



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

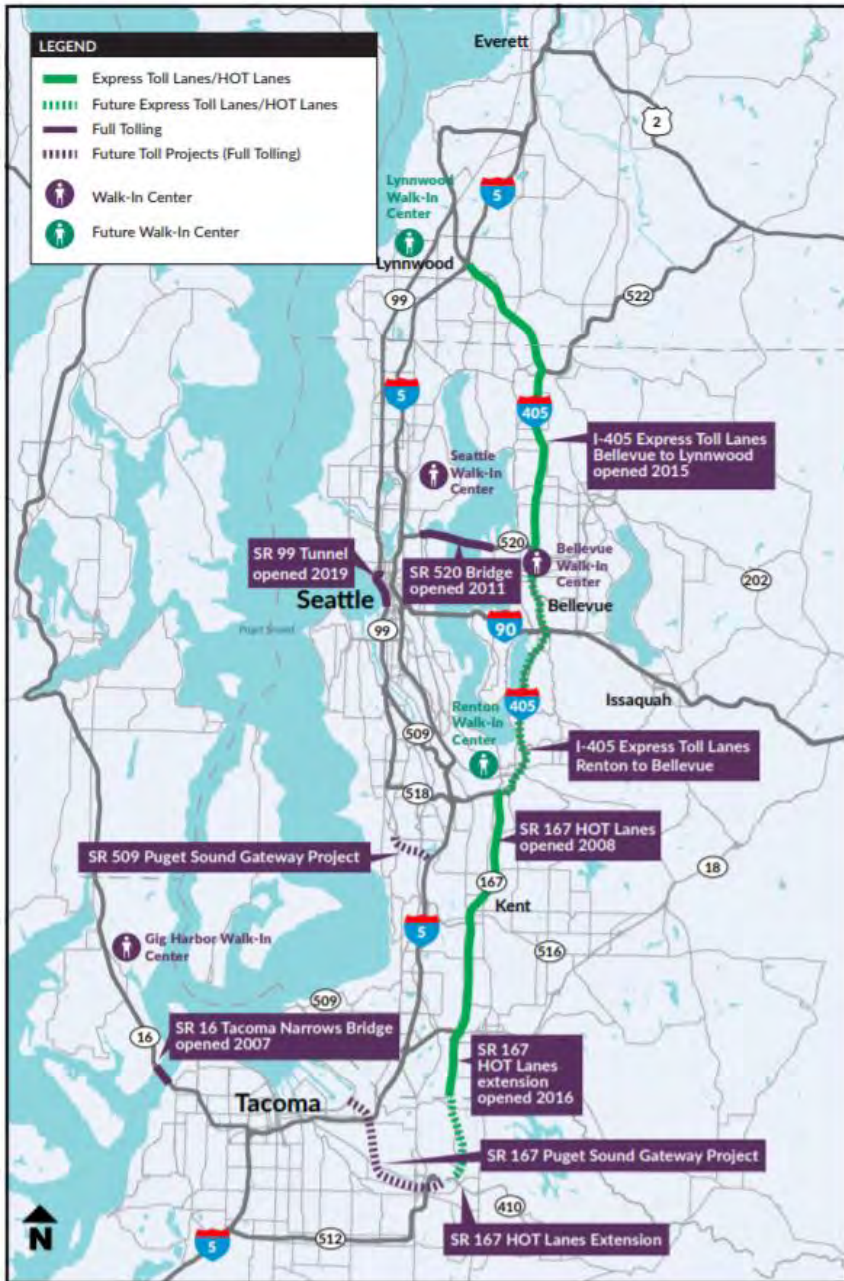
- The Legislature directed the WSTC to undertake the study in the 2019 Legislative session. A final report is due by June 2021.
- The study is to assess the impacts of tolling on low-income drivers of the I-405/ SR 167 ETLs and recommend possible approaches to mitigating such impacts.



