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Quotes are from Bob Plotnick

HOW TOLLS AFFECT THE POOR
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When it comes to paying for the new 520 floating bridge, sales or gas taxes would be harder on the poor than paying tolls.

That's according to a recent study by researchers at the University of Washington.

Robert Plotnick is a professor at the Evans School of Public Affairs and led the research.

He says if you average out the costs of tolls among all people in King County -- even people who don't use the bridge -- the costs are almost the same for rich and poor.

"The key finding to us was when you look more broadly at the entire Puget Sound area. On average low income people actually pay no more of a share of their income than anybody else. If we use sales taxes, on average, poor households would pay a higher share of their income than other households."

Plotnick says it's true that poorer **users** of the bridge will generally pay four times more of their income than wealthier drivers.

But he says new sales or gas taxes would be harder on the poor overall.

The study was paid for by the state Department of Transportation, the state agency that's implementing the tolls.

Tolling director Craig Stone says his agency is looking for ways to lessen the impact of tolls on low-income people.

"Some of the mitigation elements are the electronic benefits cards that low-income individuals can get. They can use that towards tolling."

He says policymakers see tolls as less regressive than other taxes because drivers at least have the options to change their route or take mass transit.