# Communications:
# Road Charge Pilot Program Key Issues

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Agenda Item #9
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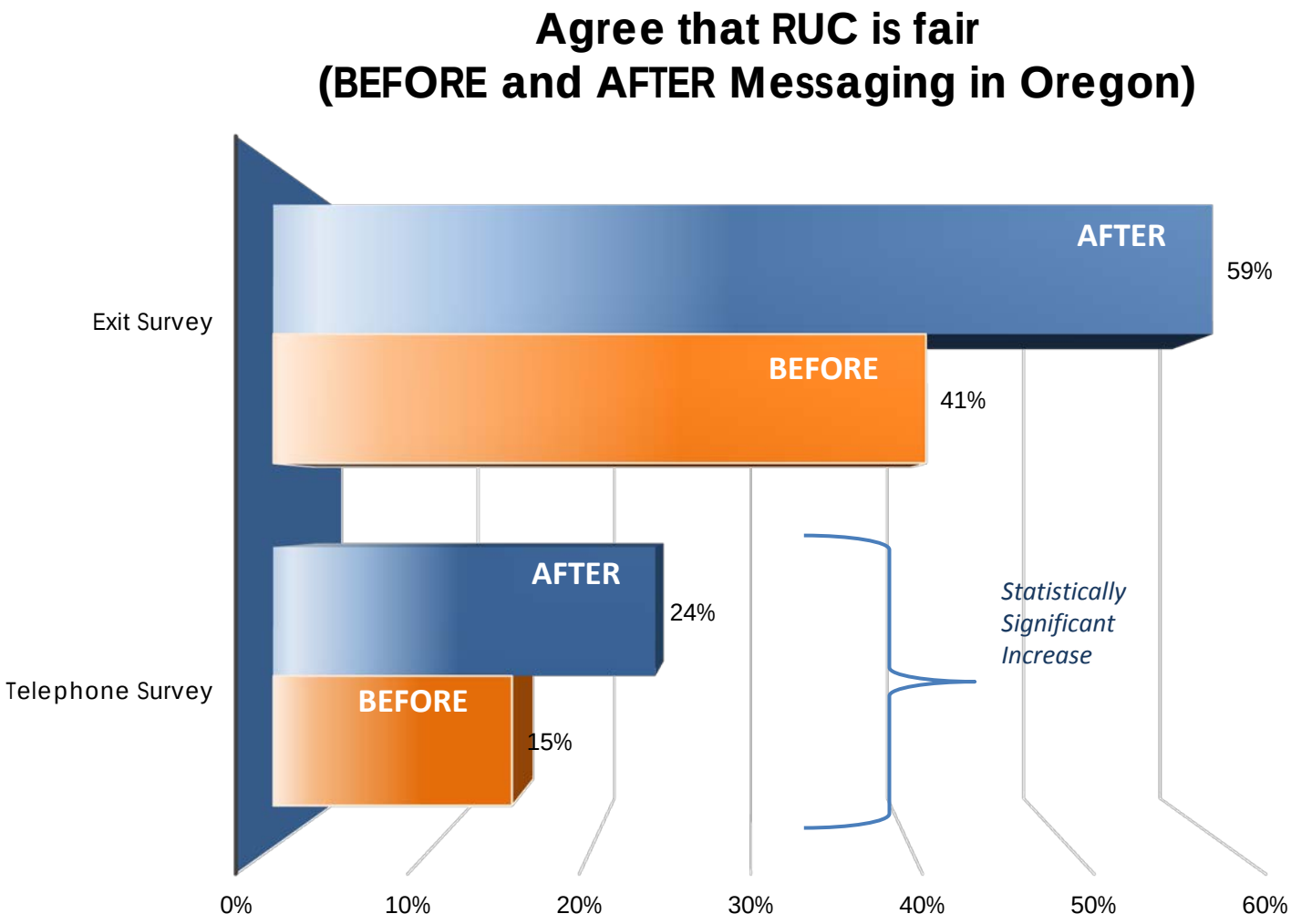
# Two-way Dialogue is Key

**Initially, people oppose road charging – thinking it is:**

- Unfair
- Invasion of Privacy
- Complicated and Costly to Operate
- Double Taxation
- Deterrent to Purchasing a Hybrid Vehicle

