Washington State Transportation Commission

Low-Income Toll Discount Program: SR 509 & SR 167 Expressways

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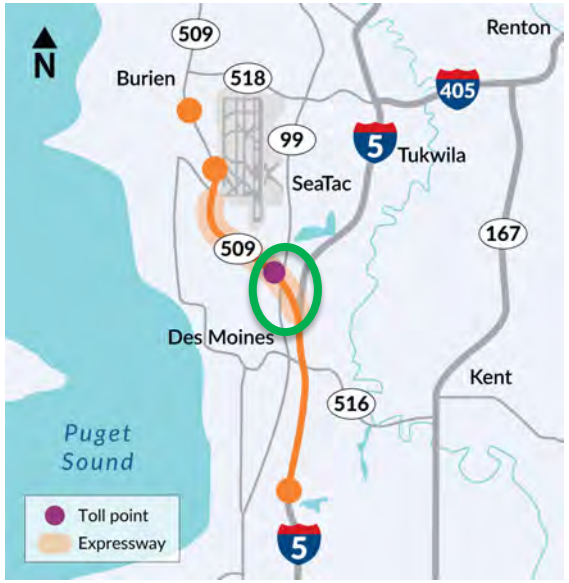
Puget Sound Gateway Program

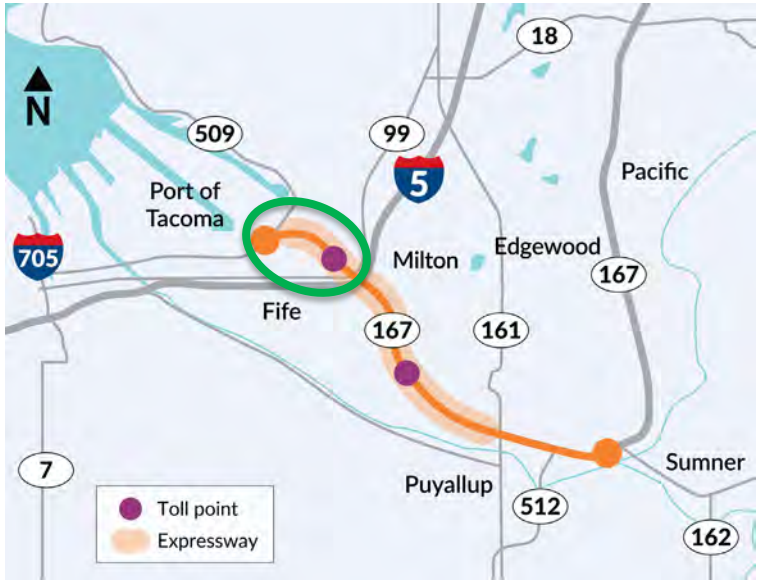
- Tolled Expressways on SR 509 and SR 167 will manage traffic and help fund construction and ongoing maintenance of the roadways.
- Tolling on the first portion of the SR 509 Expressway began in late September 2025.
- Tolling on the first mile of the SR 167 Expressway is scheduled to begin in December 2026.
- The Commission adopted toll rates for both facilities in June 2025, with intent to have low-income policies in place by the opening of the SR 167 Expressway in 2026.

SR 509 Expressway



The SR 509 Expressway will extend from South 188th Street in Burien to I-5 in SeaTac near South 212th Street.

SR 167 Expressway



The SR 167 Expressway will extend from N Meridian Ave. in Puyallup to I-5 in Fife and from I-5 to SR 509 near the port of Tacoma.

Proposed low-income toll rate policies anticipated to take effect in December 2026 starting with the portions circled in green.

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Background

WSTC Low-Income Toll Program Study

From 2019-2021, the Commission studied and assessed options for a low-income toll program, leading to a recommendation that a system-wide low-income toll program be implemented:

- Eligibility would be based upon income level, not geographic location of where one lived.
- Implementation would be phased-in by facility to ensure financial obligations could be met and traffic performance goals would be maintained.

The Commission has continued to support this approach with annual recommendations to the Legislature.

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SR 509 Expressway Low Income Proviso

As part of the toll authorization for the Puget Sound Gateway facilities, the Legislature included direction for WSDOT to analyze at least one toll schedule that exempts or discounts low-income drivers that reside in close proximity to the SR 509 Expressway corridor.

> RCW 47.56.895 (4):
> *Prior to setting the schedule of toll rates on the portion of state route number 509 between South 188th Street and Interstate 5 in SeaTac, the department, in collaboration with the transportation commission, must analyze and present to the transportation commission at least one schedule of toll rates that exempts, discounts, or provides other toll relief for low-income drivers during all hours of operation on state route number 509 between South 188th Street and Interstate 5 in SeaTac. In analyzing the schedule of toll rates, the department shall consider implementing an exemption, discount, or other toll relief policy for drivers that reside in close proximity to the corridor.*

A 50% discount for SR 509 Expressway area residents at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) was assessed.

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Puget Sound Gateway Rate Setting

In Spring 2025, the Commission set toll rates and policies for the Puget Sound Gateway Program facilities (SR 509 and SR 167 Expressways).