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

- This study 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 peak period/peak direction toll rates (Dec 2019):
 - \$4.80 on I-405; \$4.54 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 Option Selection for Further Evaluation

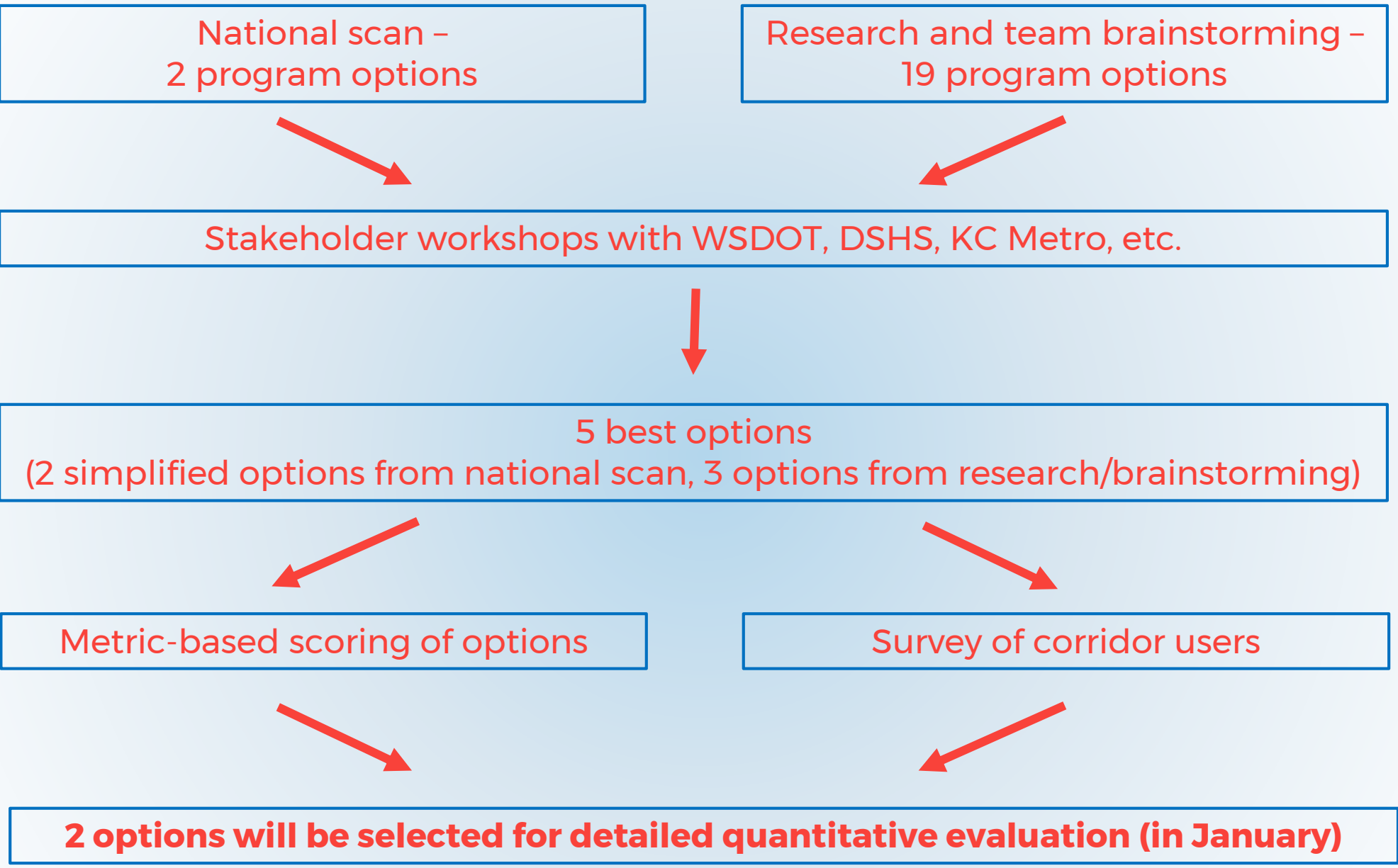
Gabor Debreczeni, Project Manager, WSP
Catherine Larson, Task Manager, LCA

December 15th, 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**



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.
- Survey conducted in November – sent to 20,629 low-income residents in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties living within about 10 miles of the I-405 and SR 167 Express Toll Lanes corridors.
 - 197 completed surveys, and 71 completed surveys from users below our income threshold (200% of the FPL).
- Received feedback on the five toll discount program options, as well as on the most convenient methods of program enrollment (online, then phone, then in-person).
 - Significantly helpful input into program option selection process.
- Survey responses will be used only for this study and contribute to the assessment of the five discount toll program options for Commission consideration.

- **Helping low-income users of the corridor gain more benefit (time savings and reliability) from having the ETL infrastructure available to them**
- Recommended standard program components support value by:
 - making the tolling program more accessible, more broadly understandable, and by creating a feedback loop to ensure it's working well for the users
- Discount toll options aim to achieve this value in different ways
- Scoring metrics used in part to evaluate program options consider different facets of providing this value, and broader considerations such as impact on ETL operations, program costs and feasibility

Standard Program Components - Proposed Recommendation

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

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**

Toll Discount Component of Program

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.

