



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

Project Update – Introduction

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Washington State Transportation Commission

November 17, 2020

WSTC Commission Meeting

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

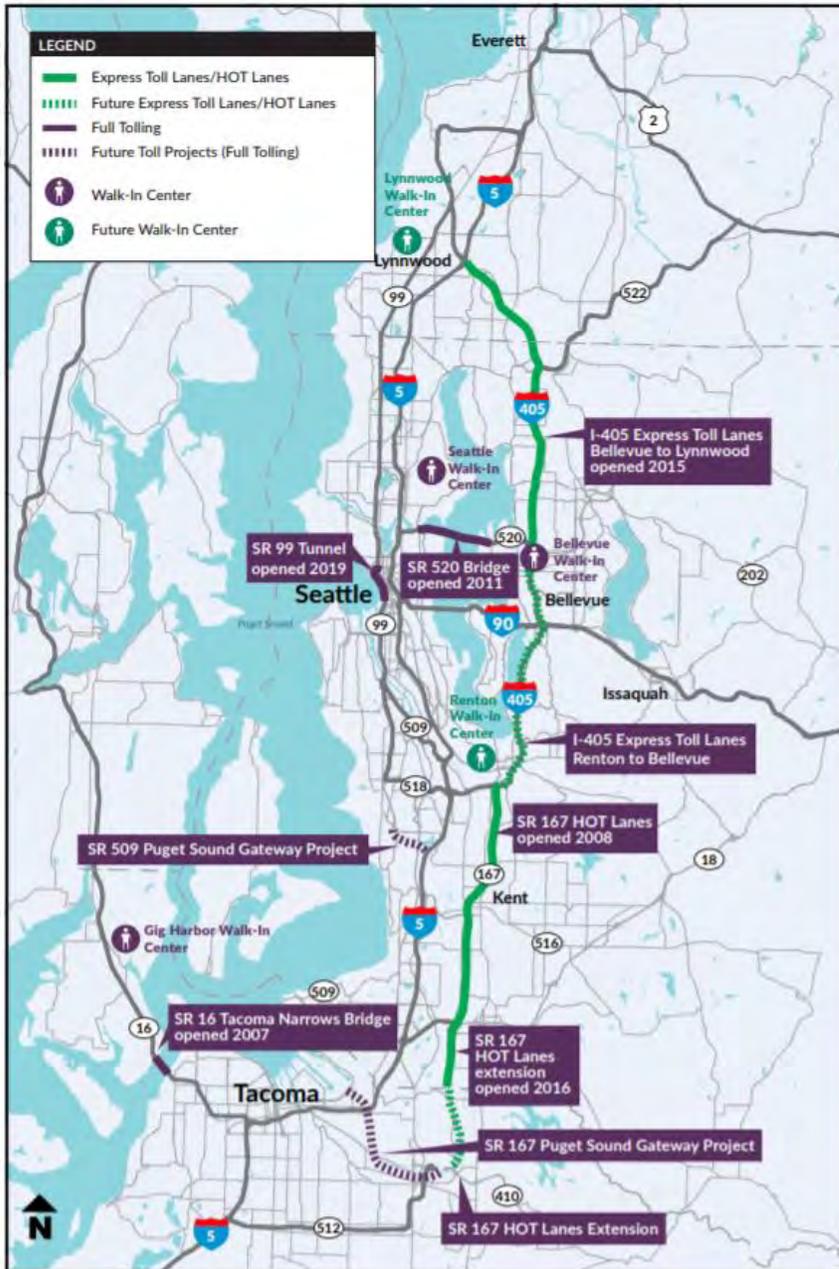
- The Legislature directed the WSTC to undertake the study in the 2019 Legislative session. A final report is due by June 2021.
- The study is to assess the impacts of tolling on low-income drivers of the I-405/ SR 167 ETLs and recommend possible approaches to mitigating such impacts.



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

- This study includes 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.
 - Survey of low-income residents in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties about proposed discount options and use of the I-405 and SR 167 corridors.
 - Evaluation of impacts on tolling policies, traffic performance, revenues, costs, operations, and enforcement.
 - Final report with recommendations to the Legislature.



