

- **Washington State Road Usage Charge Assessment** (*Eric Cempel – Cambridge Systematics*)

Like most states, Washington is concerned about the sustainability of revenues for funding its transportation system. Several studies in Washington State considered and/or recommended alternatives to the gas tax, with many pointing toward road usage charging as a potential approach. The basic idea with road usage charging is that drivers pay for roads as they do for utilities based on how much they use. At the direction of the Legislature, Washington first assessed the feasibility of road usage charging, and then evaluated the business case. This project is relevant since GO TO 2040 recognizes the need for a sustainable revenue source and encourages exploration of innovative approaches.

Guided by an appointed Steering Committee, the underlying strategy has been to follow a deliberative process. The first step addressed whether a road usage charge is feasible. This included exploring experience elsewhere, discussing policy objectives, and evaluating high-level operational concepts. The Committee found that road usage charge is feasible. The next phase involved creating a smaller, detailed set of operational concepts, bringing policy objectives into focus, and developing a financial model and non-financial factors to evaluate the business case. The Committee found that a business case could be made for three potential road usage charge concepts or combinations.

The Committee's report was submitted to the Legislature with a request to continue these investigations. Future work might include refinement of operational concepts to address policy, technical, and public acceptance issues that have been identified as well as the design of a potential pilot.