
June 2024 Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee Notes – June 21, 2024

Location: Virtual **Meeting Recording**

Attendees

Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee Members

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

Staff / Other Attendees

Brent Baker (IBR); Ed Barry (WSDOT); Tiffany Bennett (IBR); Travis Brouwer (ODOT);
Reema Griffith (WSTC); Meghan Hodges (IBR); Carl See (WSTC)

IBR Program Operations Update – Meghan Hodges

Meghan Hodges provided a brief IBR Program update. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is currently anticipated to be released in fall 2024, followed by a 60-day public comment period. Refinements to the Draft SEIS addressing public feedback are anticipated in 2025, along with the Final SEIS and Record of Decision (ROD). Ms. Hodges also shared the [link to the Draft SEIS landing page where the document will live once published](#).

Additionally, Ms. Hodges shared that a program update was provided to the Bi-State Legislative Committee on June 10, which included a brief update from the WSDOT toll division and on the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee's work.

Discussion

There was no associated discussion with this item.

Recap IBR Partner Agency & Advisory Group Feedback – Travis Brouwer & Carl See

Travis Brouwer and Carl See briefed the subcommittee on feedback that was received from two different IBR Advisory Group meetings that were held in June: the IBR Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting on June 13 and the IBR Equity Advisory Group (EAG) meeting on June 17. The goal was to introduce and discuss tolling considerations with the groups and solicit feedback on selected policy topics and future use of the bridge once tolling begins.

The CAG and EAG provided similar feedback. The CAG identified safe and efficient mobility as their priority policy consideration, and most felt that pre-completion toll rates should be similar to what the toll rates will be after the new bridge is opened. Additionally, CAG members generally agreed that paying a toll would cause them to rethink their mode of travel, such as using I-205 to avoid paying the toll or traveling during a different time of day to reduce the toll amount.

The EAG, on the other hand, identified equity as their priority policy consideration, followed by safe and efficient mobility. Similar to the CAG, the EAG agreed that pre-completion toll rates should be similar to what the toll rates will be after the new bridge is opened and that paying a toll would cause them to rethink their mode of travel. Considerations for a low-income program were also shared with the EAG.

As part of the Level 3 Traffic and Revenue (T&R) Study, a stated preference survey will be conducted. This survey will study these topics further and whether community members are likely to pay a toll.

Discussion

A question was asked if input received by advisory groups for past tolling projects in Washington generally aligns with actual driver behavior. Mr. See clarified that quantitative analysis through stated preference surveys tends to better describe driver choices and tradeoffs compared to qualitative feedback received at community or advisory group meetings.

Level 3 Scenario Development – Brent Baker

Brent Baker led a discussion on scenario development for the Level 3 T&R Study. These scenarios will provide detailed traffic and revenue projections which are sufficient to:

- Inform toll rate setting by the two Commissions;
- Leverage at least \$1.24 billion in capital funding;
- Meet all financial obligations over the forecast horizon; and
- Eventually obtain an *investment-grade* credit rating to secure financing.

Mr. Baker provided a recap of toll funding capacities from the Level 2 T&R Study scenarios. Scenarios A, B, C, D, F, and F2 all meet the \$1.24 billion funding target, whereas scenarios H, I, J, and K did not. This is primarily due to the lower truck toll multiplier assumed with these scenarios, from 4x to 2x.

To ensure operating performance and revenue levels/funding objectives can be met, the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee has several rate and policy-setting levers to consider:

- Toll rate variability by time of day / day of week / payment method
- Truck toll multipliers
- Toll escalation
- Low-income benefit program / discount rate / eligibility threshold
- Pre-completion tolling differences (rates, hours of operation)

The four scenarios advanced as preliminary Level 3 T&R recommendations by the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee were:

Scenario	Weekday Toll Rates & Hours (2026 \$)		Weekend Toll Rates & Hours (2026 \$)	Truck Toll Multipliers	Toll Escalation	Low-Income Toll Program
	Pre-Completion	Post-Completion				
1	Lower + 2.15% \$1.55 – 3.20		Two Step (Min/Midday)	2.0x / 4.0x	2.15% Annually	50% discount when new bridge opens
2	Hybrid + 2.15% \$1.55 – 3.65	Hybrid + 10% \$1.65 – 3.90	Three Step (Min/Mid/Peak)	1.5x / 3.0x		
3	Hybrid + 10% \$1.65 – 3.90		Two Step (Min/Midday)			
4	Hybrid + 32% \$2.00 – 4.70		Three Step (Min/Mid/Peak)		3% every 2 years	50% discount <i>as soon as practical</i>

Discussion

Questions were asked about updated project cost estimates. Mr. Baker confirmed that project cost updates are not expected for about another year, and clarified that there will be future opportunities to refresh the Level 3 T&R Study before bonds are intended to be sold. Mr. See further clarified that an updated tolling target will be determined following the release of the updated project cost.

A question was asked about weekend toll rates and why they are assumed to be lower than weekday toll rates. Mr. Baker explained that travel patterns vary between weekdays and weekends, with weekend travelers typically more price-sensitive than weekday travelers. However, weekend toll rates do not necessarily have to be lower than weekday toll rates.

Another question was asked about truck categories and what is meant by “medium” and “heavy” trucks. Mr. Baker clarified that the travel demand model defines “medium” trucks as larger box trucks and “heavy” trucks as tractor-trailers. Additionally, the vast majority of trucks that travel across the I-5 Bridge fall into the “heavy” truck category.

There was additional discussion surrounding considerations for a possible low-income toll program and the system requirements it would need. Mr. Baker mentioned that additional data could also be gathered through the stated preference survey.

Upcoming Meetings/Review Work Plan – Carl See

Carl See provided a brief update on upcoming milestones for the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee:

- **March – September 2024:** Develop and recommend Level 3 toll rate scenarios.
 - Full Commissions to select Level 3 toll rate scenarios at Bi-State Commission meeting on October 1, 2024, for further analysis.
- **Winter 2024 – Spring 2025:** Develop and recommend toll rate scenarios for public input for approval by the full Commissions.
- **Spring – Summer 2025:** Recommend final toll rates and policy for adoption by the full Commissions.

Discussion

There was no associated discussion with this item.

Next Steps – Carl See & Jim Restucci

In July, the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee will revisit the preliminary Level 3 T&R scenario recommendations. Mr. See proposed that the July Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee be held virtually, as opposed to in-person. Commissioners agreed to hold the July Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee virtually.

With that, the next Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee is scheduled for July 19 from 1pm-3pm (virtually). Then the full Washington and Oregon Transportation Commissions will meet on October 1 (in-person, time and location to be determined).

Discussion

There was no associated discussion with this item.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.