



*Improving the Quality of Life  
by Enhancing Mobility*

**University Transportation Center for Mobility**

**DOT Grant No. DTRT06-G-0044**

# **The 2011 Mileage-Based User Fee Symposium**

## ***Final Report***

**Ginger Goodin, Nicholas Wood, and Richard T.  
Baker**

***Performing Organization***

University Transportation Center for Mobility™  
Texas Transportation Institute  
The Texas A&M University System  
College Station, TX

***Sponsoring Agency***

Department of Transportation  
Research and Innovative Technology Administration  
Washington, DC



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16. Abstract  The fuel tax is rapidly losing its ability to support system needs. Federal environmental regulations and the escalating price of fossil fuels have created a strong incentive to develop and utilize more fuel-efficient vehicles, which will drive down fuel tax revenues relative to use of the nation's roadway network. Given the challenges associated with the declining sustainability of the fuel tax, the likely successor is a road user fee largely based on actual usage. This project sponsored the third annual two-day Symposium on Mileage-Based User Fees that brought together professionals in the field of mileage-based fees for the purpose of sharing information on current applications and exploring their potential as a supplement or replacement for the fuel tax.					
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# The 2011 Mileage-Based User Fee Symposium

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Project # 11-00-64

The University Transportation Center for Mobility™

Project Title: *Mileage-Based User Fee Symposium*

September 2011

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The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the 2011 Mileage-Based User Fee Symposium Committee. Without their help, the symposium could not have been the informative and productive event that it was.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The motor vehicle fuel tax is rapidly losing the ability to financially support the needs of the surface transportation system. New fuel economy standards have recently been proposed that will raise the corporate average for passenger vehicles to 54.5 mpg in 2025. Nonetheless, the demand for travel will be sustained in light of collecting less revenue per mile, because fuel efficiency will be increased under this scenario. A number of national commissions, the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Commission, have recognized the impending revenue shortfall and have made possible suggestions toward replacing the fuel tax as the primary means of financial support. One common suggestion was to implement a mileage-based user fee that would assess a charge on all the users of the transportation system. However, the path to implementation is unknown due to hardened political opposition and a cynical public that is skeptical toward any increase or change in taxes.

The 2011 Symposium on Mileage-Based User Fees was held in Breckenridge, Colorado, on June 12–13 as an effort to bring together public agencies, academics, consultants, and transportation advocacy groups to discuss potential implementation pathways for mileage-based fees, if they were determined to be the appropriate revenue support mechanism. Participants were presented with 13 questions at the beginning of the symposium that addressed key issues surrounding the implementation of mileage fees, and through a voting process that cumulated after seven panel sessions, were collectively able to select the three most critical questions that were talked about during the interactive discussion. The three selected questions from the symposium were:

- What is the most likely implementation pathway?
- How should research, development, and implementation activities at the state level be coordinated?
- What is the most effective way to increase public acceptance, particularly in the face of lack of public trust in government and public ownership in the problem?

Public acceptance was the topic that generated the most interest during the symposium. An underlying fact is that government institutions, in general, are not trusted by the public. A feeling of uneasiness and distrust among users was cited during the panel session as being the main barrier to implementation. One panelist illustrated the difference between the public and agency administrations as being bipolar, with the professionals seeing a complex, agency with little financial support and a public who believes that all of the revenues are frivolously wasted away. An approach that accepts voluntary adoption by the users of the system was suggested as a potential implementation pathway that could generally be accepted by the public.





## BACKGROUND

Government regulations and market choices are increasing the average fuel efficiencies for passenger vehicles. With the recent announcement by the Obama administration that the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFÉ) standards will increase from 35.5 mpg for model years 2012–2016 to 54.5 mpg in 2025, the possibility that fuel taxes can financially support the transportation system on a long-term basis is highly suspect (1). The funding that supports the Highway Trust Fund will likely decrease because, over time, drivers will pay less in fuel taxes to travel roughly the same distances. This issue is compounded because the public and their representatives in Congress are hostile to any increases in taxes, even though the Federal fuel tax has remained static at 18.4 cents per gallon since 1993.