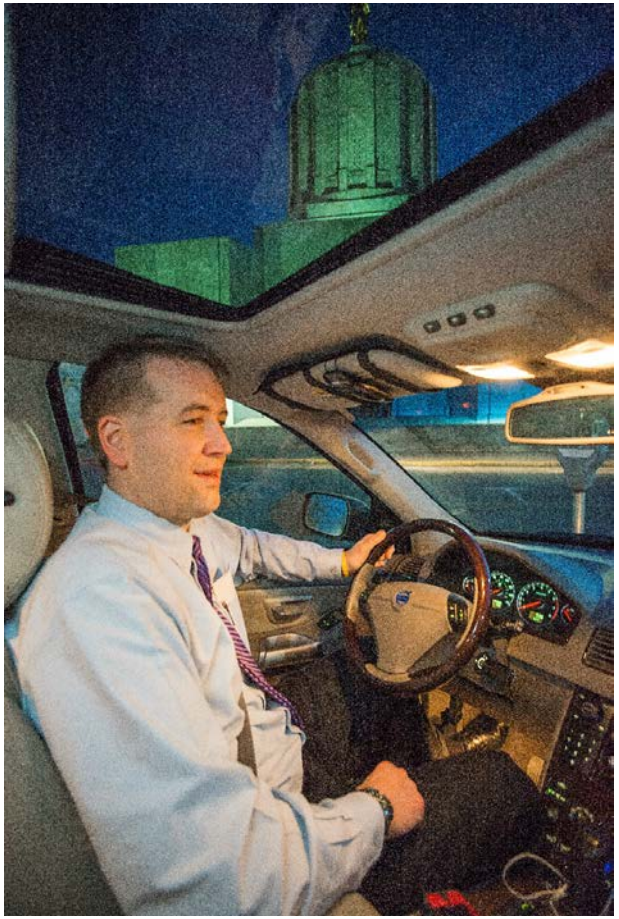
**When we can talk with people and present the facts, people gain a better understanding and are generally supportive.**

# Acceptance Grows After Dialogue



# What We Know So Far

## Good information informs strong strategies



# What We Think We Know

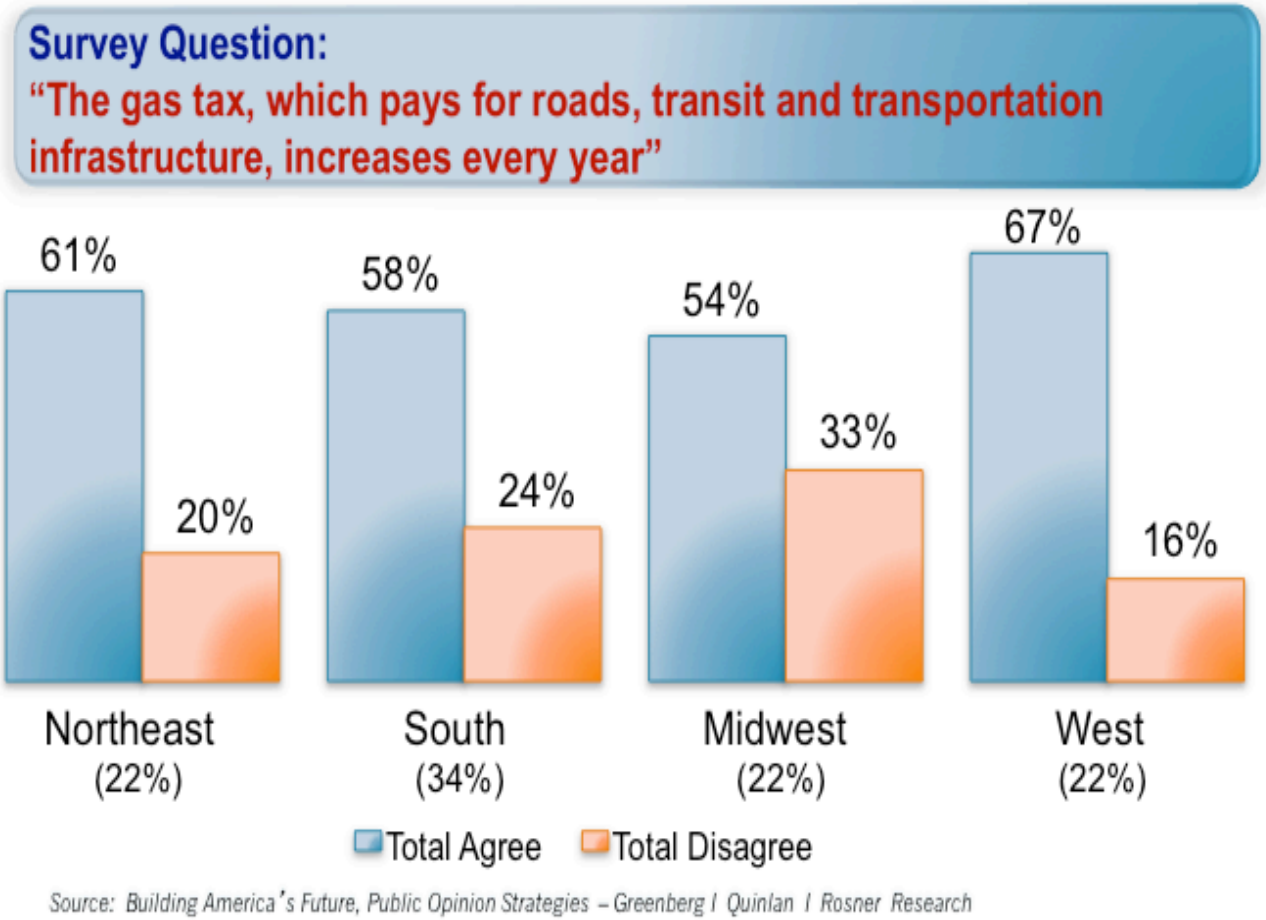
**SCAG Public Survey Data responses to question about sources of funding roadway repair and maintenance:**

