



# Developing equitable Road Usage Charge legislation

As our state continues to grow, we have the opportunity and responsibility to ensure that we have a clean and just transportation system and the corresponding funding to maintain it.

We urge the legislature to design and implement any new Road Usage Charge (RUC) policy not as a narrow replacement for the gas tax, but as a means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution while building an equitable transportation system that benefits health, safety, mobility, and access to opportunity for all.

We offer the following proposals to support these goals.

## **1. Design new revenue to fund the transportation system we need, rather than restrict spending to highways only**

We currently underfund transit, walking, biking and maintenance needs statewide<sup>1</sup>, in large part due to restrictions on gas tax spending. WSDOT needs \$1.24 billion annually to preserve and maintain the transportation system<sup>2</sup>, but the last revenue package dedicated only 9% of funds to highway preservation, and 52% (\$8 billion) to new highway capacity.<sup>3</sup> In statewide transit funding, less than 3% of the funding comes from the state.<sup>4</sup> Washington State provides just \$14.07 in transit funding per capita, compared to a national average of \$42.11 per capita.<sup>5</sup> In addition to addressing unmet needs, funding more transportation options can meet the goals of reducing road congestion and asset management: funding transit and transit access, for example, helps reduce personal vehicle trips, thereby reducing road wear and congestion.

- Do not restrict or silo RUC revenue to “highway purposes”

- Prioritize maintenance and preservation over new highway capacity
- Use adopted statewide transportation policy goals and criteria in investment decision-making

## **2. Create a more equitable system by setting a progressive rate structure, and ensure implementation considers the needs of overburdened communities and vulnerable populations**

WSTC received federal funding to conduct an equity analysis of RUC. This work and these findings must be incorporated into the policy and implementation plan, including things such as:

- How to progressively structure a RUC. Consider both financial impacts, payment methods, logistical barriers to income verification and the accuracy of proxies for ability to pay
- More extensive payment and reporting options and user interface testing for non-English languages, and a range of visual, mobility and intellectual disabilities.
- Consider payment methods for those with no bank account or smartphone.
- Maintain a rigorous focus on a secure data system to protect individuals' rights and privacy.

## **3. Strategically structure and implement a RUC to account for and address environmental impacts and other policy goals.**

A RUC aims to ensure that those using the roads are paying for costs to the system; but miles driven is only one proxy. For example, the weight and size of the vehicle can directly contribute to the scale of damage done to road condition. Additionally, other externalities are critical to consider: GHG emissions, local air pollutants, congestion, disproportionate costs, injuries and deaths, and stormwater runoff are all societal costs of transportation that we do not adequately fund or account for.

- Rate structures should account for the way different vehicles or behaviors add to these costs.
- Consider impacts and mitigation to areas with disproportionately high environmental exposures.
- Use protected RUC data to understand VMT in health disparity areas, as well as aggregate VMT to understand trends and behavior change.
- Encourage use of GPS to allow for integration with local jurisdictions for additional needs.
- Proactively work to coordinate with existing tolling and local congestion charging efforts.

- 1 <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Meetings/Documents/Agendas/2019%20Agendas/June%2026%202019/TransitCapitalNeedsPPT.pdf>
- 2 <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020/02/03/Budget-SupplementalRequest2020.pdf>
- 3 <https://wstc.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2019-1118-Transportation-101.pdf>
- 4 <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/fulltext/M3079/spt.pdf>
- 5 <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Meetings/Documents/Agendas/2019%20Agendas/June%2026%202019/TransitCapitalNeedsPPT.pdf>

