

Racial Equity Outcomes: A Path Toward Equitable Mobility

Can new road pricing strategies be used to improve mobility for people, address the climate crisis, and advance equity in Seattle?

If yes, *how* can we do it?



WHAT IS ROAD PRICING FOR EQUITABLE MOBILITY?

- Charges people or companies for driving or using roadway space in a way that distributes the costs and benefits equitably.
- Encourages people with the most access, flexibility, and options to rethink their transportation choices and change driving behavior.
- Creates a new, user-based, revenue to expand transportation options for people, but especially for those most harmed by past and current inequities in the transportation system.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CENTERING RACE IN POLICYMAKING

This work focuses on the needs of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, and communities that have historically and currently been harmed and underinvested in by the government. These include people with low income, refugees, immigrants, people living with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people, those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, women and female-identifying people, youth, aging adults, people formerly incarcerated, and those at high risk for displacement or displaced communities.

— As defined by the Transportation Equity Framework, Seattle Department of Transportation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Racial Equity Toolkit is the culmination of many thoughtful contributions and perspectives, which have been integral to shaping not just this assessment but also the path forward toward equitable mobility in Seattle.



Thank you to ...

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The Seattle Road Pricing Leadership Team:

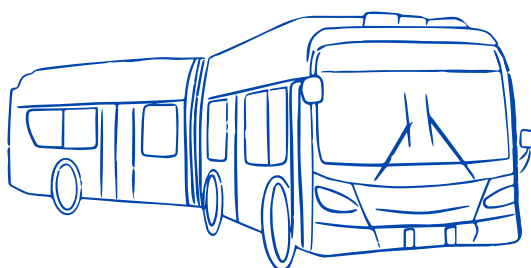
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And the City staff who helped begin this work, including Kelly O'Brien, Office of Civil Rights, RSJI Operations & Implementation Advisor; Lylianna Allala, OSE, Climate Justice Director; and Danielle Friedman, SDOT, Senior Communications Lead.

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Continued engagement and leadership from **Transportation Choices Coalition** and **Front and Centered** in the thought-process around road-pricing's potential to be a path for stable, progressive transportation funding.

Early input and shaping from members of the **Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board, Environmental Justice Committee**, and **Transportation Equity Workgroup**.



Pricing Strategies Workgroup members, whose input and expertise have deeply informed this Racial Equity Toolkit and recommendations for Pricing for Equitable Mobility in Seattle.

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Members of the Pricing Strategies Workgroup convened on Zoom.

Thank you for reading City of Seattle's Pricing for Equitable Mobility Racial Equity Toolkit.

This work was funded by the American Cities Climate Challenge, and we are deeply thankful for their climate leadership, thought partnership, and financial support during what has been a challenging time for cities.

For years, the City of Seattle has heard from community members, local organizations, and businesses that we must do more to make transportation safe, affordable, reliable, and equitable. At the same time, we must urgently accelerate our work to address the climate crisis, including tackling the transportation emissions that make up the largest proportion (60%) of Seattle's core emissions.

Roads are used by everyone, but not everyone pays their fair share, contributes the same amount of emissions, or has equitable access to safe and reliable transportation choices. The City is working to expand and improve zero-emission transportation options, such as supporting light rail expansions, safe and accessible walking, biking, rolling, and transit-only lanes that allow buses to move more freely on our streets. We are also working to reduce emissions by spurring the electrification of everything that moves people, goods, and services throughout the city, including electrifying high-polluting, high-mileage heavy duty vehicles and ride sharing vehicles, while planning and installing the infrastructure to support it all!

We know what we need to do, but our greatest challenge lies in finding means to equitably generate revenue to scale up the transportation options and climate actions we all want to see. Road pricing can be a tool to provide needed revenue to fund things like first and last mile rides to transit, more bike lanes and sidewalks, affordable or free transit for all, access to affordable electric vehicles, and more. We are proud to be part of the network of cities exploring what equitable road pricing can look like.

The last two years were a difficult time for deep community engagement. That is why **we are extremely thankful to the Pricing Strategies Workgroup, who agreed to partner with the Office of Sustainability & Environment and Seattle Department of Transportation to learn about road pricing policies, the inequities that shape our transportation system, and our shared climate challenge.** Together, they articulated the Racial Equity Outcomes that they would like to see emerge from any road-pricing policies. We are eager to share the outcome of their work with you and our partner cities around the world.



Jessyn Farrell

Office of Sustainability
& Environment, Director



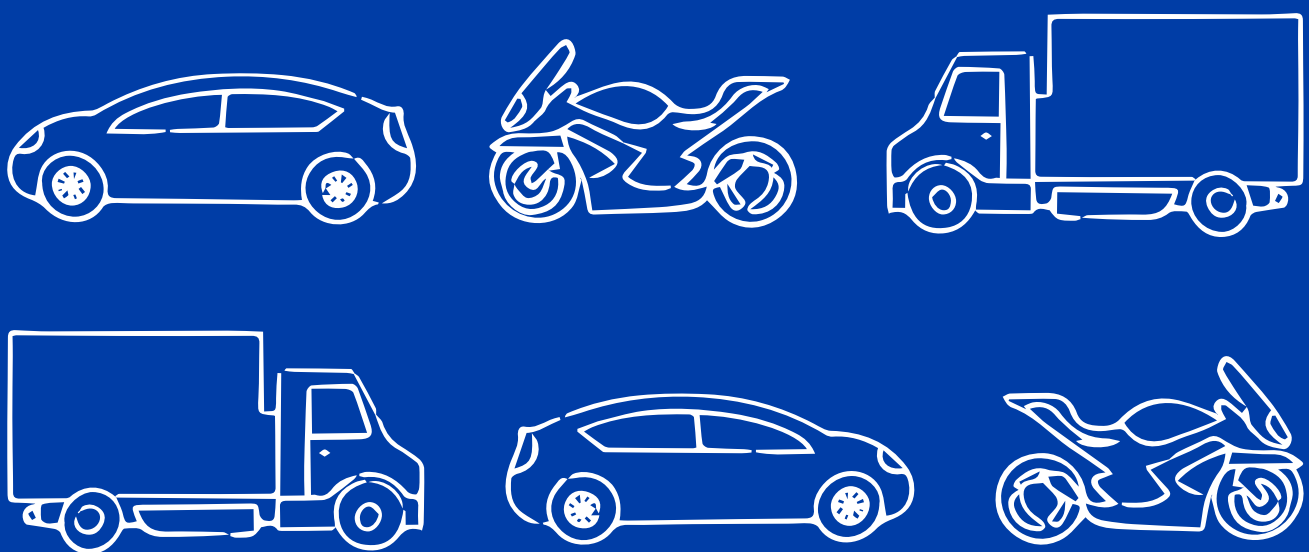
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What is a Racial Equity Toolkit?

