

General Questions About Road Usage Charging

What is road usage charging?

- A road usage charge, or RUC, is a per-mile charge drivers pay based on the number of miles they drive, rather than paying by the gallon of gas.
- Our gas tax is similar to a road usage charge – it just charges drivers per gallon rather than per mile.
- RUC ensures drivers of all types of vehicles pay their fair share for usage of Washington roads, regardless of their car's age or fuel economy.

Why road usage charging?

- RUC is a user fee like the gas tax and continues to ensure drivers of all vehicle types are paying their fair share for the usage of the roads.
- RUC provides long-term, sustainable funding for transportation regardless of vehicle fuel efficiency or the kind of fuel used.
- It moves Washington away from paying by the gallon of gas to simply paying for each mile driven.

Will RUC be in addition to the gas tax?

- No. Drivers would pay RUC or gas tax, but not both.
- Any gas taxes paid at the pump would be credited toward RUC owed, so drivers would only pay one or the other for their road usage.

How can privacy be protected?

- Drivers would have choices for reporting miles driven, including by reporting their odometer annually.
- GPS is not required. Customers who want to use GPS could do so by their own choice for their personal convenience.
- Regardless of reporting method, strong data and privacy protection laws will be in place.

How does RUC compare to the gas tax for rural residents and drivers with long commutes?

- Today's gas tax is also a per-mile tax, but the cost impact will vary by your car's MPG. The lower your car's MPG, the more you pay today under the gas tax.
- The cost impact of RUC compared to the gas tax will be determined by **what** type of car you drive – not **how far** you drive.
- If your car gets under 20 MPG, you are already paying three to five cents per mile today, under the gas tax.
- By contrast, in a RUC program drivers will pay the same per mile rate of less than three cents per mile.
- For example, if the RUC rate was set at 2.6 cents per mile, all vehicles would pay \$26 per 1,000 miles driven, regardless of your car's MPG.
- See the table below to see how RUC and gas tax compare by MPG.

Vehicle MPG	State Gas Tax (49.4 cents per gallon)	RUC (2.6 cents per mile)
15 MPG	\$33	\$26
19 MPG	\$26	\$26
25 MPG	\$20	\$26
40 MPG	\$12	\$26
EV (100+ MPGe)	\$0	\$26

How does RUC compare to the gas tax for low-income drivers?

- Today's gas tax is regressive. Everyone must pay the same 49.4 cents per gallon regardless of their ability to do so.
- Low-income drivers pay 14% more per mile driven under the gas tax, compared to high-income drivers.
- RUC provides the opportunity to reduce the tax burden on low-income motorists by providing the opportunity to offer discounts, and leveling the playing field so that all drivers pay the same per mile rate, regardless of their car's MPG.

Do EV and hybrid vehicle owners have to pay RUC on top of EV and hybrid registration fees?

- No.
- EV drivers who sign up for RUC would no longer have to pay the \$225 annual registration fee they pay today.
- Hybrid vehicle drivers who sign up for RUC would no longer have to pay the \$75 annual registration fee they pay today.

Does RUC discourage the adoption of EVs?

- No.
- EV drivers maintain an operating cost advantage under RUC simply by the fact that they do not have to buy gas.
- Compared to gas-powered vehicles, EV driver's operational costs remain much lower than those who have to buy gas.

How much will RUC cost the state to collect?

- The cost to collect a RUC will depend on the methods used for reporting miles driven:
 - Reporting miles via a simple annual odometer report when drivers renew their vehicle's registration will cost about the same as it does to collect other vehicle registration fees. Costs are estimated in the range of 4 to 6% of revenues.
 - If drivers choose an automated mileage reporting option, the collection cost may increase due to the need for onboard technology, data exchange, customer accounts, and account management.
- As the RUC program grows, like a business, the costs will spread across more vehicles, making the program more efficient.

How will RUC work for drivers visiting Washington state?

- The gas tax would stay in place so visitors from out of state in Washington can continue to pay gas taxes at the pump like they do today.

What are other states doing?

- Four states have adopted RUC programs: Utah, Oregon, Virginia, and Hawaii.
- As of 2024, 40 states have conducted research into RUC, including pilots in states like California, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Georgia.

What is the Washington Road Usage Charge research program?

- The Washington State Transportation Commission (Commission) has been researching road usage charging over the past decade to analyze how and if it might work for Washington.
- This research program, called WA RUC, has shown that Washington is ready to implement a small-scale RUC program to replace the current gas tax.
- *Details on this research program and its findings can be found on www.waroadusagecharge.org.*