- As part of its public outreach work, the Commission gathered over 1,800 comments during the rate-setting process for these facilities, including an online open house, two virtual public meetings, email, and stakeholder engagement.
- Advancing a low-income discount was generally favored by the public:
  - Those stating a preferred approach expressing significantly more support of the system-wide discount.
  - Input from local stakeholders also favored the system-wide approach.

As part of adoption of the toll rates and policies for the expressways, the Commission included a statement of intent to proceed with implementing a system-wide low-income program by 2026, rather than a geographic-based program specific to the SR 509 Expressway.

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Legislative Direction to Implement

Following the Commission's initial stated intent in spring 2025 to proceed with implementing a system-wide low-income program by 2026, the Legislature included the following direction in the 2025-27 Transportation Budget to the Commission:

> *(5)* ***The commission shall partner with the department of transportation to design and implement a toll relief program based upon income qualification. Implementation must start with facilities where tolling begins in fiscal year 2026 or later.*** *The commission shall work with the department of transportation to assess potential impacts of extending the toll relief program based upon income qualification to existing tolled facilities that opened prior to fiscal year 2026. The assessment, at a minimum, must determine potential impacts to meeting current financial and legal requirements in place for each facility. The commission, in partnership with the department of transportation, shall provide annual updates on the program to the transportation committees of the legislature.*

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Other Low-Income Toll Programs in the United States

I-880 Express Lanes & I-80 Express Lanes (Bay Area, California)

- **Benefit:** 50% toll discount while driving alone, with greater discounts for carpools
- **Eligibility:** Bay Area residents with household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

Elizabeth River Tunnels (Portsmouth to Norfolk, Virginia)

- **Benefit:** 50% or 100% toll discount for up to 14 trips per week
- **Eligibility:** Below $65,000 throughout the region (50% discount); Below $50,000 in selected communities of greatest need (100% discount)

New York City Congestion Relief Zone

- **Benefit:** 50% toll discount after 10 trips per calendar month
- **Eligibility:** Annual income of no more than $50,000 or enrollment in select government assistance programs

LA Metro Low-Income Assistance Plan – Metro Express Lanes

- **Benefit:** One-time $25 credit, $1 monthly account maintenance waived
- **Eligibility:** Household income at or below 200% of the FPL

Illinois Tollway I-Pass Assist Program

- **Benefit:** 50% toll discount for passenger vehicles
- **Eligibility:** Household income at or below 250% of the FPL

Commission Direction: Assumptions for Analysis & Program Development

Following a review of supporting studies, other low-income tolling programs, and related public input, the Commission acted in December 2025 to continue with the following preliminary assumptions for a low-income toll discount proposal:

- An 50% low-income toll discount on the SR 509 and SR 167 expressways
- Household income eligibility for the low-income program set at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level

The intent of the Commission action was to support the following:

- Advancing with financial analysis necessary to determine capacity to meet financial requirements for the SR 509 and SR 167 expressways
- Preliminary development of low-income tolling program elements by WSDOT

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Advancing a Proposed Low-Income Toll Policy

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Proposed Low-Income Toll Discount Policies

Today's Action: Advance low-income discount proposal for public input

- **Eligibility Criteria:** Household income no more than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
- **Discount:** 50% discount of the applicable *Good To Go!* pass toll rate (two-axle vehicles)

Assumption: Implementation of the proposal will not require a change to existing toll rates and policies for the SR 509 and SR 167 expressways.

- Analysis of the capacity to meet financial requirements for the expressways with the proposed action is underway and will be provided to the Commission ahead of final adoption.

Note: two-axle vehicle *Good To Go!* pass toll rates on the Puget Sound Gateway facilities (SR 509 and SR 167 Expressways) range from $1.00 to $3.00. Under this proposal, **eligible customers enrolled in the low-income toll program would pay between $0.50 to $1.50.**

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Possible Public Outreach Approach

Public input would be gathered in June-July 2026 to inform a final decision and action in July.

Possible public engagement could include:

- **Online open house**
  - Share information on the proposed low-income discount program under consideration
  - Offer the public an opportunity to provide comment
- **At least one virtual public input meeting**
- **Public comment taken at July WSTC meeting ahead of taking action**
- **Collect written public comment via the online comment form and email to: TransC@wstc.wa.gov**

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Next Steps

- **Today's Action:** Approve and release low-income toll discount proposal for public input
- **June/July WSTC meeting:** Confirmation on capacity to meet financial requirements for the SR 509 and SR 167 expressways with the proposed low toll discount.
- **June-July 2026:** Public outreach
- **July WSTC meeting:** Adopt low-income discount policy for the SR 509 and SR 167 expressways
- **Fall 2026:** WSDOT customer engagement on program operations
- **December 2026:** Low-income toll program launches for the SR 167 and SR 509 expressways

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Future Considerations

Following implementation of the low-income toll program for the SR 167 and SR 509 Expressways:

- Monitor and report on the low-income toll program performance and operation.
- Assess and determine potential future adjustments as needed.
- Ongoing customer engagement to support further operational and policy improvements.

Questions / Contact

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