 1 and 2, the team conducted a broad sweep of **low-income tolling programs that had been implemented, suggested, and considered by other agencies and national researchers.**
 - In Task 3, a workshop was conducted with **various local stakeholders**, and this workshop **narrowed the list of program possibilities to the most promising subset.**

Proposed Program Options (Discount Component)

| # | Type | Commentary | Source |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | Percentage discount off each toll trip | | Workshop, Task 2 (SFCTA) |
| 2 | Fixed discount off each toll trip | Incentivizes off-peak travel, and short ETL trips. | Workshop, Task 2 (VDOT) |
| 3 | Percentage or fixed discount, limited number of trips | Limits disproportionate use of program by intensive users. | Team suggestion |
| 4 | Fixed amount of toll credit by period of time (such as monthly, quarterly, or annually) | Different benefit levels reflect policy choices: is program for exceptional trips (lower) or regular commutes (higher)? | Workshop, Task 2 (MnDOT) |
| 5 | Fixed number of free toll trips by period of time (such as monthly, quarterly, or annually) | Program would encourage use of ETLs for infrequent high-value trips (medical, childcare, late to work, etc.) | Workshop, Task 1 (WSP) |
| 6 | Lower maximum toll rate | Benefit not persistent if maximum toll raised or waived. | Workshop |

- Each type is likely to have three options to be scored: low, medium, and high (for a total of ~15-20 options).
- The precise values that will be suggested to the Commission are being discussed now between the Consultant team, WSTC staff, and the stakeholder group.



- Details on **ancillary components** are still being discussed by the project team but will be presented to the Commission prior to the Commission's selection of program options.
- **A survey** is being conducted of low-income users of the corridor to support this discussion, including **input on the most convenient methods of enrollment** (as well as discount option preferences).
- On-going consideration of ancillary components includes:
 - Recommended enrollment and verification processes to apply to any of the discount program options chosen.
 - Other aspects for any low-income program, such as:
 - Free transponders
 - An advisory panel of users and stakeholders
 - Accessibility for people with disabilities
 - Visual-heavy and translated materials
 - Geographically equitable distribution of enrollment locations (if physical).

- The **program options** discussed so far were selected to be **aligned with the legislative language** calling for this study, **as well as** Washington State **transportation policy goals**:
 - “...a study of discounted tolls and other similar programs for low-income drivers...”
 - “...preservation, safety, mobility, environment, stewardship, and economic vitality...”
- Within this baseline, the metrics shown on following slides are meant to allow us to choose between the eligible program options.

- We gathered all suggested metrics from Tasks 1-4 and subjectively gave each a low-medium-high ranking in two categories:
 - (1) importance and relevance to this study and
 - (2) feasibility of evaluation of this metric for the Task 6/7 rankings.
- Those metrics scoring at least medium on both categories were eligible to be selected.
 - We further subjectively pruned the list to select the most important/relevant metrics. These selected metrics are shown in this presentation.
 - Metrics are categorized, but the categories only serve to organize the metrics for ease of discussion.

- The metric weights add up to 100%.
 - The metric weights were chosen primarily based on the frequency and emphasis with which the ideas they represent were identified in research conducted for Tasks 1-4. Sources included:
 - Equity toolkits (Task 1)
 - Interviews with program implementers (Task 2)
 - Workshops with local stakeholders (Task 3)
 - Research of financial & operational considerations (Task 4)
- We have found in the past that it's helpful to set up a first suggestion for the weighting. We expect the Commission (and other stakeholders) to make significant requests and suggestions on how to alter the weighting.

Category: End-user – affordability

Affordability considers the ability of users to afford the ETLs when they would like to use them; we also consider the benefit received from the program as a part of this category.

Current total weight: 15%

| Metric | Description | Weight |
|--|--|---------------|
| Net \$ benefit per household, for low-income corridor users | Considers the average benefit received by all low-income corridor users, regardless of whether they use the program. | 10% |
| Decrease in how regressive tolls are for low-income users of the ETLs | Evaluates the degree to which low-income users of the ETLs pay a greater share of their income to do so. | 3% |
| Increase in generalized cost of travel (tolls + time) for current non-low-income users of the ETLs | Considers the direct cost of program to current non-low-income users of the ETLs. | 2% |



Category: End-user – availability

Availability considers whether the program is available when users would like to make a trip using the ETLs; this category also considers the impact on non-program users in all lanes of the corridor, whether low-income or not.

Current total weight: 20%

| Metric | Description | Weight |
|--|---|---------------|
| Free or very low cost availability of reliable trip for infrequent high-value trips, e.g. medical or childcare | Can low-income users access the reliability benefit of the ETLs in a low-stress, low-planning manner? | 7% |
| Program sustainability | Can the program be sustained permanently? | 6% |
| Share of time savings by low-income travelers | To what extent does the program make the distribution of time savings more equitable? | 5% |
| Express lanes travel speeds (for both drivers and transit vehicle performance) | This affects both program users and non-users. | 2% |

Category: End-user – accommodation and accessibility

Accommodation and accessibility considers the ease of enrollment in the program, as well as the ability of users to access destinations.

Current total weight: 5%

| Metric | Description | Weight |
|--|--|---------------|
| Ease of payment of tolls (i.e. varying methods of payment) | The programs may change the options low-income users have of paying for tolls. | 5% |

Category: End-user (and other stakeholders) – acceptability

Acceptability concerns whether the users are comfortable with the program from outreach to enrollment to use, as well as the broader impact on surrounding low-income communities.

Current total weight: 15%

| Metric | Description | Weight |
|--|---|---------------|
| Easily explained to decision-making stakeholders and eventual participants | Is the program, and its value, easy to understand? | 10% |
| Burden to low-income users due to account minimums and automatic reloading | The program may change how users interact with account balances and non-payment issues. | 5% |

Category: Implementing agency – cost

Current total weight: 20%

| Metric | Weight |
|--|---------------|
| Reduction in total toll payments as a result of program | 10% |
| Cost of program implementation (excl. toll impact and incl. temporary or permanent staff needs for enrollment) | 5% |
| Ease of program operation for implementing agency(s) | 5% |

Category: Implementing agency – non-cost logistical difficulty

Current total weight: 25%

| Metric | Description | Weight |
|---|--|---------------|
| Are the stakeholders (legislature, implementing agencies, etc.) willing to support this option? | Stakeholder buy-in is a key aspect of program sustainability. | 10% |
| Operational impact re: fraud and abuse | Is correct enrollment and enforcement clearly achievable? | 5% |
| Other operational impacts on ETLs | Does the program cause other issues for managing ETL operations or demand? | 5% |
| Is the program supported by, or planned for, within current systems? | Can the upcoming tolling infrastructure easily support this program? | 5% |

- Now, we are primarily seeking Commission feedback on:
 - Whether to add additional metrics from the longer list (or elsewhere). Alternately, whether to remove any metrics currently suggested.
 - Whether to change any of the weights, either by category, or by metric.
 - The high-level structure of program options to be scored and recommended.
- Once the feedback process is complete, we will return to the Commission with concrete program options and will then use the results to score and rank the program option discount elements.

Thank you! Questions or comments?

WSP USA

