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The Role of **Traceability in Tolling**

Driving Trust, Reputation, and Credibility

Prepared by Emovis December 2025

Executive **Summary**

Modern tolling relies heavily on public trust. When drivers see tolling systems as fair, accurate, and accountable, it directly translates to higher compliance and revenue. However, widely publicized failures in back-office operations and online complaints from frustrated customers about unexplained tolling charges have severely impacted trust in these systems. The consequences have been severe, including lost revenue, costly audits and claims, and reputational damage in the form of troublesome headlines in the media and political intervention.

Agency audits show how quickly mistrust can translate into financial loss. Industry analysts estimate collection costs on some systems can exceed up to 10% of toll revenues. This level of cost severely cuts into net receipts and opens agencies up to criticism regarding their stewardship of public funds.[1]

In an industry where one misstep can quickly turn into a liability or public outrage, having traceable tolling systems, where every transaction is accounted for, is paramount. For tolling operators, traceability is no longer a technical luxury, but an indispensable necessity that offers a safety net and leverage to establish credibility and cultivate trust among all stakeholders.

[1] Congressional Research Service (CRS). (2024).

01
The Growing Demand for **Traceability in Tolling Operations**

Traceable tolling systems are an "intelligent backbone" for tolling networks. They help to enhance operational and financial integrity while providing specific, reliable data that can be used to inform decision-making. These systems are optimized in a way that helps tolling authorities evaluate performance and resolve customer disputes, ensuring every data point and tolling transaction is accessible and can be referenced at any point in time.

For example, when a customer is mistakenly charged a higher toll rate, traceability allows the back office team to rapidly review the transaction path, pinpoint where and why the error occurred, and determine if the system or its rules need adjustment. This transparency enables clear communication with the customer and helps maintain trust in the tolling process.

Additionally, traceability delivers measurable benefits that extend far beyond just cost reduction. It offers greater visibility into transaction qualification and assures everyone involved—from agencies to back-office administrators, auditors, and road users—that each tolling event is accurately captured and fairly processed.

02

From Distrust to Transparency: **Traceability as the Key to Restoring Public Confidence and Reputation**

Despite advancements in the digital tolling landscape, operational complexities continue to persist, and many tolling authorities do not fully understand *what is actually* happening inside the transaction qualification process of their operations in order to address these challenges in a timely manner. In cases when complaints or disputes arise from road users, this lack of insight can pose a serious threat to tolling authorities and their credibility.

In fact, research estimates that U.S. toll authorities lose out on at least $2.24 billion annually due to errors, revenue leakage, and in most cases, the use of outdated legacy systems that aren't built to provide end-to-end traceability.[2]

With the multitude of payment methods and high transaction volumes that toll authorities are responsible for managing, a traceable system doesn't just record data, it builds a transparent, verifiable track record that enhances accountability, optimizes systems, and strengthens public and stakeholder trust. The transparency that these systems provide also works to safeguard against inefficiencies that could be detrimental to a toll authority's reputation.[3]

$2.24 billion

LOST ANNUALLY DUE TO ERRORS[2]

[2] Deloitte. (2024).
[3] Resources for the Future. (1998).

03

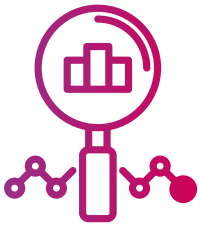
The Strategic Value of **Traceability to Strengthen Credibility**

CUSTOMER CLAIMS, DISPUTE RESOLUTION, AND INACCURATE BILLING

Tolling continues to be one of the most publicly scrutinized methods of revenue collection. The ability to trace every transaction now provides a powerful assurance of transparency, helps resolve disputes, and safeguards institutional credibility. If agencies are not careful, the smallest billing mistakes can spark major critique and public skepticism.[4] When road users dispute toll transactions, the investigation, validation, and resolution of each claim can be a lengthy process, often taking days or several weeks to resolve. This is especially true when systems lack detailed transaction-level traceability. The longer these disputes remain unresolved, the greater the potential for damage to reputation.[3]

[3] Resources for the Future. (1998).
[4] Manassas Talk Facebook. (2025).

For instance, auditors discovered that one toll authority was unaware of overcharging thousands of road users, many of whom were double billed due to a glitch when the operator changed **legacy systems** during the pandemic. Without **end-to-end traceability** in place to efficiently audit the large volume of data, only some accounts received refunds while others did not at the time of the audit. This incident led to public backlash and disputes that called the toll authority's systems and credibility into question.[5]



Data Fragmentation and Governance

Inconsistent tolling structures across different state lines and jurisdictions operate on separate platforms where each usually has its own distinct data, identifiers, and transaction records. This disunity stifles consistent reporting and can leave toll operators and their credibility on the line when mistakes occur.

On the contrary, well-managed data that is traceable, structured, and securely stored allows tolling agencies to generate comprehensive audit trails and easily meet compliance standards across all jurisdictions.[6]

Automated Data Verification to Streamline Manual Reconciliation

Tolling authorities often struggle to streamline semi-manual processes for validating and reconciling tolling transactions. This lack of automation and traceable data leads to significant time spent on discrepancy resolution between roadside systems, payment gateways, and back-office records, increasing the potential for errors.

