

PORTLAND'S PRICING OPTIONS FOR EQUITABLE MOBILITY



Why consider a new approach to pricing?

Between 2020-2021, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) in partnership with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) convened a community task force to explore a complex question:

Could we use new pricing strategies in Portland to improve mobility, address the climate crisis and move toward a more equitable transportation system?

Our transportation system today doesn't work for everyone. And with 600,000 new residents expected to live in the Portland region by 2040, many of the problems we're experiencing now—like worsening traffic, rising carbon emissions, poor air quality and high crash rates—are due to get worse. These challenges disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC), Portlanders with low incomes, and people with disabilities.

Regional interest in pricing—sometimes called “congestion pricing,” “value pricing” or “mobility pricing”—has increased in recent years as we grapple with how to combat these challenges and better manage our roads. Through the Pricing Options for Equitable Mobility (POEM) project, the City sought to understand if and how pricing could work here in Portland to advance our goals.

Pricing refers to strategies that involve charging people for driving or using roadway space. These charges can vary based on different factors, for instance, how congested the roads are, the time of day, income levels or what type of vehicle is using the road. By applying a charge, pricing can help people consider the impact of their travel choices and encourage different options (like carpooling, traveling at off-peak hours or using other, non-driving options when possible), which help to create a more efficient, more equitable and more sustainable system for all.



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PRICING STRATEGIES EXPLORED THROUGH THE POEM PROJECT:



Prices on parking



Prices on vehicle-based commercial services (e.g., private for-hire trips and urban delivery)



Highway tolling



Cordons or area pricing



Road usage or per-mile charges

THE POEM COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

Between January 2020 and July 2021, the POEM Task Force—comprised of 19 community members representing diverse perspectives, interests and expertise from across Portland—met monthly to advise the City on if and how new pricing strategies could advance equitable mobility.

Over the course of these 18 months, the Task Force:

- **Learned about the history of transportation and mobility in our region** and why centering racial equity matters.
- **Developed a shared, working definition** of equitable mobility (see back).
- **Learned about how pricing strategies have been used in other places** and why they are being considered in Portland and the Metro region.
- **Explored five different typologies of pricing**, identifying opportunities, risks and questions for further analysis.
- **Reviewed preliminary modeling of different pricing strategies** and impacts on the transportation system.
- **Deliberated and adopted recommendations** for City leadership.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY LEADERSHIP

On July 12, 2021, the Task Force voted to adopt their recommendations to City leadership. A majority of members had to approve of a recommendation for it to advance, and all recommendations received support from at least 16 members of the 19-member Task Force. The following is a summary of the group's recommendations—a complete copy is available on the POEM website.

www.portland.gov/transportation/planning/pricing-options-equitable-mobility-poem#toc-poem-community-task-force

Principles for pricing for equitable mobility

Overarching themes that should apply to all future pricing policy analysis and development:

- Pricing holds promise as a strategy to help move people and goods in a more efficient, climate-friendly and equitable way, but **ONLY** if it is designed, implemented and adjusted with intention.
- The City should urgently advance pricing options for equitable mobility policies. Failure to act is not an option.
- The City should utilize the Equitable Mobility Framework (see back) to guide future pricing and transportation policy deliberations.
- Pricing is just one policy tool and not a standalone solution.
- The City should design future pricing strategies according to the following guidelines:
 - Prioritize the goal of reducing traffic demand.
 - Provide exemptions for households living on low incomes.
 - Center climate and equity outcomes.
 - Reinvest revenue generated from pricing in strategies that further expand equitable mobility.
 - Reduce unequal burdens of technology and enforcement.