- Vehicle registration
- Money from traffic citations
- Federal, state, and city taxes
- Stimulus funds
- Property and income taxes
- Cigarette taxes
- Taxi and shuttle fees
- Mello-Roos Act

**Other key response – Road construction must mean we have enough funds?**

# There Are Many Misconceptions

- Many think the gas tax increases every year
- Many don't know what they pay in gas tax
- Many don't know what gas tax pays for



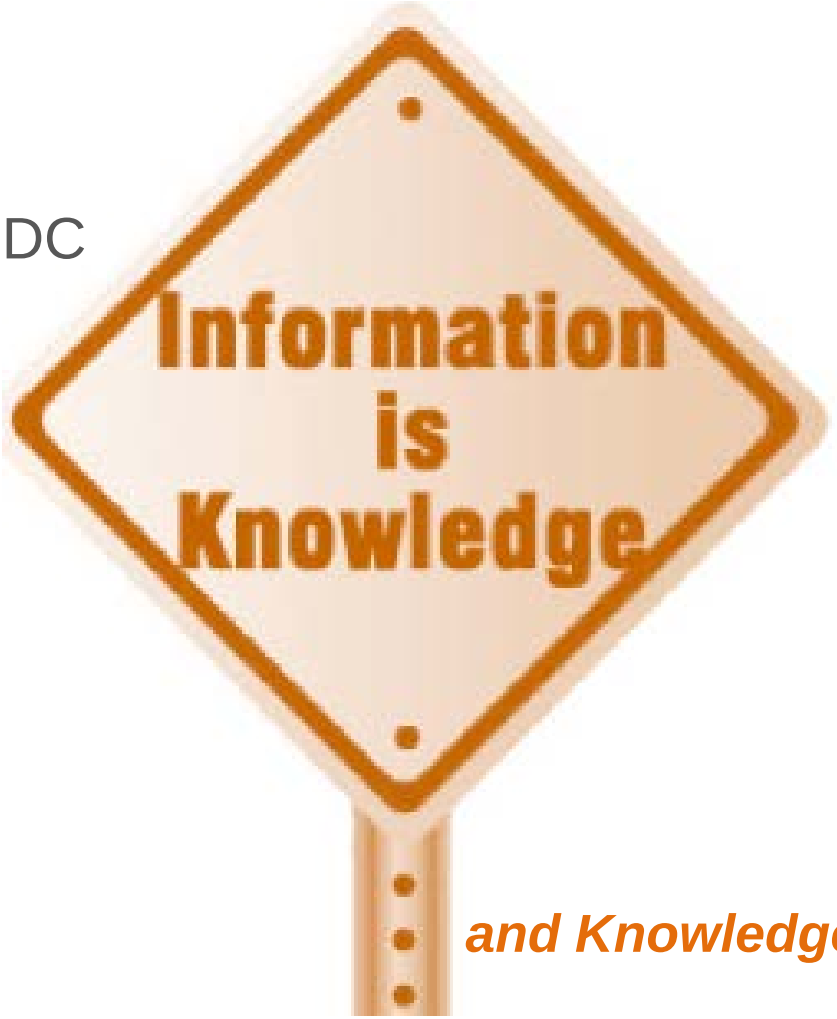
# Common Public Questions

- How much will I be charged?
- Will this be a double tax?
- Why not just raise the gas tax?
- Is this fair to rural drivers?
- Is this fair to hybrid and electric vehicle drivers?
- How will they know how many miles I've driven?
- Will my privacy be protected?