An OBO system, like Emovis Qualify, has traceability as a core feature, embedding transparency across tolling operations. Every transaction is fully visible and easily audited through the product's built-in monitoring tools. This brings accountability in transaction management to the next level and accelerates reconciliation across integrated systems, helping agencies protect their reputation.[7]

Compliance and Reporting Complexity

More refined policies on data transparency and interoperability have forced tolling agencies to have more accountability.[1] A tolling system that offers clear data lineage and traceable reporting takes away any guesswork, making sure all stakeholders operate from the same, trustworthy information.

[1] Congressional Research Service (CRS). (2024).
[5] Maryland Matters. (2021).
[6] Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). (2021).
[7] Emovis. (2024).

04

How Inefficiency Impacts Public Credibility and Reputation

When government agencies aren't operating efficiently, billing errors, inconsistent toll rates, and unresolved penalty disputes can damage trust with the general public and regulatory leaders.[8] This not only creates an impression of negligence or inequity among road users, but also hinders tolling authorities from securing new contracts or public-private partnerships due to a track record of failure in their systems.[9]

Additionally, when tolling systems collection processes are seen as inefficient or motorists do not see a direct improvement in infrastructure or service, they become suspicious and hesitant to pay their tolls, making it harder for even the most advanced tolling technologies to gain wide acceptance.

With Emovis Qualify, agencies can change that narrative. For example, when a regional authority faced a surge in customer complaints over duplicate charges, Emovis' traceable records enabled staff to identify that the data mismatch came from external information, resolve the issue in days instead of weeks, and proactively communicate accurate refunds. What could have escalated into a reputational crisis became an opportunity to show accountability and responsiveness.[7]

By providing complete visibility into every step of the customer journey, from vehicle identification to payment reconciliation, Qualify helps agencies not only resolve complex disputes efficiently, but also rebuild the public trust that keeps tolling programs sustainable.

[7] Emovis. (2024).
[9] IBTTA. (2023).

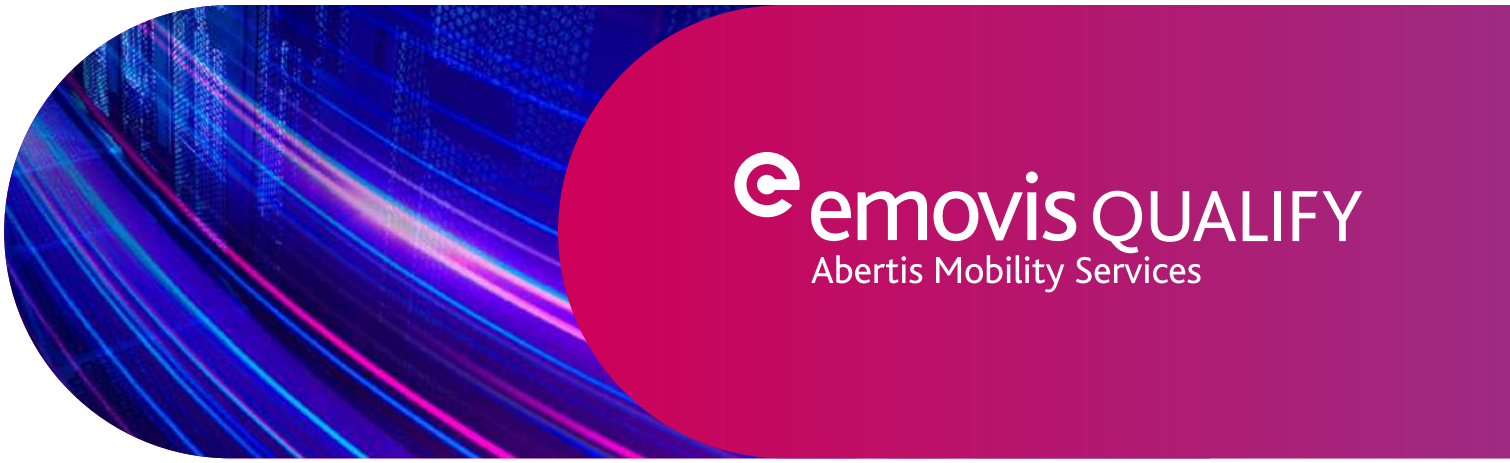
05

Future Outlook: **The Role of Traceability in Sustainable Tolling**

Efficiency and public trust are critical in the tolling industry. Traceability serves as more than just an operational back office feature, but is also a crucial step toll operators must take to ensure accountability and build trust with the drivers they serve.

Mobility solution providers can empower agencies to achieve sustainable tolling operations by offering robust traceability capabilities. When systems provide this level of transparency, authorities can protect their credibility by transforming every piece of data into a strategic asset rather than a liability that could later damage an operator's reputation.

For more information on traceable operational back-office tolling solutions or Emovis Qualify, visit Emovis online at emovis.com/product/emovis-qualify/ or call to speak with an expert.



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