Washington State Department of Transportation

All-electronic tolling on the SR 520 corridor

The 520 corridor will use 100 percent electronic tolling – no toll booths at all. All traffic on 520 will be able to cross without stopping to pay, thus allowing traffic to flow at normal highway speeds.

1. Electronic tolling, without toll booths, eliminates:

- congestion caused by toll booths – no need for traffic to stop or exit the roadway, tolls collected at normal highway speeds, for smooth-flowing traffic;
- toll booth related accidents – greatly decreases safety issues related to stop and go traffic;
- need for additional costly right of way in this congested corridor – at least $100 to $200 million to install a toll plaza;
- costly cash collection – twice the cost of electronic toll collection;
- delays in tolling commencement – toll booths would require new environmental assessments, right-of-way acquisition, equipment procurement, construction of toll plaza.

2. Paying tolls

- 80% of transactions are projected to be *Good To Go!* account holders using transponders.
- Vehicles without transponders have license plates photographed and can prepay or be invoiced for the toll, which will include an administrative fee. (See below for details)

3. *Good To Go!* electronic toll accounts

With *Good to Go!* electronic tolls are collected with a transponder, about the size of a credit card. Drivers affix the transponder on the inside of their cars' windshields. When driving on a tolled facility, an overhead antenna links the transponder to account information, and deducts the correct toll from a prepaid account. Automatic replenishment allows drivers to easily manage accounts by authorizing payments from a credit card or bank account.

4. Paying a toll without a transponder

Some people will not have transponders or may be visiting from out of town. Their vehicles will have their license plate photographed. They could pre-pay or post-pay the toll, which will include an additional administrative fee for processing. Signage in the 520 corridor will direct drivers on how to easily pay their tolls if they do not have transponders. Transponder technology and license-plate recognizing cameras are used today as part of the *Good to Go!* program on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and at tolling facilities around the world.

5. An interoperable toll system

The intent is to create one system that allows drivers to have one transponder, one customer service contact, and one statement for all toll transactions in the state. Their *Good To Go!* account will be valid anywhere they travel in Washington – including the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the SR 267 HOT lanes between Renton and Auburn, as well as on SR 520. Such an integrated system requires a coordinated statewide effort to ensure all operations work together and all tolling policies are consistent. This single consolidated system also will allow for cost savings with a single operations structure and an opportunity for efficiencies in staffing, inventory, and equipment.

6. Privacy issues for toll payers

Only photos of vehicles are taken, not the driver or occupants. All personal data is kept as confidential information. Each transponder is assigned a unique number that is linked to a specific customer account. The radio frequency identity (RFID) chips used in transponders do not hold any personal information, only a number that matches to a customer's prepaid account. The system is encrypted. Under no circumstances is individual customer information disclosed for use by marketing firms. Information is only available to the account holder(s) and to authorized law enforcement officials in the conduct of criminal investigations with a bona fide court order or subpoena.

7. All electronic tolling (open road tolling) is currently operating in:

- Toronto, Canada – 407 ETR (1997)
- Melbourne, Australia – Citylink (2000)
- Texas – Westpark Tollway, Houston (2004); SH 121, Dallas (2006); SH 49, Tyler (2006); US 183A, Austin (2008)
- Illinois – converted 20 toll booths to ORT (2005-06)
- Colorado – E-470, Denver (2009)
- Florida – Orlando-Orange County (2008-09); Miami-Dade Expressway (2006); Tampa (2006)
- North Carolina - Triangle Expressway (2010)
- New Jersey - Turnpike Authority (NJTA) system (2010)

8. Variable tolling changes by time of day to reduce congestion by:

- encouraging people who can make adjustments in their schedules to switch to off-peak times.
- encouraging as many people as possible to remain on the bridge during the off peak to minimize diversion to other routes.

9. Impacts on bridge speeds

- When tolls are in place traffic volumes go down and speeds improve.
- Speeds increase an average of 10 to 30 miles per hour on the 520 bridge.
- Speeds on I-90 are projected to decrease by less than 5 mph.

10. Diversion with tolling

Approximately 75% of traffic will stay on SR 520, either by paying the toll, carpooling, taking transit or changing the time of their trip. Some people do change their route. Modeling of traffic patterns indicates that about 5% of SR 520 traffic might shift to I-90; 2% to I-405; and 1% to SR 522.

11. Who sets the toll rates?

Under state law, the Transportation Commission is the entity that sets toll rates. The roles of the department and transportation commission are expected to be in accordance with RCW 47.56 as established by the legislature. The commission is the toll setting authority and the department builds and operates toll facilities.

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