To address these concerns, the Transportation Research Board formed a committee in 2006 to consider an evaluation of technical options for alternatives to replace the fuel tax with a user-fee based system (2). The *National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission* made a similar recommendation in their 2008 final report (3). That report recommended that the next transportation reauthorization act require major national studies to develop strategies and mechanisms for transitioning to a usage-based revenue collection system. The *National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Commission*, in its final report, found that a user-based fee derived from the number of miles driven was the most viable long-term mechanism for supporting transportation needs (4).

In March 2011, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a report that stated that mileage-based user fees (MBUF) are a practical option for raising new revenues to offset the funding gap for highway maintenance. The report tested the hypothesis that the costs of implementing a mileage fee with physical toll barriers would outweigh any potential benefits, but found that the practicality of such a system increased with the use of electronic tolling. The CBO did not offer any specific recommendations in the report, but did suggest that miles driven is a more significant factor of respective usage as opposed to the amount of fuel used (5).

The Mileage-Based User Fee Symposia were created to bring experts from the national and international communities together to further the dialogue on the future of mileage-based user fees.

## STRUCTURE

Held in Breckenridge, Colorado, on June 13–14, the 2011 Mileage-Based User Fee Symposium is the third in a series of symposia conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute and the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Additional support was provided by the University Transportation Center for Mobility of the Texas A&M University System and the Transportation Research Board. Local support came from MOVE Colorado. The overall vision of the conference was to discuss mileage-based fees as a possible revenue generation source to finance the transportation system, and to engage participants in a facilitated discussion on potential implementation pathways (6).

The symposium was attended by approximately 115 participants, representing over 60 organizations. Attendees came from 20 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. The organizations they represented included all levels of government, academic institutions, trade associations, advocacy groups, and private businesses. See Appendix A for a complete participant list. Two full days of panel

sessions and discussion featured speakers presenting on implementation pathways, demonstration of project public and political acceptance, user perspectives, the roles of the public and private sectors, and perspectives from taxation and revenue agencies. Presentations from the symposium can be found on the University Transportation Center for Mobility website (7). See Appendix B for the complete symposium program.

At the beginning of the symposium, conference attendees were presented with a list of 13 questions addressing various issues confronting an implementation of a mileage-based user fee (Appendix C). During the seven panel sessions, speakers attempted to address some of these questions. Throughout the conference, a large poster board was used as an interactive tool to pare down the original questions to those that the participants thought were the three most pertinent. The poster listed all 13 questions, and each participant was given five adhesive dots to use as votes, which they then placed near the questions they thought most important. Before the interactive discussion held near the end of the conference, the votes were tallied and the three questions with the highest accumulated scores were presented as the topics for the discussion.

When voting was complete, two of the questions with the most interest were combined into one because both dealt with the theme of public acceptance. The three resulting questions that were presented in the discussion were:

- 1) What is the likely implementation pathway?
- 2) How should research, development, and implementation activities at the state level be coordinated?
- 3) What is the most effective way to increase public acceptance, particularly in the face of lack of public trust in government and public ownership in the problem?

The basic structure of the interactive discussion consisted of an inner circle of chairs where symposium participants would sit and discuss the questions presented. Individuals were given roughly one minute per response and only those who sat inside the circle could speak. The overall time limit to discuss each question was set at 20 minutes. Symposium participants also rotated in and out of the circle in a process to encourage involvement from all the attendees.

## **FINDINGS**

During the symposium, a broad cross-section of stakeholders offered their views. Compared to the two previous symposia, this event was more finely tuned to the issues confronting the implementation of a mileage-based user fee. The 13 questions presented at the beginning of the symposium and the associated interactive discussion likely contributed to this focus.