- The metrics were presented to the Commission in October, and were adjusted based on feedback from the Commission and various stakeholders.
- Selected from research of equity toolkits, interviews with program implementers, workshops with local stakeholders, and research of financial & operational considerations.
- Some metrics represent tradeoffs (i.e. benefits vs. costs).

User Benefit
Net \$ benefit per household, for low-income corridor users
Decrease in how regressive tolls are for low-income users of the ETLs
Free or very low cost availability of reliable trip for infrequent high-value trips, e.g. medical or childcare
Share of time savings by low-income travelers
Ease of payment of tolls (i.e. varying methods of payment)
Burden to low-income users due to account minimums and automatic reloading
Operational Impact
Increase in generalized cost of travel (tolls + time) for current non-low-income users of the ETLs
Express lanes travel speeds (for both drivers and transit vehicle performance)
Other operational impact on ETLs

Other Feasibility
Program sustainability
Easily explained to decision-making stakeholders and eventual participants
Are the stakeholders (legislature, implementing agencies, etc.) likely to support this option?
Program Cost
Reduction in total toll payments as a result of the program
Cost of program implementation (excl. toll impact and incl. temporary or permanent staff needs for enrollment)
Ease of program operation for implementing agency(s)
Operational impact re: fraud and abuse
Is the program supported by, or planned for, within current systems?

- User benefit: generally higher scores for higher benefit levels, research and interviews conducted early in project useful for determining user benefit expectations
- Operational impact: generally lower scores for more users expected, especially at max-toll times
- Other Feasibility: a variety of metrics under this category so each metric considered independently
- Program cost: used input from stakeholder workshop and financial/operational research to understand expectations of the cost of implementing different options

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Metric Scoring and Survey Results

Comparison of score results and survey results for each discount toll option

Metric Type:		Score	Score Level	Survey Preference		User Benefit	Operational Impact	Other Feasibility	Program Cost
Metric Weight:						35%	9%	26%	30%
Program Type	Benefit Level								
Percentage discount	25%	50%	Medium	Low		Low	Medium	High	Medium
	50%	57%				Medium	Large	High	Medium
	75%	53%				High	Large	High	Large
Fixed discount	Up to \$0.50 per trip	58%	Medium	Low		Low	Small	High	Small
	Up to \$2.00 per trip	59%				Medium	Small	High	Small
	Up to \$5.00 per trip	56%				High	Large	High	Medium
Fixed toll credit	50% of avg.	62%	High	Medium		Medium	Small	High	Small
	100% of avg.	67%				High	Medium	High	Medium
	150% of avg.	63%				High	Large	High	Large
Fixed number of free toll trips	3 per month	64%	High	High		Medium	Small	High	Small
	10 per month	66%				High	Medium	High	Small
	20 per month	66%				High	Large	High	Medium
Lower maximum toll	25% lower	35%	Low	High		Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
	50% lower	30%				Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
	75% lower	33%				Medium	Large	Medium	Large

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- We recommend the Commission approve moving forward with a detailed quantitative evaluation of the following two discount toll options paired with the standard program components:
 - **A toll credit equal to the tolls paid by the average ETL user**
 - The precise value of this benefit will be calculated and shared with the Commission prior to detailed evaluation (for ex.: \$x per month)
 - Highest-scoring option via the scoring metrics
 - Very flexible: allows users choice of whether they would use program for occasional high-cost trips, or a larger number of low-cost trips
 - Some precedent for this: MnDOT selected option for their prospective program
 - **10 free ETL trips per month**
 - Most-preferred option in the survey
 - Program would encourage use of ETLs for infrequent high-value trips (medical, childcare, late to work, etc.)
 - The University of Washington study found that only 3.3% of ETL users used the ETLs more than 10 times per month
 - Would not include HOV trips that are already free

**The Value
We're
Seeking to
Provide**

- **Helping low-income users of the corridor gain more benefit (time savings and reliability) from having the ETL infrastructure available to them**
- Both recommended discount toll options provide the benefit of being able to use the lanes for free a certain number of times – they just count differently
 - A toll credit equal to the tolls paid by the average ETL user
 - 10 free ETL trips per month
- A powerful feature of both is that ***the users can make the decision of when the ETLs are most valuable for them – they know their own lives and needs best***
- The suggested standard program components (free transponders, advisory board, etc.) also support the value goal listed above
- Next Step: For now this is for deliberation – ***we will return to the Commission in January to ask for a final decision on this question.***

Thank you! Questions or comments?

WSP USA

