

Dear local community leader,

As you are aware, tolling on the State Route 520 bridge started last week. I am writing to provide an update so you can better inform your constituents.

Traffic

We are observing traffic closely, but it's far too early to identify traffic trends. We started SR 520 tolls during the holidays, when traffic volumes and travel times are traditionally low. We saw a shift in traffic patterns this week as commuters began to return to work and school. Observationally, during the first week we noticed some drivers diverting to I-90 and SR 522. Travel times on these routes stayed within the normal range. We also noticed that drivers who chose SR 520 are experiencing lower traffic volumes and better travel times.

We are closely monitoring traffic and, with help from cities and King County, will monitor key arterials and city streets. We will use this data to compare traffic conditions before and after tolling. We expect traffic patterns to shift repeatedly during the months ahead as drivers assess and reassess their options. Rush-hour traffic may start earlier and end later. We also anticipate that some drivers will choose to carpool, vanpool, ride the bus, work from home or shift their travel schedule to pay lower toll rates.

Toll bills

The toll collection system is accurately tracking tens of thousands of transactions at freeway speeds. More than 75 percent of the drivers who are using the SR 520 bridge have Good To Go! passes. Drivers who have not set up a Good To Go! account can still use the SR 520 bridge. We will take pictures of their license plate and send the registered owner of the vehicle a toll bill in the mail – this is called our Pay By Mail option. They will, however, pay the highest toll rate.

We will send our first toll bills to Pay By Mail customers in a week or so. If you get questions from your constituents about these bills, please suggest that they visit our website www.wsdot.wa.gov/GoodToGo or call customer service at 1-866-936-8246.

We are encouraging drivers to open a Good To Go! account to pay the lowest toll rates and take advantage of an improved commute on SR 520. During the two weeks before SR 520 tolling started, more than 30,000 drivers took our advice.

Drivers can set up and access their account anytime online at www.wsdot.wa.gov/GoodToGo. Sticker passes are available at Costco, Fred Meyer, QFC, Safeway and Walgreens. Passes are also available at customer service centers located in Seattle, Bellevue and Gig Harbor and by calling our customer service center. Thus far, our customer service centers, call center, website and retail partners are keeping up with demand, thanks in part to extended call center hours, extra customer service staff and expanded online capacity.

Expect the unexpected

As expected with a startup of this magnitude and complexity, we have experienced a few issues during our first week of tolling. For example, on the Monday morning following New Year's Day, electronic rate signs over the highway displayed the weekday toll rates instead of holiday rates. Phone and online systems have been overtaxed at times. We are working to provide information to customers and address issues promptly. We will continue to do so as we move forward.

Additional information for SR 520 drivers is attached. Thank you for helping inform your communities and for your patience as tolling gets underway on SR 520. If you have further questions please call 206-682-7708 or email goodtogotolling@wsdot.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Craig J. Stone, P.E.

Director, WSDOT Toll Division