

Advisory Group – Meeting #5 Summary

Overview:

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) hosted the fifth U.S. 69 Expansion and Modernization Project Advisory Group Meeting virtually on April 13, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The objectives of the fifth meeting were to discuss the cost of the add-capacity alternatives and roadway messaging on a tolled road and example toll rates; and to seek feedback from the Advisory Group.

Meeting Summary

1. The meeting and its contents are summarized in the attached:
 - a. Meeting PowerPoint
 - b. Meeting Recording
2. **Welcome and Meeting Logistics** – The meeting kicked off with a welcome and introduction by Robyn Arthur.
3. **Opening Remarks** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas discussed the construction implementation and cost, what the ETL user sees and what it costs to use the ETL. She mentioned that the U.S. 69 project is part of the IKE program that was implemented in May 2020. The schedule for U.S. 69 to move from development into construction will be detailed in the future.
4. **Express Toll Lanes** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas reviewed the cost for the construction of ETLs and the traditional widening alternatives.
 - a. **Express Toll Lanes, Fewer Phases** – The total construction cost would be \$655 million. Under this solution, the project would be constructed in four phases. ETLs are the better cost value compared to the traditional widening the roadway to add capacity.
 - b. **Traditional Widening, More Phases** – The total cost to construct the traditional widening option is \$740 million. This is due to additional pavement and the need for connector-distributor lanes. This alternative would require nine different construction phases.

Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: It looks like the piece-by-piece approach is more costly?

A: The ETL is more cost effective and can handle the same amount of traffic.

Q: But do we have to do all the piece-by-piece parts?

A: We are looking into the two different options to manage traffic. We would not build all phases right now for either project. What we would want to think about with the ETL option is that we would have to build at least the \$300 million phase to make that system work.

Q: What is the time frame for the construction on each, and how long should each one last until something else has to be added?

A: We used a 2050 time frame for each project. The ETL option could move through the pipeline the fastest. If we have another funding option besides the local contribution, we could look at building the project piece by piece.

- c. **Less time – less disruption – improved quality of life** – The traditional widening option with nine phases would disrupt traffic more over a longer period of time. The impact to traffic would be cut down with the fewer, larger phases the ETL option provides.

A Menti question was posed to the group: Based on the estimates of project cost and phasing options, what best describes your reaction?

- a. The ETLs option is the better value due to cost. (2)
- b. The ETLs option is the better value due to less disruption to traffic.
- c. Both a and b (6)
- d. The traditional widening option is better because of increased flexibility. (1)
- e. Other

5. **Roadway Messaging, Clear and User-Friendly** – Cameron McGown, HNTB, discussed the ETL entry and exit points.

- a. **Signs in General-Purpose Lanes** – General-purpose lane users would see signs two miles in advance of ETL entry and exit points. The sign would provide an advanced notification of the ETL facility. The signs would list the price, express lane exits and express lane entrances.
- b. **Signs in ETLs** – Signs will include entry and exit signs to the general-purpose lanes. Signs will notify users about a mile in advance of an exit. There will be an additional sign a half-mile before the exit. The weave zone will be when drivers can move out of the express lanes into the general-purpose lanes or vice versa. The signs will focus on consistent messaging to provide the best and safest user experience.

Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: There is a difference in speed between the ETLs and the general-purpose lanes to exit to the right. How will this work and is this configuration typical or similar to other models you are looking at?

A: Yes, this is similar to other configurations. The weave zone or access location won't be immediately south of the exit you want to take. There will be enough space provided to go safely from ETLs to general-purpose lanes to the exit. We will need to make sure there's enough free-flowing movement in the general-purpose lanes to exit.

Q: How will ETLs be differentiated from the general-purpose lanes?

A: There will be about a 4-foot gap to show that you're in an ETL vs. general-purpose lane. If you exit from the ETL to the general-purpose lanes over that space, that would be considered a traffic violation.

Q: How high will link 6 (or 3) be, the flyover? It could add considerably to noise exposure to the homeowners in the NW portion of the area.

A: This flyover meets the existing bridge. The improvements at those elevations are already in place. There will be new traffic on those movements but the structures and some traffic at those elevations are already there.

Q: Will there still be a disabled vehicle lane to the left of the toll lane?

A: Yes. There will still be a full shoulder to the left, between the edge of the shoulder of the ETL and the concrete barrier in the middle of the northbound and southbound lanes.

6. Example Toll Rates – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas discussed toll rates.

- a. **Rates Vary with Actual Traffic** –The afternoon peak hours will be the highest rate. This is shown by data and traffic patterns. We are using the ETLs as a congestion-management tool to help reduce congestion and ensure trip reliability. These rates help to make sure we are improving traffic.
- b. **Rates to Keep Traffic Moving in All Lanes** – Cameron McGown, HNTB, shared how a goal of ETLs is to keep traffic moving across all lanes. When the prices are too low, there are a lot of ETL users and all the lanes fill up and perform equally poorly. If the price is too high, the general-purpose lanes are too congested and the ETLs are underutilized. When the price is just right, some drivers use the ETLs and some use the general-purpose lanes. This is why the speeds in the lanes will be constantly monitored and the pricing will adjust depending on the level of congestion.

Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: That implies that the cost might change several times during the day?

A: Yes. The intent is to monitor in real time. The cost could change often based on conditions, such as every 15 minutes during the busy parts of the day, or it could change only every few hours if the traffic is lower. If someone has entered the express lane and the toll rate changes, a buffer period allows those already in the toll lane to get to their destinations with the price at the time they entered. That way their bills aren't different than they expected when they entered the lane.

