

Roads

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Oregon proposal would charge drivers 1.8 cents a mile for all miles they drive inside the state. The charge is calculated based on data from a GPS monitor in your car. And yes, it will be able to distinguish between in-state and out-of-state mileage. Many cars already have the technology installed, but if they don't it can easily be installed.

"The gas tax is currently 30 cents a mile so if you have a vehicle that is below 20 mpg, you will get a benefit because your gas tax refund will exceed your mileage charge,"

The state is working to develop incentives that will attract drivers, such as the ability to take your vehicle emissions test remotely

Whitty says. "If you're above it the mileage charge will exceed the gas tax refund."

Why would anyone volunteer when they probably will have to pay a little more? Whitty says the state is working with private companies to develop incentives that will attract drivers, such as the ability to take your vehicle emissions test remotely.

"They won't have to go to DEQ for emissions testing," Whitty says. "They will be able to just report the health of the vehicle right from the car. So with those kinds of benefits, people might see a reason to sign up."

The volunteer program is designed to test the system so transportation officials can make sure it works properly. After that the Legislature will decide whether or not to make the road user charge mandatory for all users.

Washington is looking at Several Alternatives

Washington is still researching the costs and benefits of different charging systems. Under consideration are three basic ways to charge drivers for using state roads and highways.

"We're doing the foundational work that needs to be done to make sure that this is the right approach to take," Griffith said. "The report will inform decision making, so they (state legislators) are thinking of all the implications as they are making the decisions."



Michael Twiggs, Charlie James, Juanita Twiggs and Rees Clark stand by some of the equipment which will be used by the Central Area Urban Gardeners indoor urban gardening project located in the Central Area of Seattle. The produce grown in the year round garden will be given away to local food banks, feeding programs, churches and local residents. Find out more about their work at www.goefarming.com.

The first option is a flat fee that would cover drivers for a specific time period.

"It's basically like an all-you-can-eat deal that doesn't require any tracking of mileage," Griffith said. "So this would be something that people would do who don't want any technology in their car that would use their location to document actual miles driven. They don't want to be tracked."

"The drawback is that it doesn't allow us to differentiate, for example, out of state drivers from in-state. So we're trying to wrestle with what we are going to do with people from out of state. Would they have to buy a temporary permit or maybe we keep the gas tax for those drivers?"

The second option would be based on odometer readings. Drivers would estimate the number of miles they will travel in the state and pay in advance.

Option two could be fairer because it looks at actual miles driven, Griffith said. But it does not distinguish between in-

state and out-of-state miles, and would not solve the problem of how to tax out-of-state drivers. So if Washington drivers drove out of state, they would still pay for those miles.

Also, Griffith says, if future congestion fees ever become a consideration for urban areas, this approach would not provide the location information needed to do so.

Option three is a GPS-based mileage charge, similar to Oregon's plan.

"It would be location based and would allow for the most precise tracking of your mileage," Griffith said. "It also would take care of the in-state-out-of-state issue, for example, Washingtonians who drive into Oregon or British Columbia wouldn't be charged for out-of-state miles."

Read the rest of this story online at www.theskanner.com



Ross

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the retail chain; meanwhile, Burns left the store and called the Portland Police Bureau on its non-emergency number and described the situation.

Worried her identity had been stolen, Burns called a friend to take her toddler and waited an hour and a half for an officer to arrive.

When Portland Police Officer Carlos Ibarra ran Burns' name through the police reporting system, he confirmed Burns had no arrests, citations or convictions for shoplifting.

Then they both went back into the store to determine whether a crime had taken place.

"Carlos Ibarra, the Portland police officer, was very, very helpful," Burns says. "He said, let's go in the store and get to the bottom of this." She says the officer asked the store manager if it was a case of mistaken

identity.

Officer Ibarra's police report says that the store manager not only accused Burns of theft and said she would be banned from all Ross stores nationwide, but that he had "videos and pictures to prove it."

According to the police report, Ibarra asked three times for any evidence that Burns had shoplifted, but the store manager refused to provide it.

Ibarra wrote that Burns was clearly upset and crying after the scene, upset that even her toddler daughter was "treated like a 'criminal' in public."

Afterwards Burns called the district official's number provided by the store manager and heard back two days later.

"She told me she was going to do an investigation," Burns said. "Mind you, she never actually asked me my name, she

never asked me my birthday. She never asked me my last name to make sure I wasn't on whatever list this was."

Burns says she called and texted the manager for 10 days in a row, then finally got a call back saying she was not on the theft list and that she could shop in any Ross she liked, and that the manager was sorry for her inconvenience.

"I said what, if anything, can you tell me is going to happen to the store manager? She said I can't tell you that but what I can tell you is that there will be more training," Burns said.

"I was just mortified, because never, ever have I ever been a shoplifter."

Connie Wong, the director of investor and media relations for Ross Stores, declined to answer questions about the Burns case or the Ross retail theft database.

Civil rights attorneys Greg and Jason Kafoury handle false theft accusations frequently, they say.

"We get a lot of false arrest cases involving security at Ross Dress for Less," Jason Kafoury says. "A lot of them are quite egregious and quite aggressive."

"This one was unique though, in my perspective, because they are claiming she's in some national database of thieves, and then when pressed on it they cannot provide any evidence of it," he said.

A quick web search shows a handful of retail theft databases nationwide, each operated by the corporate sector to benefit its member companies. They are not affiliated with government or the courts.

Contact them at www.kafourymcdougal.com.

Scam

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woman filed a letter from the caffeine association last year certifying she'd done 100 hours of community service, Assistant District Attorney Tracy Conn said. She said prosecutors found the letter was fraudulent, and a judge resentenced the woman to additional community-service time.

"A community service sentence is a public and personal responsibility," Vance said in a statement. "Faking it — or helping others fake proof of completion — can lead to criminal consequences."

The caffeine group's website advertised

'A community service sentence is a public and personal responsibility. Faking it — or helping others fake proof of completion — can lead to criminal consequences.'

that it could provide letters certifying community service completion, charging fees based on the number of hours required, Conn said. The group's home page and a "fast community service" site that prosecu-

tors say Kushner also ran were down Monday. Washington and Oregon news reports from 2012 and 2013 said prices ranged from \$20 to \$300, for up to 250 hours of "community service."

Customers were told to buy e-books that warn against consuming too much caffeine, study the texts at their own pace and then take a 40-question, multiple-choice test, the reports said.

An online payment-processing account associated with the websites received over \$200,000 over a period of several years, Conn said.

Kushner, 47, has written various anti-caffeine e-books, book-selling sites show. She was arrested in Delray Beach, Florida, after authorities searched for her for months.