

How Express Toll Lanes Could Help Manage Congestion

Traffic congestion is a defining element of U.S. 69 in Overland Park, with travel time from one end of the corridor to the other expected to double by 2040. It can translate into a U.S. 69 commuter losing nearly an extra week every year to commuting, [based on average U.S. commuting time burdens](#). That extra week can also mean [poorer health](#), [greater unhappiness](#) and [an out-of-pocket expense of up to \\$1,189](#).

The express toll lanes (ETLs) being considered among several options for improving U.S. 69 respond to the growing economic costs of – and mounting public frustration around – congestion by improving travel quality without paying for it with added state or city taxes. As ETLs reduce delays, they also:

- Minimize stress;
- Increase trip-time predictability;
- Shorten incident response times for emergency personnel; and
- Provide a greener, healthier commute by reducing the time vehicle idle in traffic jams.

How Express Toll Lanes Manage Congestion

The characteristics of U.S. 69 between 103rd Street and 179th Street – high traffic volumes, anticipated growth and regional demographics – suggest that ETLs could provide congestion management benefits. They work by managing congestion using dynamic pricing based on supply and demand. Tolls would be lower during periods of low congestion in the general-purpose lanes; higher as general-purpose lanes become more congested. As some drivers choose to pay a user fee (toll) and move into an express lane, congestion in the non-tolled general-purpose lanes eases, too.

ETL Congestion Management



- 1** The express toll lane (ETL) price is set based on traffic conditions, increasing and decreasing as traffic volume changes.



- 2** The cost is calculated to motivate a number of drivers to choose the ETL, paying more to achieve better travel time predictability.



- 3** As some drivers choose to pay the toll and move into an express toll lane, congestion in the free general-purpose lanes eases, too.

Express Toll Lanes and Transit Work Together

ETLs further decrease congestion by creating more incentive to use transit. ETLs improve transit travel time reliability by giving transit faster passage through the corridor within the express toll lane. This would benefit the two public transit agencies – the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) and Johnson County Transit – that jointly operate seven RideKC transit routes that cross or use U.S. 69 directly. (Currently, the South OP Express is the only route that uses U.S. 69 directly between West 103rd and West 135th Streets.) By improving bus operating speeds and service reliability, express toll lanes on U.S. 69 Highway also could provide new opportunities for transit, including improved future bus operating speeds and reliability and service for underserved suburb-to-suburb transit markets.

A Future Guard Against Congestion

Express toll lanes represent a more sustainable solution for improving U.S. 69 because they better relieve congestion now and into the future as compared to widening the corridor with additional toll-free lanes.

Applying a variably priced toll based on the level of traffic ensures that the express toll lanes will reliably operate at free-flow conditions even as traffic continues to grow in the corridor over time. Offering a consistently free-flowing lane at all times reduces pressure to build additional highway lanes in the future. Adding a lane without a toll eventually will lead to all lanes experiencing congestion as traffic continues to grow – with few options beyond building yet again another lane that may encroach on nearby businesses and homes.

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Learn More

To learn more about congestion management – or about the Project overall – please visit the [69Express Project website](#) and [sign up to be updated about the Project](#) as it progresses. You can post comments or pose questions about the Project at [the website feedback page](#) as well.