There are three frameworks for analysis for approaching MBUF implementation – Federal, State, and Market. The overall consensus from the symposium was that a State-led initiative was the most practical approach due primarily to the current lack of action by the federal government on the issue thus far. A national framework would be beneficial in giving the states guidance in adopting mileage-based user fee systems, as users of transportation systems do not want to have to account for multiple charging formats. Interoperability was stressed as a key component due to issues caused by incompatible electronic tolling technology and back office interfaces.

Some participants indicated that sole public agency administration of mileage fee systems is unlikely without a private sector contribution. A perspective that was offered at the symposium defined the preferred roles of both the public and private sectors. The public sector would provide seed money to support the development of sustainable programs and auditing practices that can ensure interoperability, provide equity, and grant access. The private sector would create thousands of new value-added services, prioritize customer service, and maximize profitability.

Many participants at the symposium stressed that coordination among the various states was critical to the implementation of mileage-based fees as a preventative measure to avoid duplication of research activities. A few participants suggested that research would still overlap between different states as state policymakers and elected officials tend to want issues examined from the perspective of their relative constituencies. A pooled fund study established by interested state agencies was suggested as one option to coordinate research on topic areas that may not be explicitly required to be done in-state by political stakeholders.

The major barrier to MBUF implementation identified by attendees was the pathway toward gaining public acceptance. Many underlying issues complicate the task of increasing public acceptance including a general mistrust of government, skepticism about the proposals under consideration, and general ignorance about the transportation system and how it is financially supported. Any change in collecting taxes is viewed as an increase, and a significant share of the public opposes any increase in taxes. Conducting field tests was recommended as one means of orienting user concerns toward the achievement of positive public perception.

A pathway for voluntary adoption was identified as the preferred alternative to mandatory adoption. Many participants felt that acceptance of a mandated system was not realistic because a group of non-compliant users will likely always exist. Any new MBUF system should illustrate the benefits of the new program to the user, as well as show how it would credibly address the problem. In terms of generating support for MBUF implementation, the concepts of equity and fairness may be more important to the public in comparison to emphasizing the gap in financial support.

Value-added services were mentioned by a few participants as having the potential for increasing public acceptance. It was suggested that for MBUF to be successfully implemented, any new program should provide tangible value at the level where pay-for-use can produce clear and direct benefits.

The trucking industry is not entirely convinced of the need to implement mileage-based user fees, at least not in the short- and medium-term. Areas of concern include cost effectiveness, enforcement, and geographic equity.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The themes of implementation pathways, state-level coordination, and public acceptance were the core topics of this conference. Public perception was the most discussed theme, specifically the distrust and skepticism toward government administering the system. Because all user groups are not supportive of a change in the way taxes are collected, voluntary adoption of MBUF was mentioned as the most practical implementation approach.

Both coordination of research and testing, and the creation of an implementation pathway were identified as being most practical at the state-level. Coordination of research and testing in the form of a pooled-fund was mentioned as a possible method to reduce redundancy in research projects. The Federal government was not seen as a viable starting point to progress mileage-based user fees due to greater political resistance. It was felt, however, that a national framework may be useful in standardizing practices and coordinating a vision.

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## APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT LIST

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Infinity Property & Casualty Corporation