Nearer-term pricing recommendations

Specific strategies the Task Force thinks the City should pursue in the next 1-3 years:

- Create a flexible commuter benefits program requiring employers who provide free/subsidized parking to offer that value in cash or alternative transportation benefits.
- Create new priced on-street parking permit and meter districts and reduce the time and complexity involved in approving new districts.
- Develop and implement a fee on privately-owned, off-street parking lots.
- Accelerate implementation of the 2018 Performance-Based Parking Management policy.
- Develop and implement a fee on urban delivery, including on-demand parcel and food delivery services, to reduce negative mobility, climate and safety impacts.
- Modify the existing fee structure on private for-hire transportation to reduce negative mobility, climate and safety impacts.
- Advocate for amending the Oregon state constitutional restriction that limits use of funds generated through taxes on motor vehicles.
- Advocate for equitable mobility principles and design in the state toll program.

Longer-term pricing recommendations

Strategies the City should continue exploring, but may take longer to implement:



Truly dynamic demand-based parking pricing



A locally controlled road usage charge



A Central City cordon

Complementary strategies

Policy areas that are most vital to invest in in parallel with pricing:

- **Public transit** infrastructure, operations and service.
- **Bike and pedestrian** infrastructure and programs.
- **Traffic safety** improvements.
- **Incentives and financial support** for different travel options.
- **Strategies to encourage shifting** to electric/more fuel-efficient cars, freight and buses.
- **Affordable housing** connected to multi-modal transportation options.
- **Land use policy** that leads to more connected, complete and inclusive neighborhoods.

Implementation next steps

Policy areas that are most vital to invest in parallel with pricing:

- **Take a leadership role** in advancing transformative pricing policies.
- **Invest in regular data collection** and surveying to inform equity analyses.
- **Study near and longer-term mobility impacts** of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Conduct wider community engagement** to inform further pricing policy development.
- **Partner with community members, businesses and organizations** to build coalitions to champion transformative solutions.
- **Explore models for a unified financial assistance system** for households living on low incomes.



DEFINING EQUITABLE MOBILITY

Over its first few meetings, the Task Force developed a working draft Equitable Mobility Framework to guide conversation and analysis, explore tradeoffs, and inform decision making. The Equitable Mobility Framework was inspired by and adapted from the Greenlining Institute's Mobility Equity Framework: www.greenlining.org/publications/2018/mobility-equity-framework.

The Equitable Mobility Framework includes five categories that represent what community members care about in the mobility system, as well as 17 indicators to help to evaluate the impacts and opportunities of different policy ideas.

WHO ARE WE PRIORITIZING?

This framework prioritizes extending benefits, reducing disparities and improving safety for Black people, Indigenous people and People of Color (BIPOC communities). Leading with race, the Framework will also be used to consider impacts on people with disabilities, Portlanders with low incomes, multi-lingual individuals and displaced communities.

Why center race?

Because racism is a contributing factor to disparities in equitable mobility: unequal access to mobility options, sustainability and health outcomes, experiences of safety in public space and economic opportunity. Addressing racism itself must be part of the work of creating a more equitable transportation system.

WHAT'S NEXT?

After two years of analysis and Task Force conversation, the POEM project suggests that pricing is a promising and currently under-utilized tool that could help make our transportation system more efficient, address the inequities we see today and help reduce carbon emissions.

The POEM project was the start of a conversation. Before implementation of these recommendations,

WORKING DRAFT EQUITABLE MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

WE CARE ABOUT



Moving People & Goods

Indicators: EFFICIENCY, TRANSPORTATION AFFORDABILITY, CONNECTIVITY, AVAILABILITY, RELIABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, QUALITY



Sustainability & Health

Indicators: CLIMATE IMPACT, AIR QUALITY, HEALTH IMPACT



Safety

Indicators: TRAFFIC SAFETY, PERSONAL SAFETY



Economic Opportunity

Indicators: JOB CREATION, WORKING CONDITIONS, CONNECTED THRIVING LOCAL ECONOMY



Equitable Transportation Planning Process

Indicators: INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH, ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

more public engagement and community input will be critical to further shape and design pricing options that truly advance equitable mobility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION and to sign up for updates about the POEM Project, visit www.portland.gov/transportation/planning/pricing-options-equitable-mobilitypoem



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