Q: Will the rate adjust by pennies or by nickels and dimes?

A: We're trying to round rates to the nickel.

c. **Rates Set to Manage Congestion**– To travel from 151st Street to 103rd Street in the morning, northbound rates could vary between \$0.50 and \$1.50; mid-day, nighttime, weekend rates could be between \$0.30 to \$0.65; and, in the afternoon, southbound rates could vary between \$0.75 and \$1.75. These rates would put U.S. 69 below the national average cost to use tolled lanes. U.S. 69 would be around \$0.25 a mile while the national average is \$0.56 a mile.

d. **Examples of Using the Corridor** – If the ETL is used for the entire corridor five times a week (one-way trips, not round trips) during rush hours, the yearly cost would be around \$360/year. One one-way trip a week during rush hours on part of the ETL would be \$48/year. Using the existing lanes all the time would not cost anything.

Advisory Group Questions and Project Team Responses

Q: Given the flyover #6 (or #3) that you described, how much additional traffic noise and air pollution do you project will occur to the homeowners in the NW portion of the 69 highway and I-435 connector?

A: There will be additional vehicles but that won't necessarily mean additional noise. Vehicles traveling at a higher speed are typically better for air quality than vehicles traveling at lower speeds or idling.

Q: It would seem that there would be very few drivers paying to use [the toll lanes] midday when traffic flows smoothly. Do the financial plans anticipate minimal revenue during the day?

A: Yes, when there is less traffic there is less incentive for people to use the express lane. There are still some people that would choose to use it during the off-peak times. The revenue model has taken these fluctuations into consideration.

Q: Are the costs set costs in each direction no matter when I enter the express lane or prorated by length of section I use?

A: The cost depends on the length of your trip. It will cost more if you use the entire length of the ETL. The directional cost will be based on frequency and time of day.

Q: What differential costs would you anticipate for trucks and busses?

A: If we move forward with this option, we will have to look at some aspects further. From a KDOT perspective, we have to charge everyone that uses the lane, but the law does not specify that it has to be the same charge. We may be able to incentivize using buses. Sometimes truck rates are higher for tolls in other places.

Q: In your first example, if someone used the lane at rush hour both ways five days a week, wouldn't the cost be twice what you have in that example?

A: Yes. We calculated using it one-way Monday-Friday.

A Menti question was posed to the advisory group: Based on these example toll rates, what best describes your reaction to the anticipated pricing?

- The rates seem reasonable for U.S. 69. (5)
- The rates seem too high for this community. (2)
- The rates seem too low to manage congestion. (1)
- Other.

A Menti question was posed to the advisory group: Given the toll rates, I could see myself as a:

- Frequent user (0)
- Occasional user (8)
- Never a user (1)

A Menti question was posed to the advisory group: Given the toll rates, I could see...

- Some value in using the express lanes. (4)
- High value in using the express lanes. (4)
- No value in using the express lanes. (0)
- I'm undecided. (1)

- e. **Engagement Moving Forward** – KDOT Deputy Secretary Lindsey Douglas discussed public engagement moving forward. The public meeting will take place April 20, and an online open house will begin April 16. There are a lot of opportunities to be involved coming up. We are working toward that end of May or early June time frame to see what the city of Overland Park decides on the ETL option. There has been a lot of information coming at you quickly. If you have additional questions or want more information, please feel free to reach out.

7. Open Discussion

Q: Do you anticipate any cuts in the hills along 69 that would warrant walls vs. laying back the soil – in particular near the picture you are showing?

A: There will be areas that will need grading as we expand the highway to six lanes. Walls will be on a case-by-case basis.

A question for the group: What other information would make this a viable option to use an ETL for yourself?











- To have a public transit option on the roadway. This is a good opportunity to tie into public transit solutions with the travel time reliability.
- I think just having the information about the environmental impacts to share with the public.
- Reaching out to lower-income people and being able to make this more accessible to people. Saying that we're doing this (ETL option) instead of taxing the entire community.

Q: Will the team plan to do any traffic simulations to show how weaving between entrances, exits and toll lanes will work? Safety impacts of these planned weaving movements?

A: Yes, we are building models to study this and to help identify where to put weave zones.

Attendees

A screenshot of attendance follows.

Julie Brewer, UCS	Teona Jerman	Leroy Koehn	Steve Hale - KDOT	Scott Cooper	John Neuberger
Mary Birch	 Lindsey Douglas	 Brandon Yar...	 Suze Parker	Clint Robinson -...	Darren Chadwick
jaskubal's iPhone	Brian Pietig	Ashley McDonald	Scott Cooper	julie.lorenz	 KTA Zoom
 Cameron McGo...	HNTB	John Neuberger	Clint Robinson -...	Chad Stafford	Jason Sanders
 Michael DeMent...	Ann Melton, KD...	Darren Chadwick	julie.lorenz	Stuart Day	Ron Achelpohl
 Tom Herzog	 Tracey Osbor...	 KTA Zoom	Chad Stafford	HNTB	Kip Strauss - HN...
Steve Rockers	Michael.E.Rineh...	Jason Sanders	Stuart Day	Bryan Dehner	Lorraine Basalo...
 Chris Tatham	fred spears	Ron Achelpohl	HNTB	Gretchen Ivy	Sean Reilly