



State of Washington

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

*PO Box 47308, Olympia WA 98504-7308 • 2404 Chandler Court SW, Suite 270, Olympia WA 98502
(360) 705-7070 • Fax (360) 705-6802 • transc@wstc.wa.gov • <https://www.wstc.wa.gov>*

April 14, 2021

Honorable Members of the United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works:

As transportation infrastructure costs rise, and fuel tax revenues face decline due to the adoption of electric and more fuel-efficient vehicles, we are compelled as a nation to find a new and sustainable way to fund our transportation infrastructure needs so that all drivers pay their fair share, regardless of the type of vehicle driven.

For over ten years, states and coalitions have utilized state funding and federal STSFA grant funding to conduct pilot testing of Road Usage Charging (RUC), including Washington State who has been researching and testing RUC since 2012. Two states (Oregon and Utah) have established operational RUC programs, with Virginia coming on-line in 2022.

The result of these combined efforts is that states have built extensive knowledge through their experience related to RUC programs and policies. Many states, including Washington State, are currently engaged in active legislative discussions that may result in additional RUC programs starting at the state level. Leveraging the learnings of active and contemplative states would benefit the development of a national effort.

As you consider transportation reauthorization and future sustainable revenue sources, there are five key steps we recommend Congress consider moving forward as soon as possible, which will greatly aid states and the nation in the advancement of a national RUC effort.

1. **Establish a RUC National Advisory Committee made up of at a minimum, states who have led RUC testing and research, industry leaders, privacy and data security experts, and other stakeholders.** The committee should be charged with guidance responsibilities including:
 - Advising on the scope, scale, purpose, and timing of a national RUC pilot, with the above assessment informing this work.
 - Conducting a comprehensive assessment of a potential national RUC system, considering how to ensure such a program remains compatible with state systems.
 - Assessing operational, technical, policy, and funding implications of a national RUC system.
 - Advising on the approach and timing of a national educational effort aimed at facilitating the national conversation on RUC, and the funding challenges transportation faces long-term under the gas tax.

2. **Establish minimum standards that states must adopt in implementing RUC programs at the state level.** Standards should address, but not be limited to the following:
 - Collection and processing of vehicle data, including ownership and permissible uses, which may include use of aggregated and anonymized data for educational and research purposes.
 - Open architecture to enable greater interoperability.
 - Data retention that balances protection of personally identifiable information with auditability.
 - A framework that enables interoperability and reconciliation processes between states related to intrastate, interstate, and international travel.
3. **Re-authorize and fund the STSFA federal grant program, and in addition to current provisions, allow states to apply the grant funding towards implementation and start-up costs of RUC programs at the state level.** Such financial assistance will greatly aid states in developing and expanding new RUC programs, which incur the greatest financial burden at the start, when programs are typically small-scale start-ups.
4. **During the reauthorization process, actively engage states who have received grants under the STSFA program, and any other states that have conducted RUC pilots, as well as states who have established programs.** The engagement could be to invite those states to provide reports to Congress and present findings and outcomes of their work, and key insights into considerations around RUC in the context of a possible future national RUC system.
5. **Support and fund a national education campaign to generate a national conversation on RUC in partnership with states.** Work with state RUC leaders and the RUC National Advisory Committee (*referred to under #1 of this document*) to develop a campaign that can be adapted to each state to meet their needs.

We thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you and appreciate your serious consideration of them. If you have questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact me anytime via email at griffir@wstc.wa.gov or by phone at 360-701-7172.

Sincerely,
Reema Griffith, Executive Director
Washington State Transportation Commission