***The media uses the phrase "tracked" in most stories about road charging, which raises privacy concerns.***

# Trends Seen in National Research

- California
- Indiana
- Washington, DC
- Colorado
- Oregon

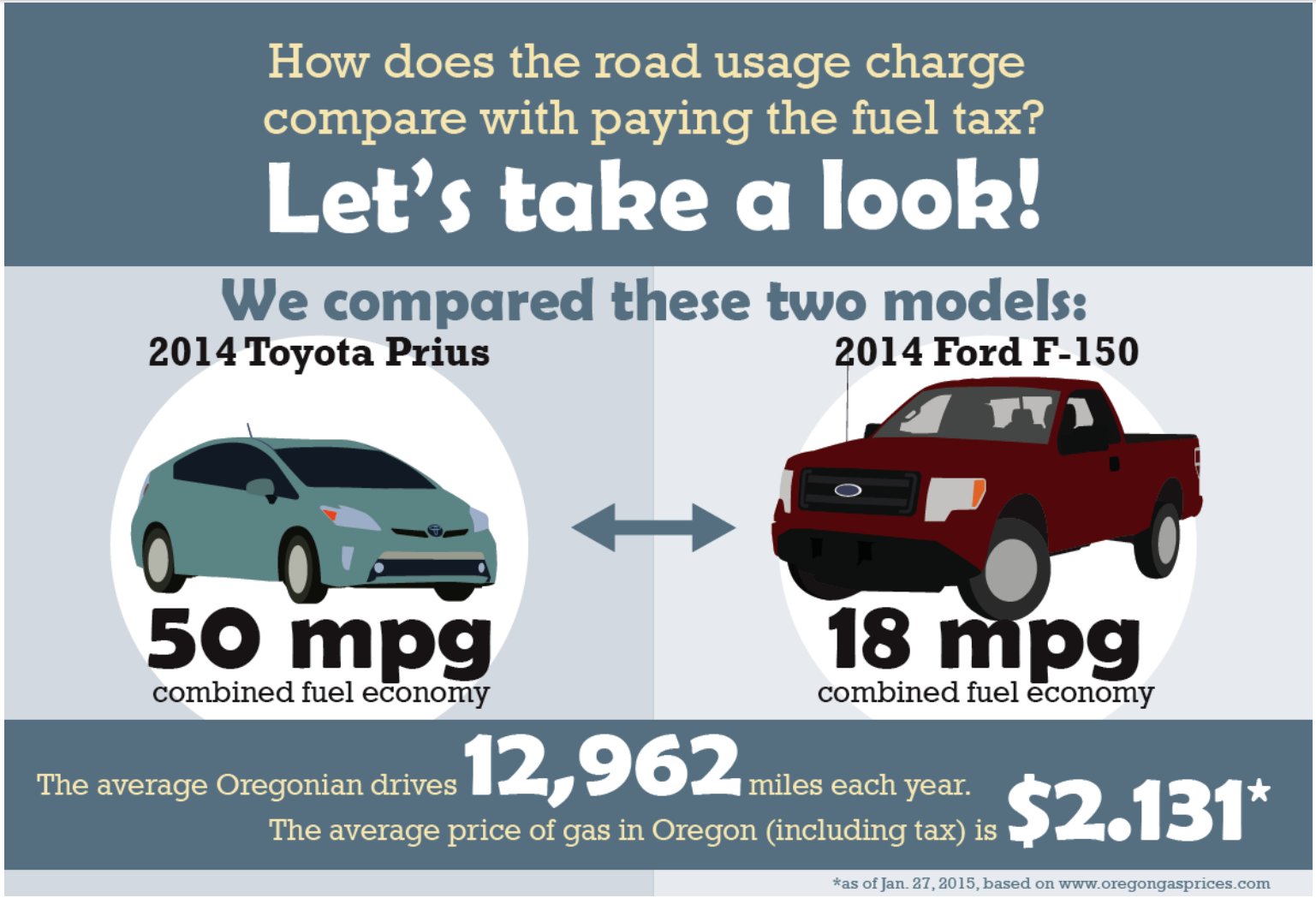



***and Knowledge is Empowerment***

# Oregon Tests Why Opponents Oppose

- Lack of trust in government
  - Government is irresponsible with budgets
  - Don’t believe government will refund gas tax, but instead tax more
- Worry about negative repercussions
  - Disincentive for hybrid and electric vehicles
  - May limit travel, hurt commerce/tourism
- Road charging program is unfair and inequitable
  - Penalizes those that drive long distances
  - All road users should pay (bicycles, etc.)
  - Unfair to those drive in/out of state
- Road charging program is Ill-conceived
  - Doubts in the planning
  - Many unknowns and lack of understanding

