

## Comparing footprint of U.S. 69 expansion options

### GUEST COLUMN

As our communities continue to grow, the Kansas Department of Transportation is working to find a long-term solution for efficiently moving increasing traffic on U.S. 69. Based on the U.S. 69 Modernization and Expansion Project team's analysis to date, adding capacity (a lane in each direction) appears to be the best solution for reducing congestion along this important corridor.

Although both added-capacity options—traditional widening and express toll lanes (ETLs)—reduce congestion, the initial analysis shows ETLs move traffic more efficiently with fewer lanes. ETLs better balance traffic across all lanes and reduce the demand to increase lanes to address congestion.

For example, with the traditional widening option, consider that the section of highway north of I-435—a part of the U.S. 69 corridor with higher traffic volumes—would require 11 lanes to carry current and projected traffic volumes. This large physical footprint would mean removing at least one building and encroaching on nearby homes.

On the other hand, the ETL option for the same area would require only eight lanes—two express toll lanes and six general-purpose lanes—to move the same amount of traffic. Because ETLs require fewer lanes, they are less expensive to build and maintain and can minimize environmental and quality of life impacts. ETLs also offer better flexibility and adaptability for future transportation technologies and congestion-management options.

In its ongoing technical analysis, the U.S. 69 Modernization and Expansion Project will continue measuring each option—and others—to better determine how well each option might reduce

congestion and meet other elements of the project's purpose and need. To date, based upon current research and analysis, express toll lanes appear to best meet KDOT's goal of finding an approach—or combination of approaches—that best improves safety, reduces congestion and provides flexible travel choices for users while supporting local and regional growth.

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