This document sets a foundation for the measurable Racial Equity Outcomes that members of the community would like to see from ANY road pricing policy to ensure it is implemented equitably. The City of Seattle's Racial Equity Toolkit lays out a process and a set of questions to guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, initiatives, programs, and budget issues that address the impacts on racial equity.



Why are we talking about pricing strategies?

With the right tools, we can face the climate crisis head-on and create a transportation system that centers each resident's humanity and supports them in reclaiming their time, health, and well-being.

We are navigating compounding crises with the COVID-19 pandemic, affordable housing shortages, racial injustices, global economic challenges, and accelerated climate change. With careful planning, we can address these crises and create solutions that put us on a path to a more racially just and climate-responsive future.

Our three big challenges:

1. Racial injustice. Our transportation system does not work for everyone. For generations, government policies and disinvestment have disproportionately harmed BIPOC communities and people with low incomes. Because of this, BIPOC communities and communities living with low incomes in the Seattle area are more likely to experience the burdens of inequitable mobility options and the health inequities that come from living in neighborhoods with disproportionately high transportation emissions.

OUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CREATES UNEQUAL AND ADVERSE OUTCOMES



AIR POLLUTION



CARBON EMISSIONS
& CLIMATE
CHANGE



HARMFUL HEALTH
IMPACTS LIKE
ASTHMA



INEQUITABLE
ACCESS TO
OPPORTUNITY



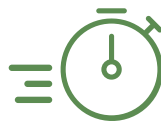
LIMITED BIKING
& WALKING
INFRASTRUCTURE



LIMITED TRANSIT
OPTIONS



UNRELIABLE BUS
SCHEDULES



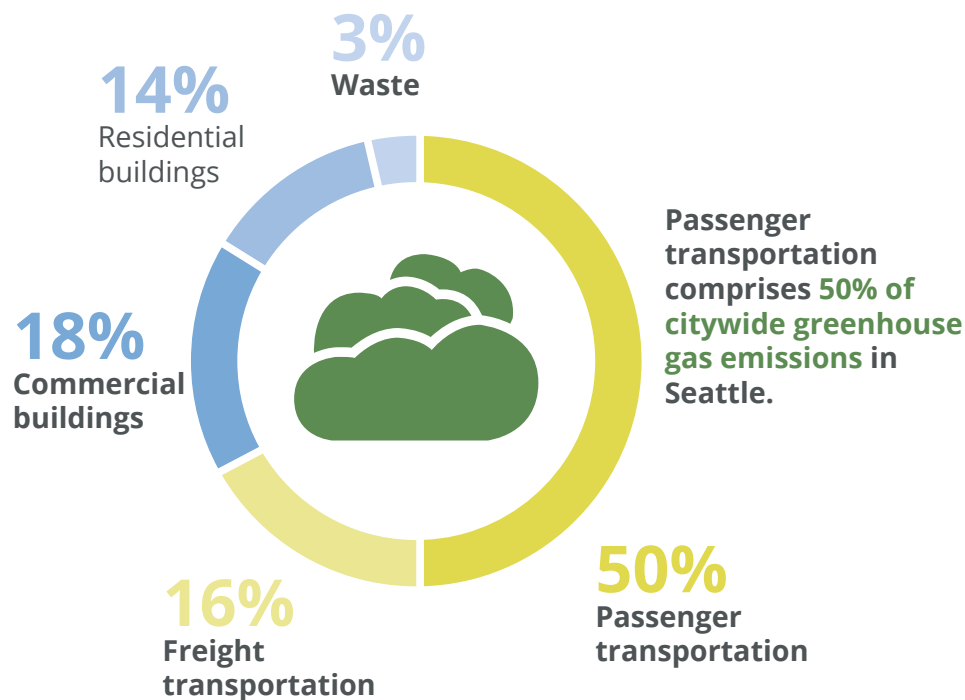
TIME WASTED
IN TRAFFIC



LESS CONNECTED
COMMUNITIES

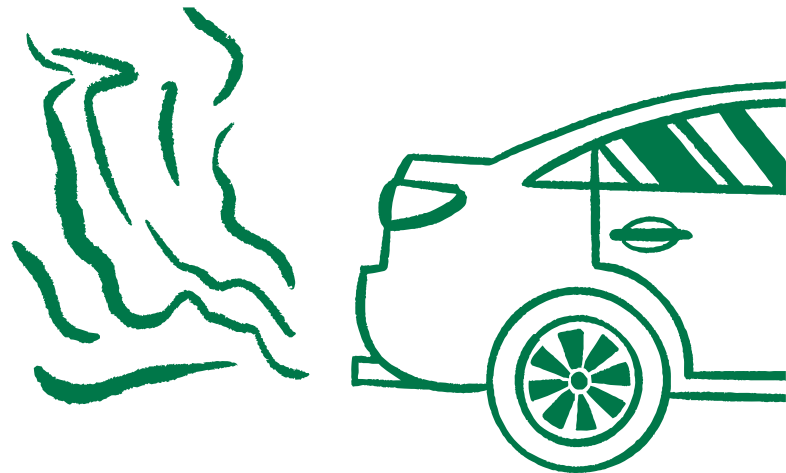
2. Climate change. The transportation system is the main source of Seattle's emissions. We're already experiencing the climate crisis, with extreme summer temperatures, more frequent and devastating wildfires, and increased drought. To be responsive to our climate challenge, we need to transform our city for the better while cutting fossil fuel use and moving to a clean energy economy.

