
March 2024 Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee Notes – March 15, 2024

Location: Virtual

[Meeting Recording](#)

Attendees

Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee Members

Lee Beyer (OTC, Vice-Chair); Jim Restucci (WSTC, Vice-Chair);
Alicia Chapman (OTC, Member); Roy Jennings (WSTC, Member)

Staff / Other Attendees

Travis Brouwer (ODOT); Brent Baker (IBR / WSP USA); Ed Barry (WSDOT); Jennifer Charlebois (WSDOT); Reema Griffith (WSTC); Meghan Hodges (IBR); Carl See (WSTC); Kristopher Strickler (ODOT)

Update on Oregon & Washington Toll Programs – Travis Brouwer & Ed Barry

Travis Brouwer provided an update on the Oregon toll program following an announcement made by Governor Kotek on Monday, March 11. Governor Kotek directed ODOT to pause development of Oregon's regional toll program, including the back-office system and roadside infrastructure. This includes stopping work on the Regional Mobility Pricing Project (RMPP), which would implement tolling on I-5 and I-205 in the Portland metropolitan region, and putting into hibernation tolling work on the I-205 Abernethy Bridge (between Oregon City and West Linn). As a result, ODOT will be transferring the administration of tolling on the I-5 Bridge over the Columbia River (I-5 Bridge) to WSDOT.

Ed Barry discussed that WSDOT has now initiated discussions with ODOT and IBR program on preparations to administer tolls on the I-5 Bridge through WSDOT's *Good To Go!* system, and WSDOT will be meeting with the IBR program and ODOT in the coming weeks and months to better understand the implications that Governor Kotek's announcement will have on WSDOT's toll program.

Discussion

There were no questions or discussion on this meeting item.

Review Draft Operating Procedures – Travis Brouwer & Reema Griffith

Travis Brouwer provided an overview of draft operating procedures for the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee that were developed by ODOT and WSTC staff, which provide an understanding of how the subcommittee shall operate beyond the Bi-State Tolling Agreement that was adopted in January. These procedures include:

- Policy considerations beyond the financial requirements based on each state's statute;
- Meeting membership, co-chairs, and meeting attendance;
- Process for advancing recommendations and research requests;
- Guidelines for public meetings and on meeting recordings and summaries;
- Public records requirements; and
- Commitment to tribal consultations.

Discussion

Without objection, the operating procedures as recommended were approved by the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee.

Review 2024 Work Plan & Meeting Schedule – Travis Brouwer & Carl See

Carl See reviewed the proposed upcoming schedule and milestones to support Commissioners on coming to agreement on a set of recommended Level 3 Traffic & Revenue (T&R) scenarios. He acknowledged that updates may be needed following the change in toll administrator. As soon as April, it is expected that the subcommittee would be able to review the Level 2 T&R study analysis and assumptions. This review would be complemented with planned and focused discussions to help inform selection of Level 3 T&R scenarios on policy and rate-setting choices. Relevant project and program updates will be provided throughout, along with an iterative narrowing of potential Level 3 T&R scenario options in support of selecting final recommended scenarios in July 2024, for consideration by the full commissions. Lastly, development and updates will be provided on a public engagement plan and tribal consultations.

Mr. See then presented a proposed Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee meeting schedule for 2024, with two meetings to be held in-person (May 17 and July 19) to support more in-depth conversations for decision-making. No subcommittee meetings are planned for August through October, but a joint in-person meeting of the full Washington and Oregon Commissions was proposed for September. Following September, subcommittee discussions would shift to focusing on specific toll policy topics, public engagement, and tribal consultation.

Discussion

Commissioners discussed the proposed May and July in-person meetings, suggesting that one meeting be held in Washington and one in Oregon, with Commissioner Restucci to Chair the meeting held in Washington and Commissioner Beyer to Chair the meeting held in Oregon. It was also suggested that the first tribal consultation meeting be held in person.