Karen White  
U.S. Department of Transportation

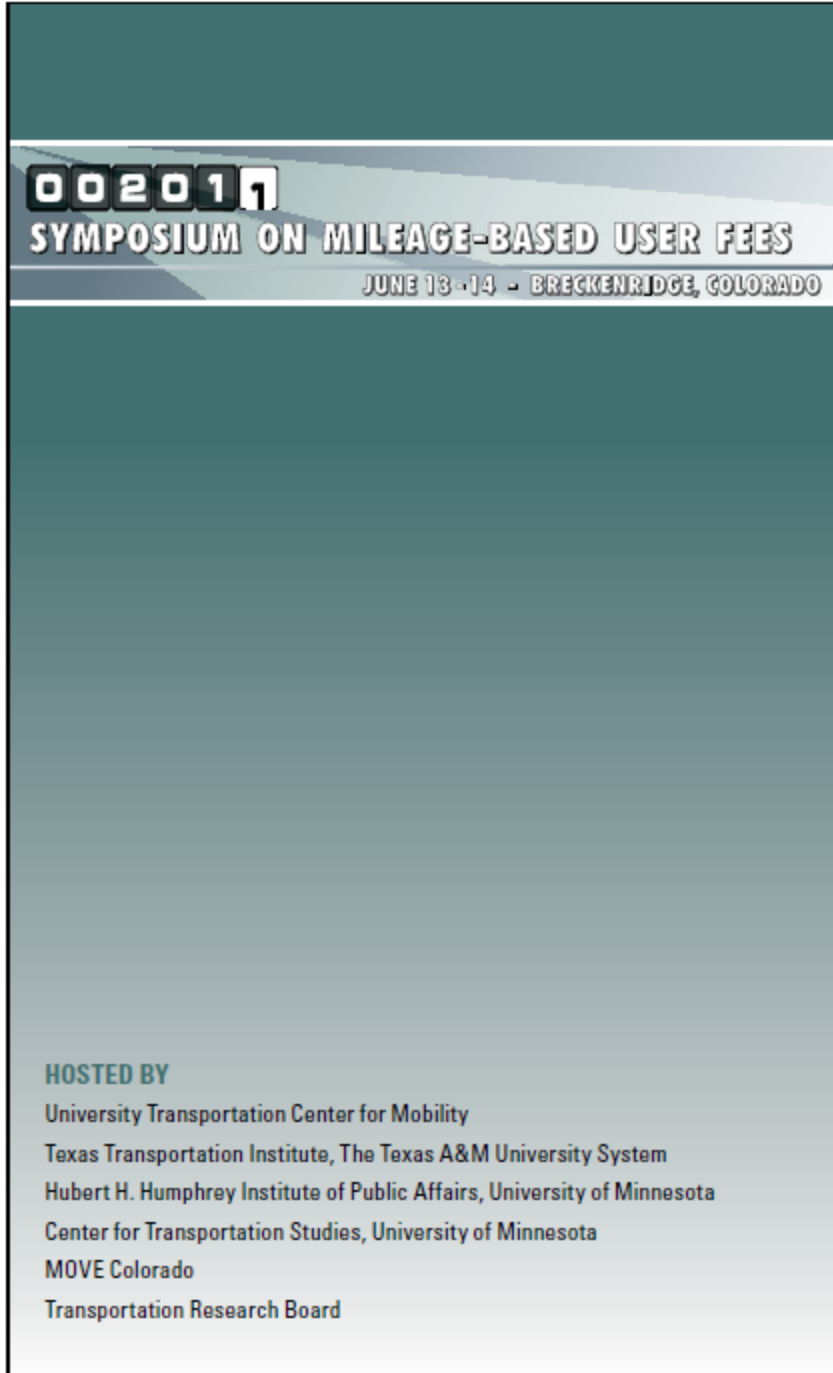
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Oregon Department of Transportation

Nick Wood  
Texas Transportation Institute

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Regional Plan Association



## APPENDIX B. SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

A vertical rectangular graphic with a teal-to-white gradient background. At the top, the year '002017' is displayed in a stylized, blocky font. Below the year, the title 'SYMPOSIUM ON MILEAGE-BASED USER FEES' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Underneath the title, the dates and location 'JUNE 13-14 - BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO' are listed in a smaller font. At the bottom of the graphic, the text 'HOSTED BY' is followed by a list of organizing institutions: University Transportation Center for Mobility, Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota, MOVE Colorado, and Transportation Research Board.