BREAKDOWN OF SEATTLE'S CORE EMISSIONS



3. Regressive funding for transportation. The way we fund transportation is inadequate and inequitable, limiting our possibilities of creating a modern transportation system that works for everyone.

Our local transportation system is funded primarily by local sales taxes—a regressive and inequitable revenue stream. Low- and middle-income households pay up to six times more as a share of their income than the top 1% do. (Source: *Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy*.)



Timeline: Seattle's journey toward road pricing

2018

Seattle joined 25 U.S. cities in the [American Cities Climate Challenge](#), a strategic initiative funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies to accelerate and deepen climate actions and greenhouse gas emissions from building and transportation sectors in cities across the nation. With support from the Challenge, Seattle committed to both exploring congestion pricing in the transportation sector and reducing carbon emissions in the building sector.

2019

The City published the [Seattle Congestion Pricing Study](#), which highlighted work to date, lessons other cities have learned, an initial analysis of different pricing tools, potential equity impacts, and next steps, including needed community conversations and outreach.

The Seattle City Council passed the Seattle Green New Deal Resolution calling for recommendations to “implement a congestion pricing plan only if it is equitable and creates revenue to support transit expansion to benefit low-income, historically marginalized, and transit-disconnected communities first and foremost.”

Early
2020

The COVID-19 outbreak shifted many aspects of City work toward responding to the residents' immediate and urgent needs. It was determined that this was not the time to pursue robust community outreach on a downtown congestion pricing policy, as the City would not be able to fully engage community members to ensure an equitable policy, and the immediate needs of residents and small businesses struggling to survive in the pandemic took precedence for City engagement.

2020

The OSE & SDOT pricing team pivoted to more broadly examine pricing as a concept, and to specifically examine if and how any future pricing policy (from parking pricing to congestion pricing) could be implemented equitably.

The City team convened with existing partners through the Climate Challenge, including [Transportation Choices Coalition](#) and [Front and Centered](#), to begin to explore the viability of equitable pricing and better understand where community pain points and needs were in relation to transportation.

2021

The City team held presentations and discussions with four City-established advisory groups led by community members:

- Environmental Justice Committee
- Transportation Equity Workgroup
- Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board
- Green New Deal Oversight Board

Volunteer representatives from these advisory groups convened as the Pricing Strategies Workgroup for a four-part workshop series to examine various pricing strategies, during which they came to agreement on Racial Equity Outcomes for any pricing strategy the City might explore.

The City and consultant firm Nelson\Nygaard conducted technical research to assess transportation patterns, burdens, and opportunities to inform potential pricing strategies.

2022

The Seattle Department of Transportation published the **Transportation Equity Framework & Implementation Plan**, a set of strategy documents for SDOT decision-makers, employees, stakeholders, partners, and the greater community to utilize as a roadmap to collaboratively create an equitable transportation system. Tactics related to this work from the framework and plan are as follows:

- Tactic 36.1: “Explore an equitable approach to road pricing with BIPOC and vulnerable communities, develop road pricing policy approaches generated from the conversations with BIPOC and vulnerable communities.”
- Tactic 36.3: “Partner and fund BIPOC-led community-based organizations to create community-tailored mode shift solutions.”
- Tactic, 25.4: “Identify policy co-development opportunities to engage with Transportation Equity Workgroup and community members; normalize practice of community engagement at the policy level so community can be involved in policy impacts and decision-making processes.”

The City published the Pricing for Equitable Mobility Racial Equity Toolkit, which you are reading now!

Pricing for Equitable Mobility: A community conversation

Pricing strategies have the potential to bridge inequities and plan for a just transition to a clean fuel economy—if the process centers equity through meaningful community engagement.

The City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment and Seattle Department of Transportation have met—and will continue to meet—with partners and community members to better understand the potential of pricing strategies to improve mobility, address the climate crisis, and serve people equitably.

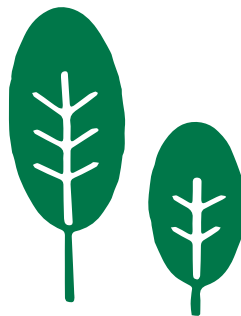
REFLECTIONS ON PRE-PANDEMIC COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

In the City team's review of community conversations held pre-pandemic through initiatives led by the Department of Transportation, Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Planning and Community Development, and Environmental Justice Initiatives, we heard several overarching community concerns, values, and priorities:



Homelessness & Housing

Across all neighborhoods, Seattle residents are concerned about the homelessness crisis and the need for more affordable housing, with transportation and public safety concerns not far behind.



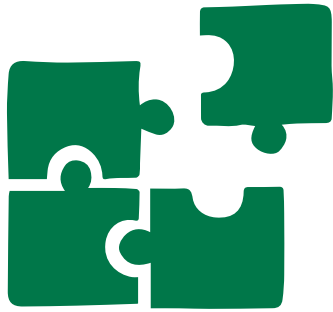
Access to Public Space & Water

People want access to Seattle's natural beauty as well as important cultural connections to the land and water.



Safer & Expansive Transit

People want more transit options and a better overall transit experience, including safety improvements, people-first streets, access to seating, and enhanced lighting.



City & Community Partnerships

Lower-income and communities of color have expressed a desire to collaborate with the City to design policies and programs that work for them.



Improved Public Safety

Some residents expressed they do not always feel safe on city streets and believe that the City should invest in improvements for public safety, as well as safe crossings and pedestrian safety.



Economic & Cultural Opportunity

People desire intentional planning to ensure equitable economic access to opportunity and to protect cultural hubs that are at risk of displacement. Community members expressed a need for green career opportunities for people of color, especially young people.



Environment & Health

People want open spaces, including greenery and green infrastructure, which also create social, psychological, and physical health improvements for the residents, children, and workers who use these spaces.

DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WE'VE HEARD EVEN GREATER EMPHASIS ON RACIAL EQUITY.

In conversations held during the pandemic, the need to address racial inequality across our transportation system was even more pronounced. In conversations with the Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board, Environmental Justice Committee, and Transportation Equity Workgroup, we heard that the people need a more robust and equitable public transportation system, particularly people with lower incomes and BIPOC communities who have been displaced from Seattle.

"The COVID-19 pandemic exposes and magnifies the numerous longstanding inequities oppressing frontline communities. In addition to systemic racism, our extractive economy, and climate, it is another catalytic disruptor that has rocked our entire country and the world at large, and demanding us to consider alternative visions for a brighter future."

—From the Environmental Justice Committee's "Community Conversations Report, Priorities for COVID-19 Response & Recovery," Dec. 2020

From the onset of community engagement on this issue, we have heard that pricing policies **must be implemented equitably or not at all**. Residents and workers have expressed concern with whether pricing, specifically congestion pricing, would be regressive (contributing to the transportation burden of those most harmed by racial inequity) or progressive (reflecting an individual's ability to pay)—especially for those who have been displaced from the city core and for those who do not have other viable transportation options.

*"In the survey and the listening sessions, strong concern was expressed around the effects of new policies or fees on lower income people. Efforts targeting polluters for action like the Clean Fuels Standard, or taxes on polluting industries such as the Carbon Fee, drew much more support than direct user fees such as the road usage charge. Interestingly, when asked what would make these fees acceptable, the most popular answer was ensuring that the funds are invested in ways that create equity and opportunity—rather than making sure wealthier people pay more, or penalizing polluters. **People care about the fairness of the tax; but they are even more interested in the results.**"*

—From Front and Centered's "Just Movement Listening Sessions and Survey Findings," 2020

In January 2022, the MASS Coalition sent a letter to Mayor Harrell emphasizing their priorities for Seattle's transportation system, including:

- Rapidly bringing down Seattle's transportation emissions.
- Achieving rapid mode shift away from single-occupancy driving by stepping up investment in trains and buses and **pursuing equitable approaches to pricing cars.**
- Centering equity and environmental justice in our transportation system.



Seattle transportation: The legacy of colonization and systemic racism

Seattle's racist land use and transportation legacy still influences where people live today, and rising housing costs continue to displace residents.

Overall, residents in neighborhoods with higher-than-average white populations drive more than any other group in Seattle—even though they are most likely to live closest to where they need to go and to have consistent, affordable, and reliable access to transit.

Our transportation system has not equitably invested in neighborhoods with higher-than-average BIPOC populations and populations with low incomes.

Residents in these neighborhoods are more likely to:

1. Face a higher transportation burden because of the costs of car ownership.

- Private vehicles cost the average Seattle household \$9,895 every year.
- 86% of all average household transportation expenses go toward private vehicles.

2. Spend more of their time commuting.

- Commute time for Black residents: 18 more hours every year than white residents.
- Commute time for Black residents with low incomes: 36 more hours every year than white residents.



SOURCE Nelson\Nygaard, *Pricing for Equitable Mobility Technical Paper* (June 2021)

3. Experience the health impacts of living in and spending more time near high-traffic areas with greater air pollution.

- Increased exposure to toxic, long-term pollution and climate change impacts.
- Conditions linked to long commute times, like stress, poor sleep quality, mental or other health impacts, lead to decreased life expectancy.

People living in Seattle's South Park and Georgetown neighborhoods have an expected lifespan that is eight years shorter than the average Seattle resident, and 13 years shorter than the richest Seattle neighborhoods.

Exposure to auto emissions is tied to higher rates of asthma, heart disease, and other health conditions. The neighborhoods that are exposed to the highest level of pollutants from auto emissions are often the same low-income and majority-Black or Latinx neighborhoods that were torn apart by highway construction in the mid-20th century.

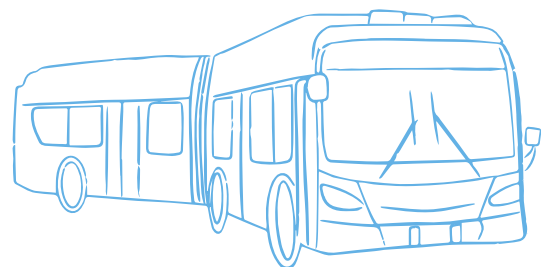
Pricing can be a tool to reduce traffic emissions and associated health impacts that disproportionately impact people of color and people with low incomes.

SOURCE Just Health Action and DRCC/ TAG, The Duwamish Valley Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis (2013)

4. Depend on private vehicles as a way to get around, as a result of our current inadequate and inequitable transportation system.

- Residents in these neighborhoods are more likely to need to commute to somewhere outside the downtown core, and the established commuter network, for their work.

SOURCE Nelson\Nygaard, Pricing for Equitable Mobility Technical Paper (June 2021)



