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Partnering for Progress: Transportation Funding Solutions Grounded in DMV Collaboration

The Eastern Transportation Coalition (Coalition) has prioritized working with transportation decision makers and stakeholders at federal, state and local levels to explore a wide range of alternatives to the traditional fuel tax as way to stabilize transportation funding. This work has highlighted that **solutions will only succeed through partnership with our Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMVs)**.

As the keeper of vehicle records and collector of fees, DMVs will be engaged in and in many cases will administer an electric vehicle fee, a mileage-based fee, or a new fee connected to registration. In the 41 states with EV fees, the DMVs are responsible for administering these fees which are most often collected during the annual vehicle registration process. Should a national EV fee be re-introduced, DMVs will be central to its rollout. For the four MBUF programs in the U.S., DMV engagement varies. In states like Hawaii, DMVs have heavy engagement including system upgrades, leveraging inspection programs, and MBUF collection, while in other states like Oregon and Utah the DMV is primarily responsible for vehicle eligibility checks for the MBUF program.

For this reason, the Coalition has been focused on bringing the DMV into our alternative funding work since the beginning to ensure that programs are set up in ways that leverage existing systems and motor vehicle agencies' vast experience with customer interaction and administering fees. This collaboration has highlighted the wide range of DMVs' organizational structures (e.g., standalone agency, within a DOT, connected to a revenue department, etc.) and their technological capabilities (e.g., DMV systems still operating on mainframe/outdated technologies vs. modernized DMV systems with more advanced capabilities) and how their setups can enable or support MBUF programs and relevant technologies. In addition, DMVs are not just implementation partners, but also the public face of the policy. **By tapping into DMV expertise and working as partners, transportation agencies can better navigate implementing efficient, publicly accepted MBUF programs.**

Working with DMVs: Turning Policy into Sound Programs

DMVs aren't just program implementers, they're strategic partners. Their daily interactions with millions of drivers give them unmatched insight into three common MBUF implementation obstacles:



Public acceptance. DMVs serve as the face of transportation, with regular touchpoints that build and maintain drivers' trust—sending renewal notices, processing payments, and answering questions. Not only do they have established contact mechanisms for messages about vehicle-related payment, but the DMVs have decades of experience interacting with and educating the public about license and vehicle fees.

Payment and enforcement. As the responsible party for vehicle-related payments, DMVs can speak to the strengths or weaknesses of existing processes. One topic of interest is flexible payment options, which is often a topic of discussion for MBUF. DMVs are also familiar with, and often the face of, payment enforcement. Their insights can help shape fair, user-friendly collection methods and clear, consistent enforcement policies based on lessons learned and previous experiences.

Technical readiness. DMVs operate systems that enable registration and other fees to be collected in their respective vehicle databases. Their vehicle databases enable fee collection and vehicle eligibility checks, and they understand the nuances of their state systems, including technical limitations and upgrade needs.

In short, DMV knowledge translates into programmatic success, but it is imperative that transportation agencies invest in the partnership. Below are examples of how the Coalition has led the way toward this goal.

- **Elevating DMV voices:** Throughout our MBUF work, the Coalition has made an intentional effort to bring in DMV leadership from our grant partner states. This includes engaging them in real-world pilots, vehicle-based data analysis, and strategic discussion through practitioner exchanges and workshops.
- **Facilitating critical peer conversations:** At conferences like those hosted by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), the Coalition has facilitated peer-to-peer roundtable discussions on new funding and the roles of DMVs, raising awareness at these agencies and identifying challenges to be considered and explored in further work.
- **Delivering practical resources:** The Coalition is preparing a resource document for DMVs and their transportation agency partners to use as they are asked to implement new fees, different payment schedules and additional payment



mechanisms. The resource document will include details about what fees each state administers, collection processes and options, as well as lessons learned and best practices.

Considering the growing need to evolve transportation funding, many new funding mechanisms rely on DMVs, not just as implementers, but as strategic partners. By recognizing their deep ties to drivers, their expertise in payments and compliance, and their insight into system capabilities, there is opportunity to create MBUF programs that are efficient and publicly supported. Moving forward, it is imperative to continue to have DMVs at the table while fostering peer learning to equip partners with the necessary resources to navigate finding a sustainable funding solution, together.