Update on Oregon’s Low-Income Toll Program – Travis Brouwer

Travis Brouwer provided an overview of ODOT’s Low-Income Toll Program, highlighting the challenges following Governor Kotek’s March 11 announcement. However, Governor Kotek’s intent remains that ODOT examine a low-income toll program if Oregon were to advance tolling in Oregon. Development of ODOT’s Low-Income Toll Program began in 2021 following legislative direction, and a Low-Income Toll Report was delivered to the Oregon Legislature in 2022. Then in 2023, ODOT conducted a preliminary T&R analysis of 20 options for the I-205 Toll Project that assessed different income-thresholds and benefit levels to estimate impacts and determine key operational details. This analysis indicated relatively small impacts on traffic and revenue at discounts of 50% or 75%.

In December 2023, the OTC provided direction to ODOT that a low-income toll program be applied to the RMPP and I-205 Toll Project, as follows:

- Residents of Oregon and Washington State would be eligible to enroll;
- The benefit would be a percentage discount;

- Commitment to implement a 50% discount for customers whose income is up to 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL); and
- Commitment to study 10% and 25% discounts for 300% FPL and 400% FPL in further traffic and revenue studies to inform OTC's decision whether to offer a benefit at this income tier.

Discussion

There were no questions or discussion on this meeting item.

Review Tolling Options Assessed in Level 2 Traffic & Revenue Study – Brent Baker

Brent Baker reviewed the Level 2 tolling options, including 7 scenarios (A-G) that were previously documented in the Level 2 T&R Study that was published in November 2023, and an additional 4 scenarios (H-K) that the subcommittee requested be analyzed:

- Scenario A: Base Tolls
- Scenario B: Lower Tolls (NEPA)
- Scenario C: Scenario A + No Toll Escalation
- Scenario D: Scenario A + RMPP
- Scenario E: Scenario B + RMPP
- Scenario F: Scenario A + 50% Low-Income Discount
- Scenario G: Scenario A + 25% Low-Income Discount
- Scenario H: Combines Features of Other Scenarios
- Scenario I: Scenario H without RMPP
- Scenario J: Scenario H with lower pre-completion tolls
- Scenario K: Scenario I with lower pre-completion tolls

It was proposed that scenarios H and J be reexamined with no Oregon toll projects following Governor Kotek's March 11 announcement.

Mr. Baker then briefed the subcommittee on approaches to toll rates across toll facilities in Washington and Oregon and what assumptions were used in the IBR analysis. Variable toll rates on a set schedule were analyzed for the I-5 Bridge to provide at least \$1 billion in program funding and congestion management with lower midday and off-peak tolls. In addition, it is assumed that pre-completion tolling of the existing bridge would be in effect during construction of the new bridge from 2026 to approximately 2033.

Discussion

By consensus, the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee approved reexamining scenarios H and J with no Oregon toll projects.

Questions were raised regarding the impacts that Governor Kotek's announcement will have on traffic diversion and related revenue on the I-5 Bridge. Mr. Baker confirmed that this will be assessed in more depth with the additional Level 2 T&R scenarios, and upon the forthcoming Level 3 T&R Study which will include a stated preference survey and origin and destination data collection. Also discussed were assumptions and impacts around overnight tolls, approaches to toll escalation and truck multipliers, and low-income toll considerations.

Next Steps – Commissioner Jim Restucci

The next Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee Meetings is scheduled for April 19 from 1pm-3pm (virtual).

Public Comment

Chris Smith, representing Just Crossing Alliance, stated his disappointment that the Equitable Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC) that was chartered under the toll projects in Oregon has been discontinued. Mr. Smith suggested that the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee recharter EMAC for input on a possible low-income toll program.

John Ley, Clark County, questioned the value of the IBR Project, both in terms of time savings and traffic diversion. Mr. Ley stated that there is not enough capacity in the region to handle the amount of vehicles crossing the Columbia River. Lastly, Mr. Ley implored the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee look at ways to cut costs, reducing reliance on tolls.