The climate crisis demands bold change

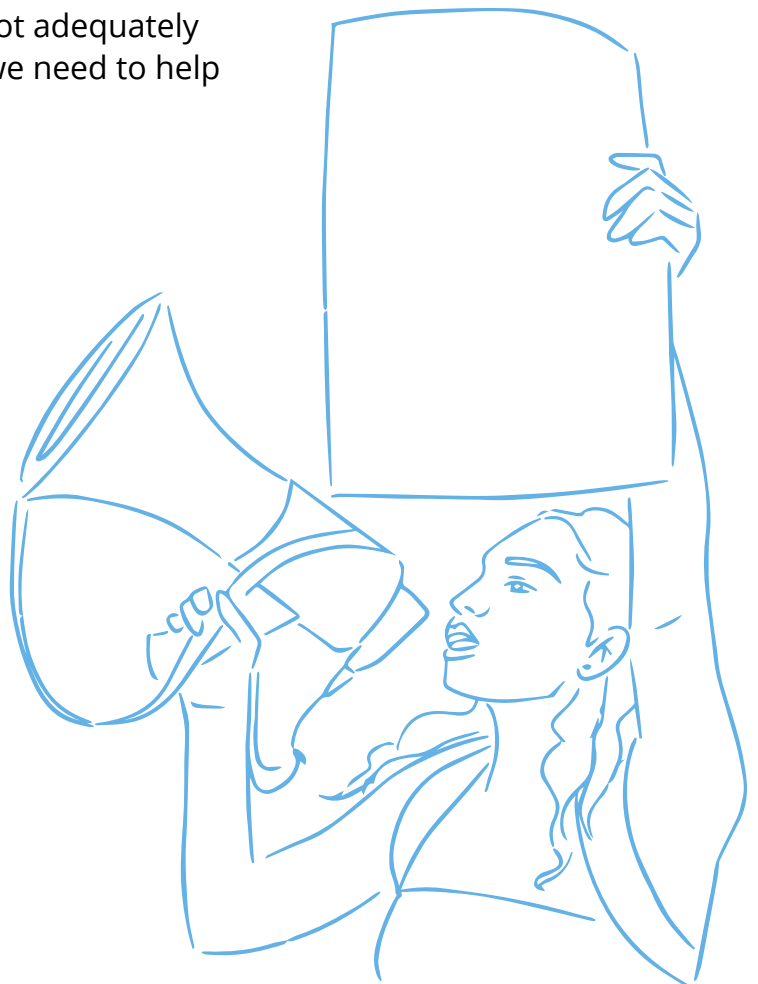
The systems perpetuating harms to BIPOC residents and residents with low incomes are the same ones that are driving the climate crisis.

The City of Seattle has committed to reducing transportation emissions by 82% by 2030. Our Green New Deal demands that Seattle be climate-pollution free by 2030.

Seattle is not on track to make this a reality.

We need to urgently reduce emissions and create greater opportunities for sustainable transit, as well as other mobility solutions that are affordable, reliable, accessible, and ideally electric. And we need to do it in a way that repairs harms, addresses the persistent legacies of racist policies, and actively invests in BIPOC communities.

Right now, our transportation system is not adequately funded to allow us to make the changes we need to help residents thrive in a changing climate.



The way we fund transportation is inadequate and inequitable

WHERE DOES SEATTLE'S TRANSPORTATION FUNDING COME FROM TODAY?

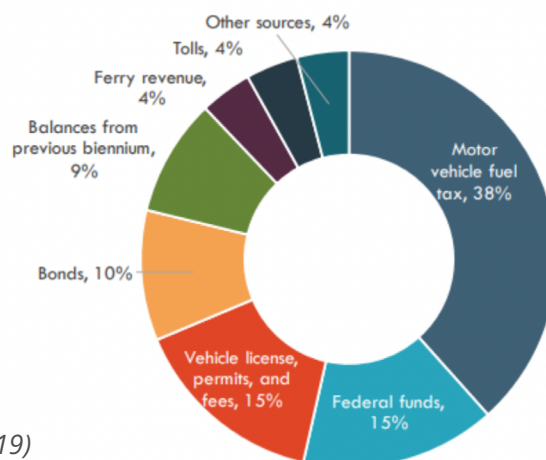
Funding for transportation infrastructure and public transportation services in Seattle and King County comes from multiple revenue sources, including grants, fees, and taxes. State and federal resources come to the City and County through competitive grant processes, as well as through direct allocations.

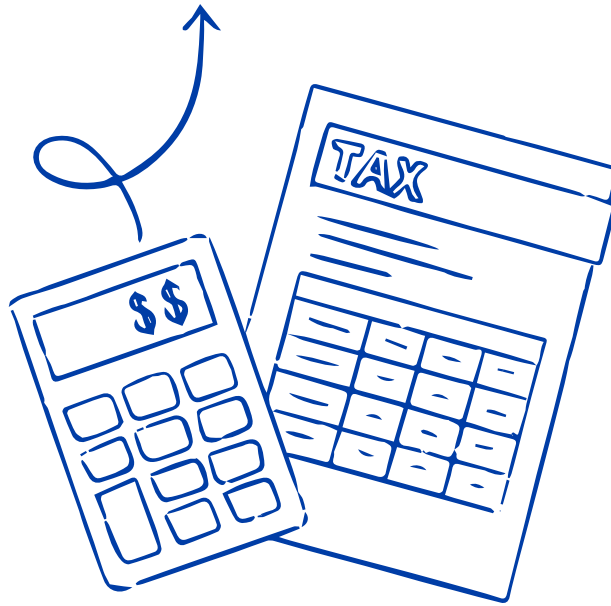
Washington State transportation funding

- Most of Washington's transportation funding comes from fuel tax (38%), which is spent exclusively on highways.
- Washington State receives federal funding allocations (15%) from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration through programs like the National Highway Performance, Surface Transportation Block Grants, Highway Safety Improvement, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement, and National Freight.
- Vehicle fees and permits (15%) are another primary funding source.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION REVENUE SOURCES (2017–2019)

SOURCE *State of Washington Joint Transportation Committee, Assessment of City Transportation Funding Needs (June 2019)*





Local Seattle transportation funding

Funding has restrictions that limit how it can be used. 79% of local transportation funds come from local resources.

Of these local funding resources, 87%* can only be used for any transportation-related expenses. All local unrestricted funds come from taxes: property tax, local businesses and occupation tax, local retail and sales tax, and local utility tax.

In Seattle, property tax is heavily relied on to fund transit operations and capital expenses.

Restricted funds include commercial parking tax, local improvement district funds, Transportation Benefit direct funds, and transportation impact fees.

Funding from other sources is often limited.

State dollars reach cities through three channels: direct distributions through Motor Vehicle Fuel tax (gas tax), local project appropriations, and state competitive grants and loan programs.

However, state funding from sources like gas taxes can only be spent on highways. This doesn't support Seattle residents who rely on public transportation.