In the Driver's Seat: Virginia's Digital Campaign Delivers Results

The Coalition partnered with the Virginia DMV in the development of a digital campaign to inform Virginia drivers about the state's Mileage Choice Program. Administered by the Virginia DMV, the program was launched in July 2022 and gives owners of higher efficiency vehicles (defined as 25+ MPG) the option to pay by miles driven instead of an annual flat Highway Use Fee (HUF).

The digital campaign was designed based on robust public opinion assessment, including:

- **Initial message testing** conducted during the program's launch.
- **Two surveys in 2025**—one reaching current participants and another engaging eligible but unenrolled drivers.
- **Focus groups** with current, former, and eligible participants to explore motivations and barriers to enrollment.

Insights gained shaped the messaging strategy, confirming relevance and resonance with Virginia drivers.

Digital Outreach Campaign Goals



Raise awareness of the Mileage Choice Program among electric and hybrid/high-efficiency vehicle owner audiences.



Increase interest among Virginia drivers to learn more about Mileage Choice.

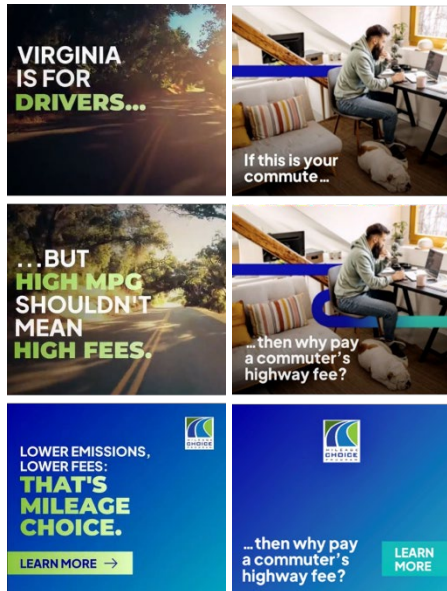


Encourage conversion (program signups) on the Virginia Mileage Choice Program webpage.

As a part of this effort, the Coalition produced an educational video explaining the Mileage Choice Program. The video is available on the program's website and will be featured at DMV locations across the state. [Watch the Video!](#)

Additionally, a Virginia calculator will be coming soon on the Virginia DMV website – stay tuned for when it is available.

Assessing Outreach Material Performance



The digital outreach campaign sought to understand which messages resonated with eligible Mileage Choice drivers. Offering a dynamic approach to achieving campaign goals, the Coalition utilized varying digital ads and made adjustments along the way. All ads were used in various contexts, such as Meta and display ads, and all performed well, yielding strong engagement across multiple platforms.

The campaign had **over double the industry average “click-to-conversion” rate** with 207,000+ clicks to the site and 17,000+ initial conversions to sign-up for Mileage Choice (clicks to “check eligibility” or “sign up” once landing on-site) indicating interest in the topic. It also yielded in total almost 16 million impressions (number of times the ad was shown).

These results underscore the effectiveness of digital advertising that is based on public opinion data in reaching and engaging audiences and demonstrate an effective tool for understanding which messages resonate with drivers in specific state. The Mileage Choice Program and this accompanying campaign can serve as a model for other states looking for similar solutions.

Where Have We Been?

Sharing Key MBUF Insights Across the Country

June 2025:

- **AAMVA Region 1 Presentation:** *Driven by Perception: What the Public Thinks About MBUF*
- **Washington D.C. Legislative Briefing:** *The Eastern Transportation Coalition Fueling the MBUF Dialogue*
 - Learn More: <https://tetcoalitionmbuf.org/the-road-to-sustainable-transportation-funding/>
- **ITIF Panel:** *Paving the Way: A Fair Funding Future for US Roads*
 - Learn More: <https://www.govtech.com/transportation/could-tech-make-trucks-pay-fair-share-to-use-highways>

August 2025:

- **SASHTO Presentation:** *When will the Alternative Funding Soup be Served?*
- **California Joint Informational Hearing Assembly and Senate Transportation Committees Presentation:** *A Path Towards Sustainable Funding*
 - Learn More: <https://www.assembly.ca.gov/media/assembly-transportation-committee-20250825>
- **Eno Center for Transportation Article:** *Transportation at a Crossroad: User Fees, Emerging Technology, and the Value of Transportation*
 - Learn More: <https://tetcoalitionmbuf.org/eno-center-spotlight-dr-patricia-hendren-on-transportations-crossroads/>