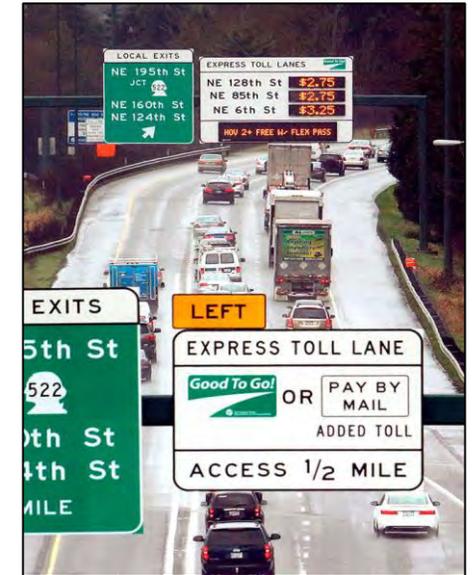


I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes

- 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.
- **November 2020: Proposed program options presented to WSTC.**
- 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 Program Options

Gabor Debreczeni, Project Manager, WSP

Catherine Larson, Project Team, Larson Consulting Associates

November 17th, 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.

**Program
Options
Selection
Process**



National Scan: Two operational low-income toll programs

- Virginia DOT Toll Relief Program - Elizabeth River Tunnels
 - \$0.75 discount per toll transaction after first eight trips per month for low-income residents of two towns adjacent to the toll tunnels.
 - Qualitative idea: benefit for local low-income residents who frequently need to use the toll tunnels.
- LA Metro ExpressLanes Low-Income Assistance Plan
 - One-time \$25 credit, as well as waiver of \$1/month recurring transponder fee for low-income county residents
 - Qualitative idea: to make acquiring and holding a transponder free.
- Qualitative ideas from both programs carried forward in our analysis.
- We have also found five other agencies currently considering implementation of low-income toll programs.

Stakeholder Workshops - Summary

Purpose:

- Identify and document key agencies' capacities for implementing or supporting options for a potential low-income toll discount program

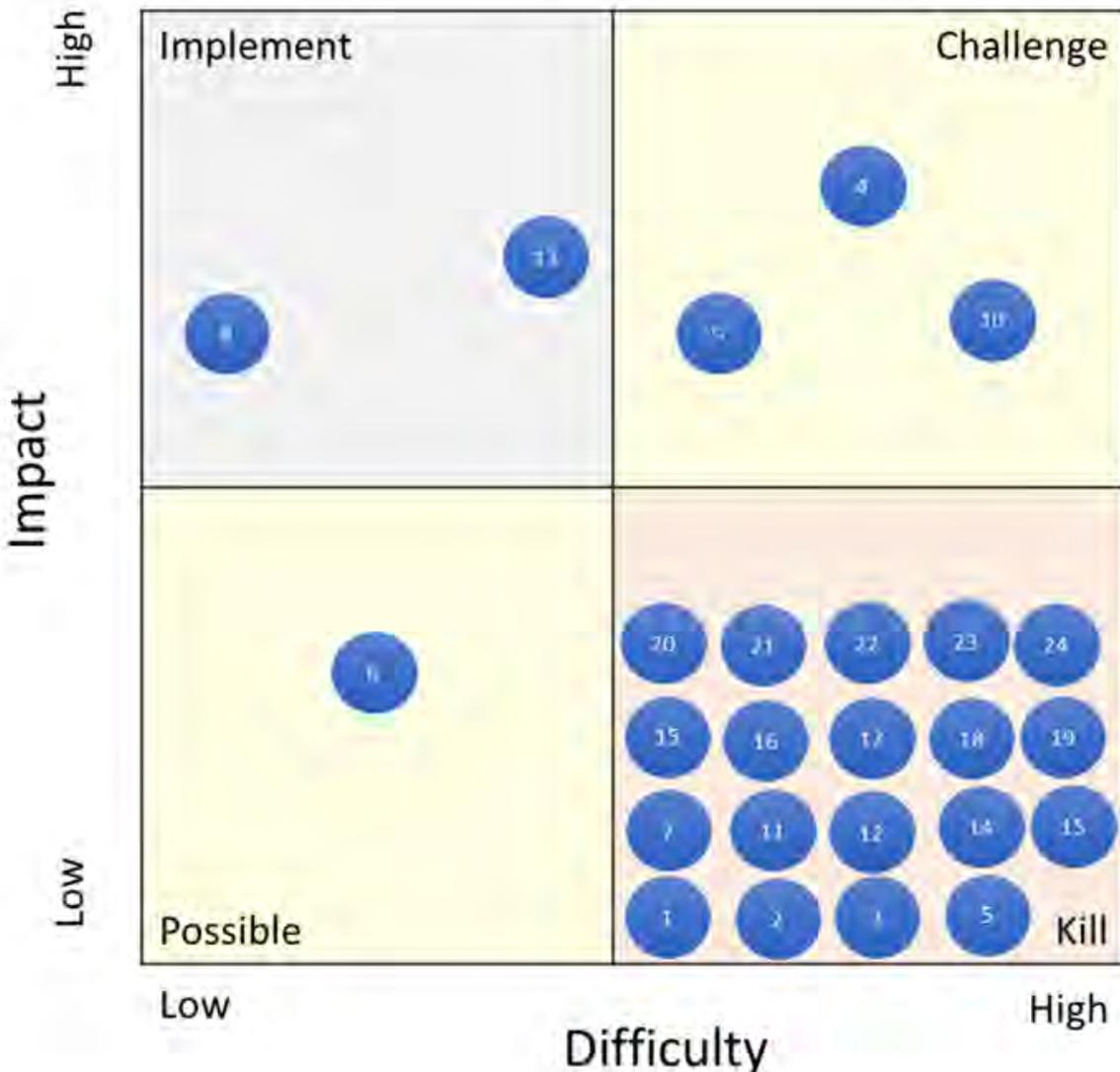
Participants:

- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
- King County Metro
- Washington State Transportation Commission

Discount Options:

- Toll Rate Discounts
- Non-toll Rate Discounts
- Account-based Adjustments

APPENDIX B: PICK CHART ANALYSIS



Potential Program Elements

1. Subsidy through EBT (K)
2. Low income benefits offered only with geographic eligibility (K)
3. Discount after certain number of transactions (K)
4. Percentage discount (C)
5. Percentage discount up to a maximum of \$XX (K)
6. Flat discount (\$X) per transaction (P)
7. Flat discount per year (non-rolling) (K)
8. Free transponder (I)
9. Fixed allotment of toll credit per month, quarter or year (C)
10. Number of free transactions per month, quarter or year (C)
11. Credits that only kick in after certain dollar amount (K)
12. Discounts that only kick in after certain dollar amount (K)
13. Lower max toll rate for low-income (I)
14. Cap tolls paid per day (K)
15. Cap tolls paid per month (K)
16. Low cost monthly pass for unlimited toll use (K)
17. Transit usage results in toll credits for future usage and tolling trips (K)
18. Peak-hour only discount (K)
19. Off-peak only discount (K)
20. Matching credit with prepaid tolls paid (K)
21. Provide a discount by fee type ("Pay by mail" and Pay By Plate fees) (K)

Enrollment and Eligibility – Proposed Recommendation

- We recommend that **the low-income toll program be open to all Washington State residents who** receive state economic services from DSHS, and thus **have a unique client ID through DSHS.**
 - In practice, this approach mostly implies that all Washington State **residents with household income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level** would be eligible for the program.
 - **This threshold is commonly used**, either exactly or approximately, in the comparable programs we found nationwide.
 - The most significant benefit of this approach is **dramatically simplified eligibility verification**. This is often the most logistically complicated aspect of means-based programs, and DSHS has developed a process that allows other agencies to use DSHS’s existing verification results in a turnkey manner.
 - The **combination** of verification for multiple programs also **lowers the hurdles to participation**, the time needed, and the cost for program users.

**Toll Discount
Component of
Program**

**Proposed
Options**

Type	Benefit	Objective
Percentage discount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% discount • 50% discount • 75% discount 	Mostly benefit low-income users who are regular commuters during peak times.
Fixed discount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0.50 discount per trip • \$2.00 discount per trip • \$5.00 discount per trip 	Mostly benefit low-income users who travel at off-peak times, and those who make short ETL trips.
Fixed toll credit (per month, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of average amount spent on ETLs by all users • 100% of average • 150% of average 	Allows users choice of whether they would use program for occasional high-cost trips, or a larger number of low-cost trips.
Fixed number of free toll trips (per month, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three free trips monthly • Ten free trips monthly • Twenty free trips monthly 	Program would encourage use of ETLs for infrequent high-value trips (medical, childcare, late to work, etc.)
Lower maximum toll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% lower maximum • 50% lower maximum • 75% lower maximum 	Allows low-income users to plan to use ETLs with greater frequency during peak times.