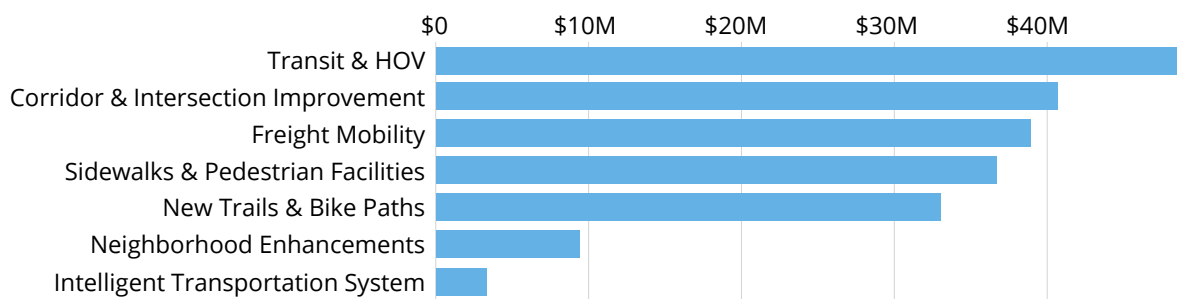
*SOURCE Nelson\Nygaard, *Pricing for Equitable Mobility Technical Paper* (June 2021)

In the past decade, the City of Seattle has launched two initiatives to provide additional funds for transit in the region.

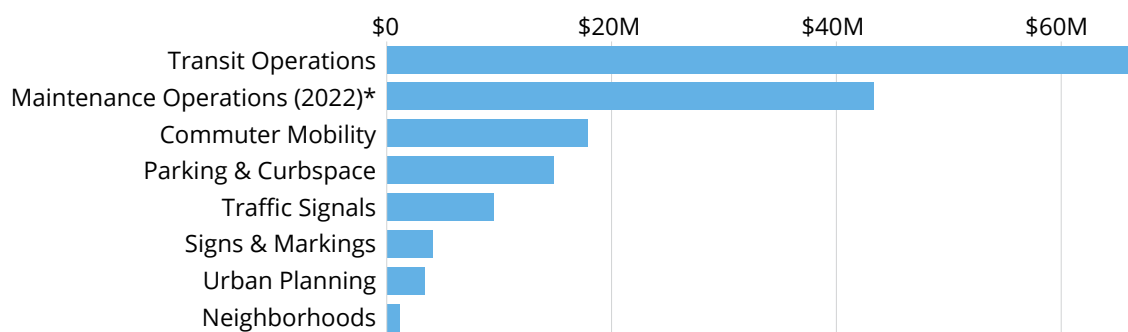
- **Seattle Transportation Benefit District:** Allows the City to collect a 0.15% sales tax, as well as a \$40 vehicle license fee (paid when registering a vehicle), to fund various transportation programs.
- **Levy to Move Seattle:** A nine-year transportation levy which funds infrastructure maintenance and transportation improvements.

The Seattle Department of Transportation is one of the City's largest departments and is tasked with maintaining and building transportation infrastructure and managing the public rights of way. In 2020, the City of Seattle's proposed operating budget was approximately \$6.6 billion and \$739 million was allocated toward SDOT.

SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CAPITAL BUDGET (2020)



SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS BUDGET (2020)



SOURCE FOR CHARTS *Nelson\Nygaard, Pricing for Equitable Mobility Technical Paper (June 2021)*

*SOURCE FOR MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS BUDGET *Seattle Department of Transportation, Adopted Budget (2022)*

THERE ARE MANY PROBLEMS WITH HOW TRANSPORTATION IS FUNDED TODAY.



REGRESSIVE

Seattle's dependence on tax revenue places a higher burden on people with low incomes. Because of Seattle's high reliance on sales tax, low- and middle-income households pay up to six times more as a share of their income to taxes than the top 1% do. Families with incomes lower than \$24,000 pay the highest taxes based on share of income in Washington state.



VOLATILE

Funding streams like a sales tax are unreliable. They fluctuate based on spending or inflation.



INADEQUATE

Washington State ranks near the bottom nationally for per capita spending on transit, walking, and biking. This is a result of limited funding resources.



RESTRICTIVE

Funding that is restricted to specific purposes means there are fewer available funds for creating more equitable transit or car-free options.

We can fund a clean and just transportation system

WHAT MAKES A SOLUTION EQUITABLE?



PROGRESSIVE

Progressive funding streams are based on a taxpayer's ability to pay, and will not disproportionately harm residents with low incomes.



SUSTAINABLE

Sustainable funding remains stable amidst changing market dynamics.



SUFFICIENT

Sufficient funding meets Seattle residents' needs and creates numerous additional benefits.



FLEXIBLE

Flexible funding can be invested where it's needed most — from maintaining existing infrastructure to building a network of transit, sidewalks, and bike paths.

Racial equity outcomes for Seattle pricing strategies

The following **Racial Equity Outcomes** were designed, reviewed, and refined by representatives from the Transportation Equity Workgroup, Equitable Development Initiative, Environmental Justice Committee, and Green New Deal Oversight Board who were all part of early conversations about road pricing, and finalized by the Pricing Strategies Workgroup who refined and completed them. These outcomes have also been shared widely with City of Seattle staff, other cities working on pricing across the country through the American Cities Climate Challenge, and local nonprofits working on transportation equity.

Any potential new road pricing policy, piece of legislation, revenue proposal, or investment recommendation should be designed with and evaluated against these Racial Equity Outcomes:

1. Designed through a safe, inclusive, and equitable process. Seattle's discussion of equitable road-pricing strategies will be developed through an equitable process where priority populations (see outcome #2) are given decision-making authority around policy recommendations.

We recognize that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and communities of color have experienced the most harm from COVID-19, so co-designing this policy safely will be paramount. We also recognize that we must ensure ongoing communication between the City and prioritized communities to address both positive and negative experiences after policy implementation.

2. Benefit our priority populations, defined as people with low incomes, Black, Indigenous, Immigrant, Latinx, Communities of Color, people with disabilities, vulnerable youth and seniors, people who have been or are currently incarcerated, and those who have been or are at risk of displacement.

