

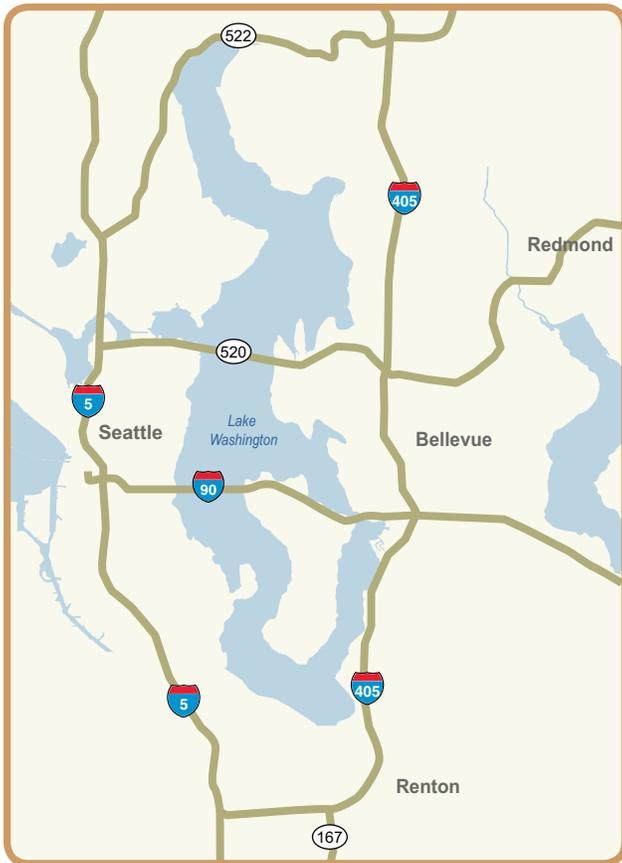


## **520 Tolling Implementation Committee**

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**Tolling Report Prepared for the  
Washington State Legislature  
January 28, 2009**

# executive summary



Lake Washington and surrounding highways

The 520 Tolling Implementation Committee was created by the Washington State Legislature in 2008 to evaluate tolls as a means of financing a portion of the 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program, engage citizens and regional leadership in the evaluation, enhance understanding of tolling alternatives, and report to the Governor and Legislature in 2009.

The existing State Route 520 bridge structures across Lake Washington and Portage Bay are vulnerable to earthquakes and windstorms and need to be replaced. In 2008, the Legislature asked for an evaluation of toll scenarios that could produce \$1.5 to \$2.0 billion in financing.

The Committee and its staff developed and evaluated ten scenarios with tolls on 520 or tolls on both 520 and I-90. The Committee initially evaluated four scenarios, and collected extensive public and local jurisdictional input on those results. That input helped staff develop an additional six scenarios for evaluation. The Committee then re-engaged the public and local jurisdictions with results for all ten scenarios. It now reports all findings to the Governor and Legislature.

## Overall Findings From Public Engagement

As requested by the Legislature, the Committee and its staff led a public outreach and input-gathering effort in conjunction with the tolling analysis and evaluation process. Thousands of people participated directly by attending Committee meetings or public open houses, visiting the website, taking part in a web survey or writing to the Committee. A random sample, statistically-valid telephone survey was also conducted. Committee members and staff met regularly with jurisdictions, technical staff and other stakeholder groups to understand their concerns and aspirations related to tolling. The Committee found the following:

- Generally, people support tolling, and support tolling the existing 520 bridge in 2010 (59 percent in web survey and 64 percent in phone survey).
- The phone survey showed that most people support the idea of tolling I-90 in addition to 520, although most users of I-90—in particular Mercer Island residents—are opposed to this concept. Support increases among I-90 users if toll revenue is used for I-90 improvements.
- Among those who support tolling, variable tolling is also supported as a way to reduce congestion and improve traffic conditions. Those who oppose the overall concept of tolling also oppose variable tolling.
- Electronic tolling is also supported. Most people appear to understand the connection between electronic tolling (no toll booths needed) and improving traffic flow. Some did ask questions about logistics associated with electronic tolling.



The Committee aimed to provide guidance on a key question: *“How can funding be secured for the new 520 bridge under the best terms for taxpayers, bridge users and adjacent communities?”*

## Overall Findings from Scenario Analysis

### Financial capacity

- The toll scenarios examined raise between \$522 million and \$2,457 million in corridor funding from tolls. The most a 520-only scenario raised was \$1.5 billion. Most scenarios that toll both 520 and I-90 raised more than \$2.0 billion.
- Only one 520-only scenario met the low end of the Legislative target (\$1.5 billion).
- All two-bridge scenarios (520 and I-90) met the Legislative target and four of five scenarios exceeded the high end (\$2.0 billion).

### Begin tolling in 2010 vs. 2016

- Tolling 520 in 2010 raises more funds and may reduce the cost of borrowing compared to tolling 520 in 2016.
- Tolling starting in 2010 enables use of \$154 million in federal funds from the USDOT Urban Partnership Agreement. There would be \$86 million available for tolling and active traffic management infrastructure. An additional \$41 million would be used to buy transit coaches in the corridor. \$27 million would be available in funds for ferries.

### Traffic conditions with tolling

- When tolls are in place, volumes go down and speeds improve on the tolled facility.
- If tolls are placed on both bridges, traffic volumes go down and speeds improve on both bridges.
- Speeds decrease on alternate routes. This decrease, however, is less than the speed improvements on the tolled routes.

### Diversion due to tolls

- People may change their travel choices to take transit, carpool, or vanpool; shift the time of day of their trip; or change their destination.
- Some people do change their route, but the overall effect of those route changes tends to be distributed across the transportation system.
- Diversion is reduced by existing congestion levels, limited alternate routes and resulting lack of time savings from using another route.

In addition to these findings, the Committee is also providing the Legislature with requested research into advanced tolling technologies; new technologies

for managing traffic; opportunities to partner with businesses; and potential traffic mitigation opportunities. Appendices listed below contain additional details and analysis for all topics and are available on disk and on the Committee's website (build520.org).

## Mitigation Recommendations

ESHB 3096 requested the Committee recommend mitigation measures associated with potential diversion resulting from tolling. The Committee is recommending a two-part approach.

In Part 1, keeping traffic on 520 is the priority. The intent is to manage toll levels to keep people on the 520 bridge while also meeting revenue expectations. This can be accomplished through variable tolling, identifying funds to provide transit service and working with employers to reduce congestion. Ultimately, the new 520 bridge, with its expanded capacity, will keep traffic on 520.

Part 2 includes recommendations targeted to the five locations most likely affected by potential diversion (522, I-90, I-405, I-5 and the University area) as found in traffic diversion analysis. Mitigation measures could include system-wide instrumentation and traffic monitoring, electronic driver information signs (particularly for the 522 corridor), advanced traffic technology, transit expansion and coordination for new service, and related projects such as new or expanded park-and-rides.



### Appendices available on disk and on the website:

#### Volume 1:

A: Legislation - ESHB 3096

B: Outreach Events and Materials

C: Travel Demand Modeling and Financial Analysis

D: Travel Demand Model Peer Review

E: Active Traffic Management

F: Toll Collection Technology

G: Mitigation Recommendations for Diversion

H: Discussions on I-90

#### Volume 2:

I: Public Comments

- Letters from jurisdictions
- Summaries of public comment
- All public comments received