Standard Program Components - Proposed Recommendation

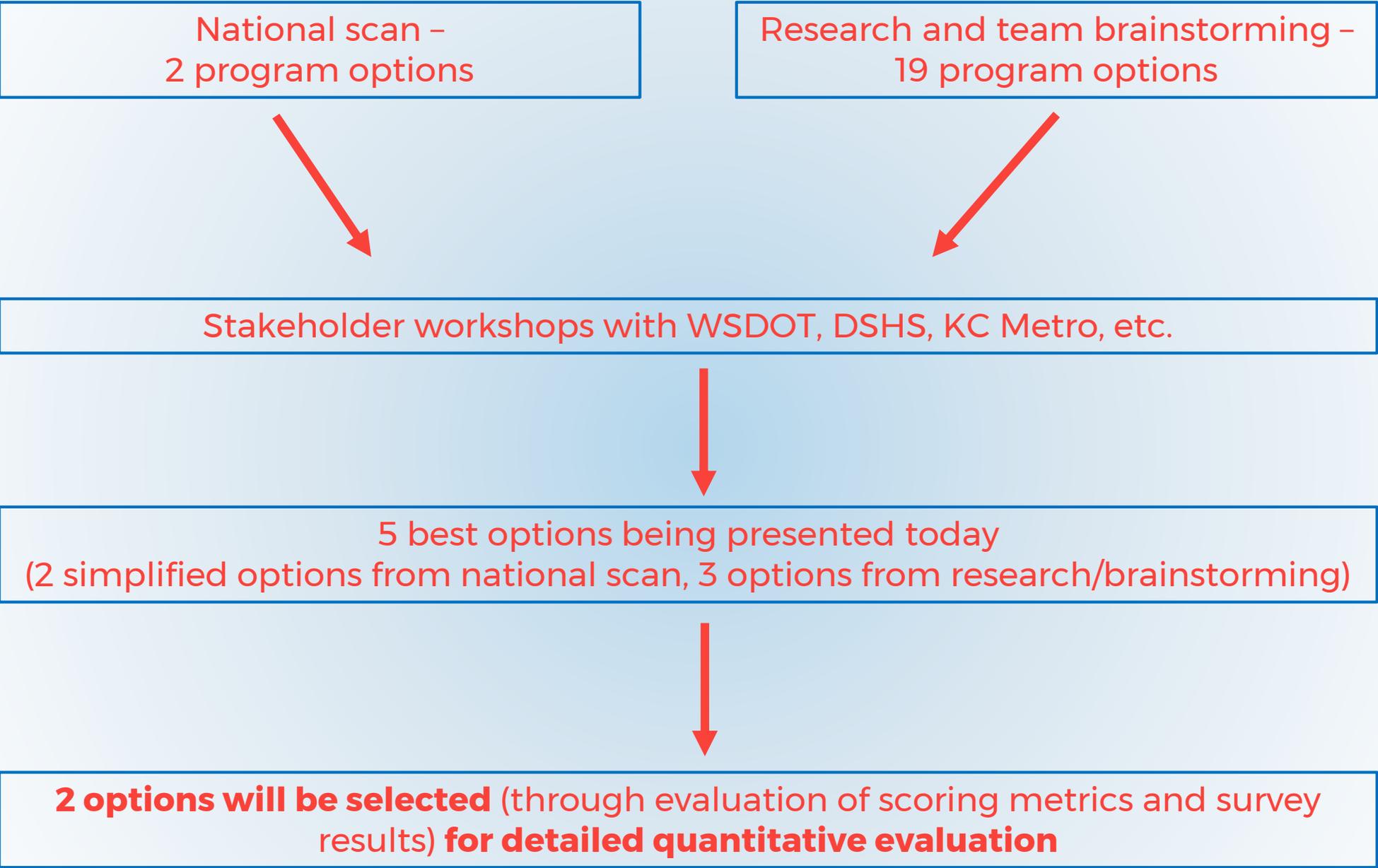
- We preliminarily recommend that beyond the discount component being chosen, the low-income toll program contain the following elements:

