

Vehicle Mileage Fees Study - Technical Assistance and Support

Goal: The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) will prepare an exploratory study on the viability of pursuing vehicle mileage fees as a statewide source of transportation revenue to address long-term funding sustainability. The activities identified in this scope of work will consist of background and preparatory tasks in advance of the formation of an Exploratory Committee, which will serve as a sounding board for and provide direction to TTI in the formulating the results of the final study.

Task 1: Preparatory Activities

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will form an Exploratory Committee composed of state leadership from outside of TxDOT. In preparation for the initiation of the study and Committee meetings, the following tasks will be performed:

- Task 1.1 TTI will conduct a literature review to assemble background information on all previous and current pilot tests, demonstrations and implementations of vehicle user fees, both domestically and internationally. Researchers will also utilize points of contact with other agencies to obtain information not published. An up-to-date annotated bibliography of all resources will be developed for use in providing background information for the study.
- Task 1.2 TTI will prepare a draft focus group discussion guide and draft stakeholder interview instrument, and develop and submit an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas A&M University for approval of research involving human subjects. Focus group recruiting and stakeholder interviews cannot begin until approval by the IRB, and will not proceed until the documents reviewed by a peer group of State DOT representatives (see Task 1.3 regarding peer group).
- Task 1.3 TTI will organize and facilitate a bimonthly conference call (three calls over duration of performance period) with other State DOT representatives for the purpose of (1) obtaining feedback on issues and findings, and (2) staying abreast of activities in other states. Oregon DOT and Minnesota DOT have agreed to participate.
- Task 1.4 For the purposes of focus groups and stakeholder interviews, TTI will develop alternative system models for collecting mileage fees that will address assumed policy objectives agreed to by TxDOT. The technology models will be formulated using previous TTI research on technology options: http://utcm.tamu.edu/publications/final_reports/Goodin_tech_09-39-07.pdf The draft technology models will be vetted by a panel of technology experts and a group of State DOT representatives. A technical memorandum summarizing the technology models and feedback from the peer assessment will be prepared.



- Task 1.5 TTI will also use previous TTI research on technology options to develop a decision matrix that can be used by policy makers to select alternative technical approaches based on policy objectives.

Task 2: Conduct Focus Groups

After necessary revisions to the focus group discussion guide following review by the State DOT peer group, and upon approval of IRB application amendments resulting from revisions, TTI will conduct three focus groups comprised of representatives of the general public to assess perceptions and attitudes about vehicle mileage fees and to test messages that enhance public understanding and acceptance. For travel budgeting purposes, the locations are assumed to be Dallas/Ft. Worth (metro), Lufkin (rural), and Laredo (border). TTI will accomplish the following:

- Task 2.1 TTI will secure a public facility venue and use a database of local contacts to recruit participants for the focus groups. Depending on the location, recruitment will also be conducted with the use of local newspapers and/or electronic communication, such as Craigslist. Every effort will be made to include a cross-section of the population at each focus group. It is anticipated that 10-12 people will be recruited for each group.
- Task 2.2 TTI will conduct each focus group, which will be approximately one hour to one-and-one-half hours in length. The focus groups will be held in the evening to allow for a broader participant pool. Focus group participants will be compensated \$50.00 for their participation. Compensation will be noted in the recruitment materials. A moderator and at least one note-taker will be present at each focus group, with the moderator facilitating the discussion. The sessions will also be audio taped as an aid in development of the technical memorandum; actual transcriptions will not be produced.
- Task 2.3 TTI will summarize the results of the focus groups. A technical memorandum will be produced for summarizing the groups' opinions, perceptions, thoughts and ideas about vehicle mileage fees.

Task 3: Outreach Support

In an effort to facilitate general education on the topic of vehicle mileage fees, TTI will assist TxDOT in distributing general information on vehicle mileage fees and gathering input from stakeholders through targeted interviews.

- Task 3.1 TTI will develop a distribution list for TxDOT for dissemination of the Vehicle Mileage Fee primer to professionals at transportation agencies in Texas. Following approval by TxDOT, the electronic version of the document will be provided by email.
- Task 3.2 After necessary revisions to the interview instrument, TTI will conduct up to 15 stakeholder interviews with agencies and advocacy groups, by phone as a



minimum or in person (desirable). The purpose of the interviews is to identify issues and concerns with vehicle mileage fees. TTI will develop the interviewee list in coordination with TxDOT. Suggested interviewees include but are not limited to the following: AAA, Texas Trucking Association, Texas Good Roads, and the Texas Farm Bureau.

- Task 3.3 TTI will develop a list of media talking points and will respond to media inquiries on behalf of TxDOT regarding the exploratory study and the topic of vehicle mileage fees in general.