The policy will prioritize distributing benefits to these priority populations who currently and historically have experienced disproportionate impacts of climate change, who have high transportation burdens, and who are at high risk of displacement or have been displaced from the city.

Specifically, the policy must:

- Ensure revenue is prioritized and directly invested in reliable, safe, affordable public transportation and other transportation necessities for the priority populations identified.
- Ensure revenue is directed toward programs that reduce congestion and travel times for people who have been displaced and have been pushed out of the city core where they historically worked, worshiped, played, learned, and lived.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and exposure to air pollution affecting priority communities. Invest in improving health outcomes for people living near highways and industrial areas who have been historically and are currently impacted by pollution and climate change. Invest in people, neighborhoods, and lands we know will be impacted in the future.
- Assert that transportation infrastructure investments and policy innovation cannot proceed as usual if we are to fully realize racial justice and increased opportunities for wealth building, decolonization, and the thriving of communities of color. To undo historical damage, a restorative approach to past and ongoing harm is necessary, and we must make investments accordingly.

3. Not exacerbate existing burdens or disparities.

Recommendations for new pricing strategies will only include recommendations that will not exacerbate transportation and economic burdens for priority populations,

specifically, the policy must not:

- Increase the cost of transportation for those who have been displaced and/or already pay a high share of their income for transportation.
- Negatively impact people who must drive for work, such as ride-share drivers, domestic workers, shift workers, and delivery and freight workers.
- Burden BIPOC-owned businesses downtown and surrounding areas.
- Restrict access to the city center or other neighborhoods for access to social and City services.
- Result in enforcement actions (in-person by the police or via debt collection or court actions) that burden or exacerbate the economic harm experienced by BIPOC communities.

4. Ensure privacy protections.

Recommendations for new stable, progressive pricing policies may require the adoption of new technologies. Any recommendations will ensure the privacy of priority populations, such as undocumented people, immigrants, refugees, and people who have been formerly incarcerated that are currently being targeted, or have in the past been targeted, by the federal, state, or local governments. Any technologies that may be considered cannot be used to harass or target BIPOC communities, must comply with the surveillance ordinance, and must be clear how and by whom data will be collected, managed, protected, and utilized, as structural racism continues to be perpetuated in the technology used by government.

5. Intentionally engage and involve current and historic BIPOC residents of neighborhoods that may be impacted by any recommendation.

BIPOC communities have a long legacy of resilience and resistance, having survived generations of invasion, colonialism, internment, redlining, and racism at the hands of government. These policies will be designed around the unique needs of BIPOC communities, many of which have been greatly impacted by government decisions, like the development of the I-5 freeway, which has led to decades of poor air quality. BIPOC community members will be given decision-making power in the co-design process for new pricing recommendations. Ensuring that community members living both inside and outside Seattle continue to feel connected to culture, business, and community within the city is critical to this policy's success.



Can road pricing strategies contribute to a more equitable transportation system in Seattle?

To build a just, affordable, and reliable transportation system we need new policies and programs, funded with progressive, sustainable, and flexible sources of revenue.

Road pricing for equitable mobility involves charging people with transportation privilege—those who can afford to pay—for driving or using roadway space, in order to equitably distribute the revenue to create a more equitable transportation system for all.

BENEFITS OF ROAD PRICING

A pricing program's success depends largely on *how* and *when* people are charged and how revenue from congestion pricing strategies is used. If successful, pricing strategies have the potential to enhance racial equity and benefit historically vulnerable communities, leading to:



Affordability

Offers discounts, sets caps, provides rebates, or fully exempts certain drivers based on income level or other characteristics.



Healthier Communities

Reduces traffic and the associated health risks to priority communities.



Safer Streets

Reduces the number of cars and invests revenues for safe bicycle and pedestrian networks in historically disadvantaged communities.



Better Mobility Options

Helps fund a variety of mobility options, such as improved transit service. Funds programs that benefit those most harmed by transportation inequities.



Behavior Change

Influences behavior by assigning a price to when, where, and how much people drive.

APPLYING RACIAL EQUITY OUTCOMES: TYPES OF ROAD PRICING

Road pricing can take a lot of different shapes; the key is to determine how these strategies can best be implemented without contributing to further harm and how revenue can be used to meet community needs, going forward. Two questions should be at the center of any pricing discussion:



Who is paying
upfront fees
or taxes?



How is revenue being
used—is it being
equitably redistributed?

The Pricing Strategies Workgroup discussed a wide range of pricing strategies in order to develop their racial equity outcomes. These are some of the examples that were discussed, and ideas for making them equitable. Where applicable, we have also included recommendations from the Transportation Equity Framework Implementation Plan.

1. Parking Pricing Innovation: Policies that address where, how, and how much individuals pay for parking.

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Consider charging less during business hours in areas with high concentrations of essential service providers.
- Explore expanded event parking pricing, especially in areas frequented by out-of-town drivers.

Transportation Equity Framework Implementation Plan Tactic 32.1:

Explore the feasibility of creating a “low income” account for use at paid curbside parking, such as through PayByPhone.

2. Curbside Pricing Innovations: Policies that address how curb space is prioritized and how much it costs to use it.

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Consider parking fees dictated by the purpose of a visit (e.g., visits to a doctor, religious service).
- Consider allowing reservations to use curbside space (in the future).
- Be aware of how rideshare companies may be impacted, and ensure costs fall on the companies themselves rather than individual drivers.

3. Road and Bridge Toll Pricing: Policies where a monetary charge is required to use a road or a bridge. It can be variable, changing throughout the day based on congestion, or the type of vehicle, or the number of passengers in a vehicle (occupancy).

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Explore bridge tolls (they have less barriers than road tolls to apply equitably), with special consideration for places like West Seattle where residents are highly dependent on bridge travel.
- Consider the future potential for shifting toll lanes to EV priority lanes as EV vehicles become more accessible.
- Consider various ways to equitably structure toll costs, such as charging only commercial entities or developing a sliding scale based on income.

4. Urban Delivery Pricing: Taxes or fees levied on packages or deliveries, including on-demand parcel and food delivery services, delivered to residences within a city.

