



Frequently Asked Questions

10/10/2019

What is “equitable mobility?”

Mobility is freedom of movement, the ease with which people can get where they need to go, and businesses can move goods through our city. A transportation system with equitable mobility provides the same opportunity for everyone to move around reliably and sustainably in ways that meet their needs. Right now, Portland’s transportation system isn’t equitable. Marginalized and underrepresented communities face barriers that impact their mobility and access—due to gentrification, displacement, historic underinvestment, and a transportation funding system based on regressive gas taxes. Over time, these burdens and the costs associated with them have unfairly impacted specific communities. Through efforts like the Pricing for Equitable Mobility project, we are aiming to make sure our transportation system works for everyone.

What do you mean by “pricing?” What’s on the table?

The Pricing for Equitable Mobility project will explore a wide range of pricing strategies. These are strategies which use a fee to more accurately reflect the demand for using transportation infrastructure. We already put a price on many things in our transportation system based on their availability, value and impact, such as parking spaces. Fees help manage demand for limited space and resources, help cover costs of taking care of infrastructure, and help residents consider the impact of their actions on the environment and society.

Through this project, we’ll be exploring many types of pricing strategies, including but not limited to:

- The cost of parking
- Fees based on a geographic area or certain times of day
- Tolls on freeways or other roads
- Fees based on specific types of trips (such as private-for-hire rides)
- The creation of congestion zones or cordons drawn around a specific area
- Fees based on vehicle miles traveled or other measures of road use

Why are we considering this?

Cities around the world are already experimenting with ways to “price” congestion, inequities, and the impact to the climate. “Pricing” actually describes a wide range of strategies such as tolling or variable parking prices. In places like London and Stockholm, pricing helps encourage people to drive less, drive at different times, carpool, take transit, walk, bike, or consider other options. In the U.S., New York City, Seattle, and San Francisco are all implementing or considering pricing strategies.

The truth is, we can’t build our way out of congestion. Studies show that simply adding more space on the roads for cars only leads to worse traffic. However, by using pricing strategies designed for our local context, we can bring efficiency to our roadways to the benefit of us all.

How can pricing make our transportation system more equitable?

Right now, our transportation system isn't equitable. Marginalized and underrepresented communities face barriers that impact their mobility and access—due to gentrification, displacement, historic underinvestment and a transportation funding system based on regressive gas taxes. A greater proportion of Portlanders who use transit come from communities of color than drive alone to work, and congestion is significantly slowing down our bus system. Furthermore, people of lower income and wealth levels pay a much higher proportion of their annual income on transportation on average.

Pricing has the potential to address the inequitable benefits and burdens of our current system, both through reducing traffic on our roadways and supporting investment in transit or other improvements. Around the world, pricing systems have been designed to maximize benefits and minimize impacts on those who are most vulnerable, such as through income exemptions and fee assistance programs. Research shows adequate travel choices are key to ensuring pricing systems don't have disproportionate impacts.

For more information on how pricing can lead to more equitable outcomes, read the recent [TransForm report, "Pricing Roads, Advancing Equity."](#)

How can pricing help us move toward our climate goals?

Approximately 42% of our local carbon emissions come from the transportation sector and these emissions have increased in recent years, despite cars becoming more fuel efficient. As more and more people move to and through Portland, our typical transportation behaviors are not sustainable—for our roadways, our economy, or our environment. To meet our climate goals and avoid the worst effects of the climate crisis, we all need to find more sustainable ways of getting around the city. Pricing can help encourage more sustainable, efficient traveling behavior, such as carpooling, taking transit, biking, walking or rolling as a pedestrian. Many cities that have implemented pricing strategies have seen significant reductions in greenhouse gases—Stockholm, London, Singapore and Milan all reduced CO₂ emissions by 14% or more due to congestion pricing!

How are you engaging the community in this conversation?

To advise the City on the design of potential pricing strategies and priorities for any revenue generated through pricing, we are convening a Pricing for Equitable Community Task Force in fall 2019. The Task Force will meet monthly and represent diverse perspectives, interests and expertise from across our community. Task Force meetings will be open to the public.

The Pricing for Equitable Mobility Community Task Force will inform PBOT and BPS as they consider if and how new pricing strategies could potentially be used to **improve mobility, address the climate crisis and advance equity for people historically underserved by the transportation system** in Portland, including, but not limited to, low-income Portlanders and communities of color.

Specifically, the Task Force will develop recommendations around:

- whether to implement new pricing strategies;
- the design of potential new pricing strategies; and
- priorities for reinvesting any pricing revenue in transportation-related projects, programs, and services that serve historically underserved communities and increase the equity of our system.

The Task Force will also help to inform the City's participation in ODOT's separate Portland Metro Area Value Pricing project and Metro's technical regional pricing study and analysis.

Who is involved in the Pricing for Equitable Mobility Community Task Force? How can I participate?

The Task Force will be comprised of approximately 20 stakeholders with differing areas of expertise, but who all share a commitment to improved mobility and transportation justice. We will seek Task Force members with first-hand experience and expertise in areas such as: transportation justice/environmental justice; business; a variety of transportation modes (transit, pedestrian, bicycling and freight); disability rights; transportation safety; youth transportation experience; climate change; neighborhood needs; workforce development; and academia/major institutions.

All Task Force members will be expected to participate and share their unique perspectives in Task Force discussions. As the resolution passed by City Council on July 10, 2019 directs the group to advise on pricing strategies that advance transportation justice objectives, Task Force members will be expected to demonstrate experience or a willingness to consider the needs of those who have been historically underserved by the transportation system in Portland, including, but, not limited to, low-income Portlanders and communities of color.

When could we start introducing new pricing strategies?

Some pilot strategies could be implemented on City of Portland-owned infrastructure in the next year or two, while other strategies will require significant regional collaboration and may take many years to implement. All strategies will be thoroughly vetted by the Pricing for Equitable Mobility Task Force, City of Portland staff and City Council before implementation. At this stage, we are still exploring the viability of different strategies and how they might work in the Portland context.

Will everyone have to pay?

Who pays fees depends on the pricing strategy. At this stage, we are still exploring the viability of many different pricing policies and how they might work in the Portland context. Payment structures and any exemptions will be carefully considered by the Pricing for Equitable Mobility Task Force, City of Portland staff and City Council before implementation.

What will you do with any revenue generated from new pricing strategies?

The Pricing for Equitable Community Task Force will help identify priorities for any revenue generated through potential pricing policies. The City of Portland's Transportation System Plan and other planning documents, like the PBOT Strategic Plan and Climate Action Plan, set out targets and goals related to equity, mode shift and carbon emissions. These strategic priorities and public input will be carefully considered in determining how pricing revenue could be invested.

How can I learn more?

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