Proposed Standard Program Components
Provide a free Good To Go! pass to program users
The program to have an advisory panel , including low-income users of the program, that is diverse with regard to race, geography of residence, age and gender
The program documentation to be available in all primary languages for the region, with live translation available for other languages used in region
Program information to be shown in visual formats as much as possible
The entire enrollment process (physical and remote) to be accommodating for users with disabilities
Physical program enrollment locations to be broadly geographically accessible

Low-Income Toll Program Survey - Summary

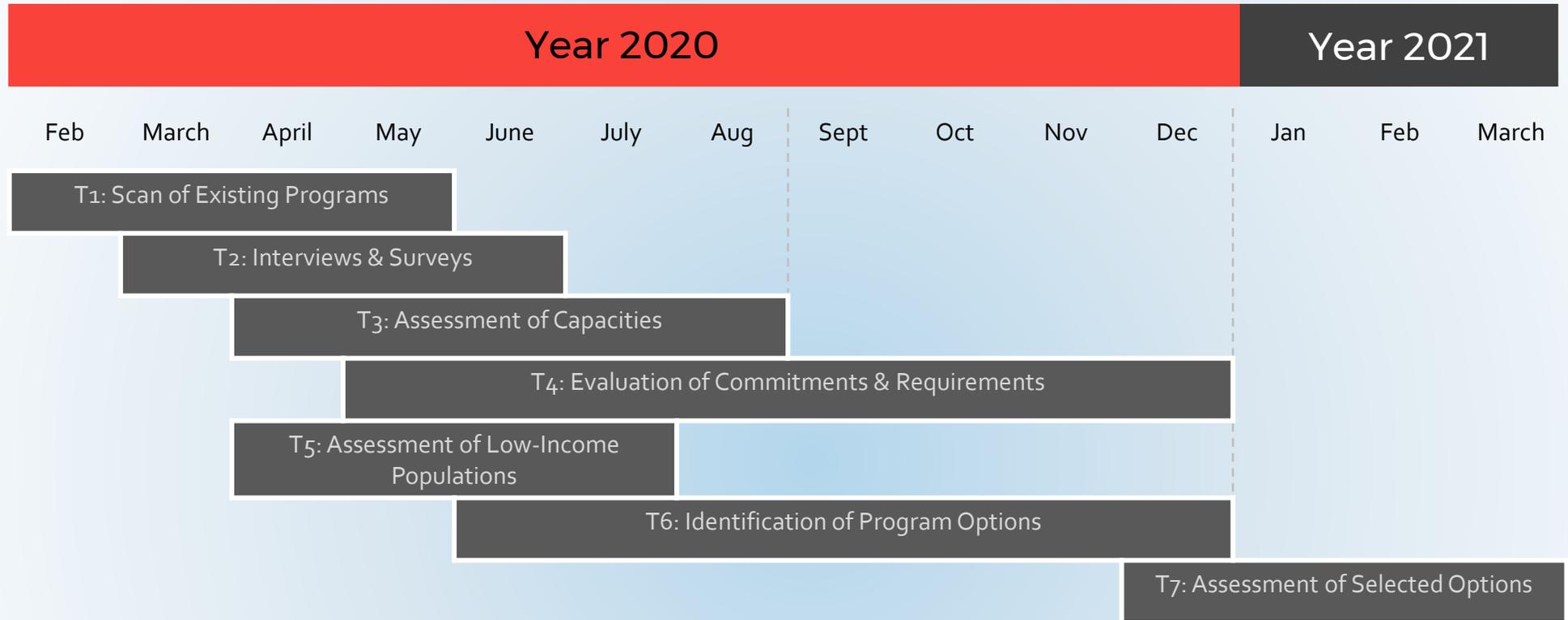
- Stakeholder Workshops Identified the need for input from potential users of a low-income discount program for the I-405 and SR 167 Express Toll Lanes.
- Surveying 20,000 low-income residents in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties within about 10 miles of the I-405 and SR 167 Express Toll Lanes corridor.
- Soliciting feedback on various toll discount program options and use of the I-405 and SR 167 corridors.
- Survey began November 10th, with response accepted through November 20th.
- Survey responses will be used only for this study and contribute to the assessment of the five discount toll program options for Commission consideration.

Next Steps



WHAT'S NEXT?

What's Next?



December: We will suggest two program options for Commission to choose to carry forward into detailed quantitative evaluation.

January onward: Conduct detailed quantitative evaluation for two chosen options.

Thank you! Questions or comments?

WSP USA