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Consider urban delivery pricing as a means to incentivize green/electric fleets for small company delivery vehicles.
- Consider a more holistic program design that expands delivery options to include community lockers or hubs, with priority locations in small local businesses, as a way to increase foot traffic and provide walkable/rollable neighborhood pick-up options.

5. Congestion/Area Pricing: A fee charged when vehicles cross a boundary and drive inside a priced zone. (Fees could be priced based on the amount of time spent in an area.)

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Use health indicators as a way to assess which “congested” areas should be given highest consideration for pricing.
- Base pricing on people’s ability to pay. Only people who can afford to pay, should pay.
- Consider a number of free trips to the priced area per month.
- Explore holistic implementation options that simultaneously increase Park & Ride options, or on-demand rides to transit, especially outside the city.

6. Road Usage Charge: A charge on individuals (ideally those who are able to pay) based on factors, such as how many miles they drive and the type of vehicle driven.

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- This policy could harm BIPOC community members, especially those who have been displaced from Seattle, who have to drive further distances, and who don't have access to transit to meet their needs.

Ideas from the Climate Alliance for Jobs & Clean Energy

- If implemented carefully, a statewide Road Usage Charge can be an innovative new transportation revenue source that helps address Washington's regressive tax structure.
- Revenue from this policy should fund investments in a cleaner, more just transportation system.
- This policy should include a progressive rate structure that adjusts based on ability to pay as well as vehicle efficiency.

7. Commercial Driving (Fleet) Pricing: A fee charged to specific vehicle types entering a zone, such as freight, ride-hailing, or other commercial vehicles.

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Consider lower or exempted fees for electric vehicle fleets.
- Consider how revenues can support affordable electric car-share in impacted communities, or electrification of vehicles for small BIPOC-owned businesses.
- Consider how we are making it easier for small businesses to navigate deliveries in Seattle.

8. Parking Stall Tax: A tax on large business or property owners who dedicate substantive amounts of land to free and unlimited parking for customers or employees. It could be based on square footage or number of parking stalls.

Ideas from the Pricing Strategies Workgroup

- Consider prioritizing parking stall taxes in areas frequented by high-income individuals.
- Consider the impact on people grocery shopping for large families.

Recommendations for the road ahead

Informed by the Pricing Strategies Workgroup, with representatives from the City of Seattle Equitable Development Initiative, Environmental Justice Committee, Green New Deal Oversight Board, and Transportation Equity Workgroup.

Pricing strategies could significantly expand the City of Seattle's available transportation revenue, generating much-needed funds to invest in an equitable, sustainable, and just transportation system. But without careful and intentionally antiracist program design, any of these strategies could reinforce and exacerbate existing inequities, penalizing and placing deeper burdens on Seattle residents and workers with the least access to transportation options.

Workgroup members were asked of each potential pricing strategy: **Is there a path, using this specific policy, where we are ONLY taxing transportation privilege?**

Across all strategies, Pricing Strategies Workgroup members expressed skepticism and concern about their potential negative impacts to priority populations (*defined on Page 24*). They also acknowledged the need for expanded funds, which can directly benefit these same populations, and the potential for these policies to meet that need if they are carefully designed with equity as the north star.

When considering potential pricing strategies, the City of Seattle must align with the following Pricing Strategies Workgroup recommendations:

1. All potential pricing options must be co-designed, implemented, and evaluated using the Racial Equity Outcomes, which have been drafted with community input and expertise. (*See Page 24.*)

2. When considering pricing options that disincentivize car usage, it is essential to consider that priority populations are often reliant on cars because of the current inadequate and inequitable transportation system.

Pricing policies should not place greater burdens on individuals with the fewest options.

3. Careful consideration should be given to how and when fees are charged, prioritizing pricing transportation privilege (potentially including, but not limited to, residents of high-income neighborhoods, landowners, and corporations and large companies), while designing systems with lower fees or full exemptions for individuals with inequitable transportation privilege (potentially including, but not limited to, essential workers, commuters forced from the city by gentrification, residents of low-income neighborhoods, and small business owners).

4. Pricing transportation privilege must include efforts to identify and understand why individuals with greatest access to transportation options often do not utilize these options.

“The City of Seattle needs to continue having a thoughtful, community-oriented focus in considering all of the options.”

—Pricing Strategies Workgroup Member

5. Efforts to rebuild our transportation system should integrate opportunities for the current system to be improved. Pricing options should not be considered or implemented in a vacuum, but rather they should be developed in partnership with other relevant improvements—for example, congestion/area pricing should happen alongside investments in first and last mile transit options or park and rides which mitigate burdens on workers who must commute from outside Seattle.

6. Priority populations must be closely engaged in the policy design and implementation. These include First Nations, community members in neighborhoods with majority BIPOC residents, residents with low incomes, renters in high density areas, small business owners, and Seattle area workers who live outside the city. Engagement must be culturally competent and should involve the City coming to community spaces (e.g., events, gathering places, town halls), as well as door-to-door canvassing, surveys, etc.

7. Revenue gained from pricing strategies should be distributed in ways that create an equitable, accessible transportation system, and that intentionally distribute benefits to priority populations.

“We need to start shifting to community-centered and environment-centered practices. We are running out of time.”

—Pricing Strategies Workgroup Member

These Workgroup recommendations are also reflected in directives within the City of Seattle Green New Deal ordinance’s mandate to *“Implement a congestion pricing plan only if it is equitable and creates revenue to support transit expansion to benefit low-income, historically marginalized, and transit-disconnected communities first and foremost.”*

By exploring road-pricing policies in Seattle, we have an opportunity to creatively co-design new revenue sources that are stable and progressive (meaning that the fees are paid only by those people most able to pay), and to invest in programs and projects that most directly benefit communities of color and other priority populations.

“Equity work needs to include Indigenous folks with restorative pathways and consider Seattle’s actual footprint on BIPOC communities.”

—Pricing Strategies Workgroup Member

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ROAD PRICING STRATEGIES



American Cities
Climate Challenge