# Relating Road Charges to Fuel Taxes is a Useful Approach for Public Communications




*Example from Oregon*

# Relating Road Charges to Fuel Taxes is a Useful Approach for Public Communications

*as of Jan. 27, 2015, based on www.oregongasprices.com

## Amount of fuel used annually:

**259.24** gallons ⟷ **720.11** gallons

## Total costs with fuel tax:

**$552.44**
Includes $77.77 state fuel tax

**$1,534.55**
Includes $216.03 state fuel tax

## Total costs with road usage charge:

**$669.10**
Includes $194.43 road usage charge

**$1,512.95**
Includes $194.43 road usage charge

### Difference: +$116.66

The owner of the Prius pays a little more in road usage charge — $9.72 per month — which is offset by significant savings in fuel, using 460.87 gallons less per year.

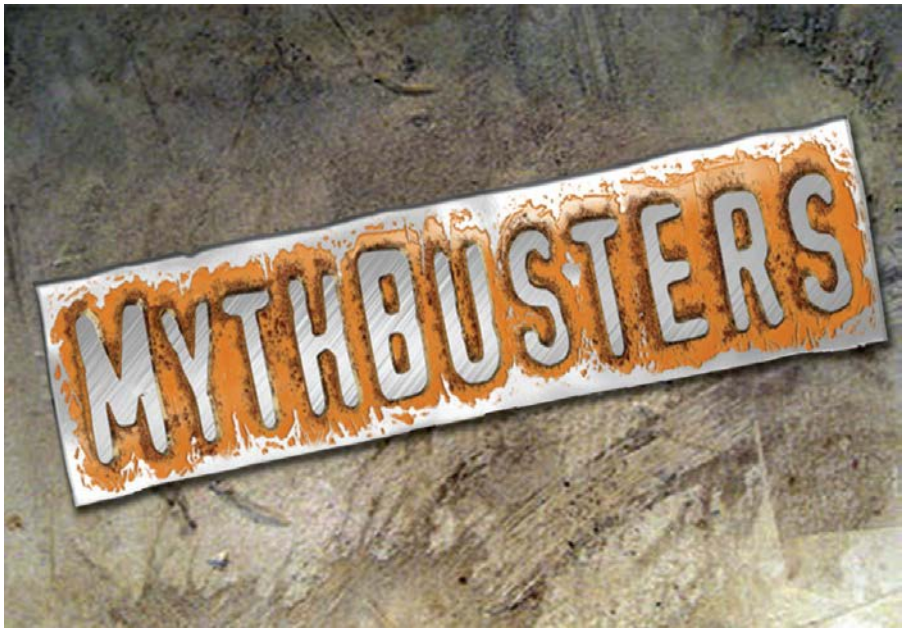
### Difference: -$21.60

If enrolled in the Road Usage Charge Program, the owner of the F-150 would earn a rebate of $1.80 per month because fuels tax paid at the pump exceeds the road usage charge.

*Example from Oregon*

# Correcting Myths

- Various misconceptions concerning road charging exist around the U.S.
- Observed initial beliefs about road charging:
  - Road charging is unfair to rural residents, farmers, ranchers, low-income drivers, cross-state drivers, etc.
  - Road charging is an invasion of privacy
  - Road charging is double taxation




***We propose to correct myths with accurate, timely information***

# Communications Recommendations

- Provide the facts, publish a “Road Charging Facts” brochure early
- As information about the pilot program is decided, refresh and update the public
- Leverage private partners’ and vendors’ advertising and branding to help correct misconceptions about road charging
- Partner with trusted California brands and third-party endorsements to help tell the road charge story
- Work with partners like AAA as messengers:
  - Use credible messengers (often NOT government)
  - Private-public-nonprofit partners are well received by the public
- Use grassroots outreach and a Users’ Forum for two-way conversations

# Program Pre-Pilot Communications Planned

**Four Key Activities:**

- **Telephone surveys** to gather information on what Californians think about road charging and roadway conditions
- **Focus groups** to gain detailed insights into Californians' understanding of road charging with several outputs or goals
- Results to create road charging **messages and materials** that we can use before and during pilot
- Design **evaluation plan** to test public acceptance of various road charge methods during the pilot

**Plus: support & assist TAC communications efforts**

# Questions? Contact: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