**002017**  
**SYMPOSIUM ON MILEAGE-BASED USER FEES**  
JUNE 13-14 - BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

**HOSTED BY**  
University Transportation Center for Mobility  
Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System  
Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota  
Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota  
MOVE Colorado  
Transportation Research Board

## SYMPOSIUM ON MILEAGE-BASED USER FEES

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**T**his symposium will bring together professionals in the field of road user fees to share information and advance the discussion of usage-based fee systems. Representatives from past, current and upcoming pilot studies and implementations will present lessons learned and key study topics from their projects. Panel discussions will address specific topics such as legislative and policy issues, public acceptance challenges, potential technology applications, and institutional issues. The symposium will incorporate interactive discussion sessions on logical next steps as well as the associated challenges and opportunities.

### SYMPOSIUM PLANNING COMMITTEE

- ⊗ Ginger Goodin, Co-chair, Texas Transportation Institute
- ⊗ Lee Munnich, Co-chair, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
- ⊗ Gina Baas, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota
- ⊗ Richard Trey Baker, Texas Transportation Institute
- ⊗ Kenneth Buckeye, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- ⊗ Paul Hanley, University of Iowa
- ⊗ Alauddin Khan, Nevada Department of Transportation
- ⊗ Mark Muriello, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
- ⊗ Flo Raitano, MOVE Colorado
- ⊗ Scott Rawlins, Nevada Department of Transportation
- ⊗ David Reeves, Colorado Department of Transportation
- ⊗ Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith Associates
- ⊗ Ferrol Robinson, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
- ⊗ John Sabala, Texas Department of Transportation
- ⊗ George Schoener, I-95 Corridor Coalition
- ⊗ Paul Sorenson, RAND Corporation
- ⊗ Myron Swisher, Science Applications International Corporation
- ⊗ Katherine Turnbull, Texas Transportation Institute
- ⊗ James Whitty, Oregon Department of Transportation

**DAY 1****Monday, June 13, 2011**

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- 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.      **Registration**  
*Outside Spruce Room*
- 7:15 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.      **Continental Breakfast**  
*Spruce Room*
- 8:15 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.      **Symposium Opening and Welcome**  
*Spruce Room*  
*Ginger Goodin, Texas Transportation Institute, and Lee Munnich, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota*
- 9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.      **SESSION 1: IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS**  
*Spruce Room*  
*Moderator: Paul Sorensen, RAND Corporation*
- **Conceptual Frameworks for System Trials**  
*Paul Sorensen, RAND Corporation*
  - **Oregon Electric Vehicle Implementation**  
*James Whitty, Oregon Department of Transportation*
  - **New York State Truck Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Fee Pilot**  
*Dick Mudge, Delcan Corporation*
  - **Voluntary Adoption Approach**  
*Bruce Schaller, New York City Department of Transportation*
- 10:15 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.      **Break**
- 10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.      **SESSION 2: PUBLIC AND POLITICAL ACCEPTANCE**  
*Spruce Room*  
*Moderator: Lee Munnich, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota*
- **Congressional Perspectives**  
*Alex Hergott, U.S. Senator Inhofe's Office*
  - **Emerging Policy Issues**  
*JayEtta Hecker, Bipartisan Policy Center*
  - **U.S. Department of Transportation Technology Scan**  
*Karen White, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Policy*
  - **State Legislative Perspectives**  
*Nick Farber, National Conference of State Legislatures*
  - **Public Opinion and Policy Research**  
*Paul Hanley, Public Policy Center, University of Iowa*

**DAY 1****Monday, June 13, 2011**

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12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**LUNCH: Keynote Address***Bristlecone Room**Mark Mehalko, LS Gallegos and Associates and President of MOVE Colorado*

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

**SESSION 3: POLICY ISSUES***Spruce Room**Moderator: Ken Buckeye, Minnesota Department of Transportation*

- **Mileage Fees as Revenue Replacement vs. Supplement/New Revenue Source**  
*Adrian Moore, Research Foundation*
- **Multi-jurisdictional Charging — I-95 Corridor Coalition**  
*Mark Muriello, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey*
- **Geographic and Income Equity**  
*Mark Burris, Texas A&M University*
- **Rural Issues**  
*Terri Binder, Club 20*

2:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

**Break**

3:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**SESSION 4: STATES OF THE PRACTICE:  
DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS***Spruce Room**Moderator: Alauddin Kahn, Nevada Department of Transportation*

- **Minnesota**  
*Ben Perce, Battelle Institute (Minnesota Department of Transportation Technology Demonstration)*
- **Nevada**  
*Alauddin Kahn, Nevada Department of Transportation*
- **Texas**  
*John Sabala, Texas Department of Transportation*

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Reception***Bristlecone Room*

**DAY 2****Tuesday, June 14, 2011**

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7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Registration**  
*Outside Spruce Room*

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

**Continental Breakfast**  
*Spruce Room*

8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

**SESSION 5: USER PERSPECTIVES**  
*Spruce Room**Moderator: Ferrol Robinson, Humphrey School of Public Affairs,  
University of Minnesota**Panel:**Ken Budkeye, Minnesota Department of Transportation**Darrin Roth, American Trucking Association**Jill Ingrassia, American Automobile Association**Dave Huber, GMAC Insurance*

9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

**Break**

10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**SESSION 6: ROLES OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR**  
*Spruce Room**Moderator: Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith Associates**Panel:**Jack Opiola, D'Artagnan Consulting LLP**Bern Grush, Bern Grush Associates*

**DAY 2****Tuesday, June 14, 2011**

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- 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.      **LUNCH: Updates on National Initiatives Related to Mileage-Based User Fees (MBUF)**  
*Bristlecone Room*  
*Moderator: Lee Munnich, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota*  
*Panel:*  
**MBUF Alliance**  
*Jack Basso, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials*  
**National Transportation Policy Project**  
*JayEtta Hecker, Bipartisan Policy Center*  
**Transportation Research Board**  
**VMT Revenues Subcommittee**  
*Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith Associates*  
**State Peer Group**  
*John Sabala, Texas Department of Transportation*
- 1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.      **SESSION 7: PERSPECTIVES FROM TAXATION AND REVENUE AGENCIES**  
*Spruce Room*  
*Moderator: Trey Baker, Texas Transportation Institute*  
*Panel:*  
*Rich Prisinzano, U.S. Department of Treasury*  
*Mark Muriello, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey*
- 2:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.      **Break**
- 2:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.      **SESSION 8: INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION**  
*Spruce Room*  
*Moderators: Katherine Turnbull and Ginger Goodin, Texas Transportation Institute*
- 4:00 p.m.      **Adjourn**

## APPENDIX C. IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONS

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### SYMPOSIUM ON MILEAGE-BASED USER FEES

JUNE 13-14 - BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

#### If MBUF is the right solution forward...

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1. What is the most likely implementation pathway? (National framework, state led, voluntary opt-in, etc.)

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2. Is it possible to develop a dual infrastructure system to implement a limited, voluntary opt-in MBUF system?

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3. Given the amount of research and testing that has occurred over the past decade, what is the next logical step? Are we at the point of where only large-scale implementation or trails will answer the crucial questions that remain?

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4. What is the most effective way to increase public acceptance?

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5. How can development be advanced in the face of the lack of public trust in government and public ownership in the problem?

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6. How can national, state, and local political leadership be developed?

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7. What will be required to produce a coherent vision?

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8. Where will funding come for research, testing, and implementation?

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9. What are the most compelling reasons to pursue? What is the problem(s) being addressed by implementing MBUF?

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10. How should research, development and implementation activities at the state-level be coordinated?

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11. Who has a stake in the development and how should stakeholders be engaged?

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12. Who should lead the development of privacy standards?

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13. Who should lead interoperability standards, and how?

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