



MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*  
**DATE:** April 30, 2018  
**SUBJECT:** **Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis – Consideration of Input**

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**AT A GLANCE**

*The following memorandum provides the RTC Board with draft comments for consideration in crafting input to the Oregon Department of Transportation’s Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis.*

**BACKGROUND**

In January 2018, RTC staff presented a report covering contextual factors and trends for major project funding, at the national, state and regional scale. (link: <https://rtc.wa.gov/packets/board/2018/01/201801-08-ProjectFunding.pdf>).

In that report, RTC staff documented how tolling has been utilized as a tool for financing major infrastructure upgrades in the bridge / highway category for many decades. Following that report, Staff presented information in March regarding the current federal administration’s infrastructure proposal:

(link <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/INFRASTRUCTURE-211.pdf>) and specifically mentioned the emphasis that proposal has on transitioning federal funding policy to expand the use of tolling for funding and maintaining federal transportation infrastructure.

Recognizing that tolling is a tool to fund transportation infrastructure, and considering the recent trends in Washington State and at the federal level, RTC staff have begun specific examination and evaluation of the tolling / congestion pricing Concepts now under review in the [Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis](#).

**SCHEDULE FOR ODOT STUDY INPUT**

Currently published schedules indicate that the Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Feasibility Analysis - Project Advisory Committee will meet in a joint meeting with the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) to transmit their project recommendations on July 12, 2018. Prior to that meeting, the Project Advisory Committee will meet on May 14 and June 25, to first hear the results of the Phase II Concept review and to finalize their recommendations to the OTC.

After the July 12 joint meeting of the Project Advisory Committee and the OTC, it is assumed that RTC will continue to monitor this proposal and weigh in at important milestones. Those milestones could include: First, the OTC will deliberate and prepare a final Application for submission to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) by December 31, 2018. It is presumed

that their final Application will be made public, and public input allowed, prior to December 31. RTC Staff will monitor that process and provide updates to the RTC Board.

Second, after submission to FHWA, ODOT will receive guidance regarding the scope of the required Application review under the formal procedures of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The RTC will be provided opportunities to comment during that formal process. The following matrix illustrates the milestones for RTC input to the ODOT process.

**RTC Input Milestones**

Milestone	Schedule
Feasibility Analysis	<i>Recommended by:</i> June 25 Project Advisory Committee meeting and no later than July 12 Oregon Transportation Commission meeting.
Concept Submission to FHWA	<i>TBD</i> – Assumed Fall 2018, and no later than December 2018.
Project Review under NEPA	<i>TBD</i>

**RTC CONCEPT EVALUATION**

To date, the Project Advisory Committee has been presented information regarding broad concepts and potential mitigation measures. It is expected that ODOT will report the results of the Phase II Concept technical review at the upcoming May 14 Project Advisory Committee meeting. It is at that juncture that RTC and other regional stakeholders will have a more complete understanding of the potential benefits and impacts of the Concepts under current review.

Due to the rapid pace of study work, RTC staff do not have sufficient technical information to provide a reasonable benefit / impact assessment of Concepts now under review. As a result, RTC staff will wait to make a complete assessment of the preferred Concepts, utilizing the RTC staff’s recommended Evaluation Framework, after updated technical information is presented at the May 14 Project Advisory Committee.

**PROJECT INPUT**

In lieu of pending technical assessments, RTC staff have crafted the following comments which can form the basis of RTC input and engagement, regardless of the final Concept proposed by the Project Advisory Committee and/or the OTC.

## **DRAFT Input**

**Partnership and Consultation:** Metropolitan area and bi-state planning and project coordination has resulted in many beneficial regional infrastructure improvements over many years. It is expected that continued partnership on projects of mutual bi-state interest will occur, and that ODOT will engage in consultation with affected partner agencies. RTC will request consultation as part of future NEPA project evaluation processes in order to assess bi-state and regional transportation system and policy impacts.

**Regionally Significant Project Implementation:** A regionally significant project improvement plan should be prepared, identifying the planned regional and bi-state bottleneck removal and corridor projects (ex, highway, transit, *other* modal) that will be funded from toll proceeds. Implementation of congestion pricing should support construction of those projects. Most notable among the planned bi-state bottleneck removal projects is replacement of the existing I-5 Columbia River bridges. I-5 corridor congestion pricing strategies should support (financial or otherwise) a future I-5 Columbia River bridge replacement project.

**Regional Mitigation:** Identify and mitigate at the bi-state level, direct and indirect impacts created by a congestion pricing project. Mitigation responses should be tied to the corridor of impact and should be proportional. Legislative remedies need to be pursued to enable project mitigation actions in Washington State, in order to fairly address bi-state impacts, or avoidance of non-mitigatable impacts should be pursued. *(For example: a mitigation response to a northern I-5 congestion pricing project could be expanding I-5 express bus transit services provided by C-TRAN, thereby providing improved transit for affected Clark County stakeholders.)*

**Regional Systems Monitoring:** Regional corridor outcomes and performance metrics should be defined prior to beginning a congestion pricing pilot project. Through monitoring, propose corridor specific project mitigations and programs to ameliorate social/economic impacts created by a congestion pricing project. Corridor monitoring and mitigation towards the outcomes should be continuous for the duration of a pilot project.

**Decision Making:** Disclosure of future project decision making milestones and input opportunities should be communicated to regional and bi-state governmental agencies and the public at large.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following the May 1 RTC Board meeting, and upon review of the ODOT Project Advisory Committee meeting materials of May 14, RTC staff will prepare final comments for RTC Board input at the June 5 RTC Board meeting.