

## Dallas-area drivers about to face new concept: fluctuating toll prices

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The opening of a portion of LBJ Freeway's tolled lanes next month will usher in a new way area drivers pay to get to Texas.

The concept is meant to manage congestion by relying on dynamic pricing — toll rates that fluctuate every few minutes based on traffic conditions.

LBJ will be the first highway in Texas to use dynamic pricing on what's being branded as TEXPress lanes. They run parallel to LBJ's reconstructed main lanes, which will remain free. TEXPress lanes, eventually, will be the first dynamic-priced lanes in America to offer a guarantee (of sorts) that motorists can drive at least 50 mph — even during rush hour.

At least four other planned highway expansions in the Dallas-Fort Worth area — including Interstate 35E and State Highway 183 — will feature toll lanes with dynamic pricing alongside updated free main lanes.

Without the tolled managed lanes to generate money, officials say, highway construction that's needed to keep pace with population growth would stall.

"This is the type of transportation project that's going to drive the economy of 10 million people," said Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Morris and a bevy of state and regional officials discussed the concepts at a media event Wednesday in an office building that overlooks a portion of LBJ that will open Dec. 14.

The long-congested highway is undergoing a \$2.6 billion redevelopment. Developer LBJ Infrastructure Group, which will operate the highway for 52 years, financed the bulk of construction costs. Money collected from tolls will be used to pay back that investment.

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The first phase to open will be a 3.2-mile stretch from Preston Road to Greenville Avenue. The recently reconstructed DFW Connector north of Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport is expected to use TEXPress lanes starting next year.

#### Temporary toll cap

To ease drivers into the TEXPress concept, prices on LBJ will be capped during the first four weeks. The most a driver with a TollTag will initially pay to drive that stretch, depending on time of day and direction they are headed, is 95 cents. The cheapest amount is 15 cents.

After the first four weeks, the minimum and maximum toll rates could change. After motorists have had six months to get used to dynamic pricing, it's likely there will be no caps on how much the rates could be. That means traffic — and what the project developer thinks people are willing to pay — will determine the cost.

LBJ Infrastructure Group will run a command center where traffic will be monitored and toll prices will be set based on congestion. Texas Department of Transportation officials will oversee the pricing.

"This is all going to be based on the behavior of the traffic," said Robert Hinkle, corporate affairs director for the developer.

The way those toll rates fluctuate can seem counterintuitive. That's because the more traffic there is in the tolled lanes, the higher the cost to use them. Higher prices are expected to decrease the number of drivers wanting to jump on, thus thinning out traffic.

Helping further that goal is the 50 mph guarantee that begins once the cap on toll prices is removed. Motorists who don't end up averaging at least 35 mph will receive a rebate on what they're charged — but only in some instances. Situations that are out of the operator's control, like a car accident, won't trigger a rebate.

"We want to move more people than a typical highway corridor does," Morris said.

The toll rates will be posted on electronic signs. If the rates change while driving that segment, motorists will be charged the rate posted when they entered.

#### A break for carpoolers

Carpoolers and motorcyclists with TollTags will receive a 50 percent discount during rush hour on the base TEXPress lanes. But they must use a smartphone app that hasn't been released yet to register as a high-occupancy vehicle every time they want the discount.

These motorists' TollTags will notify police officers that they are registered as an HOV vehicle. Officers will ticket HOV-registered drivers who don't actually have more than one person in the car, similar to the way they already ticket single-occupancy drivers on free HOV lanes throughout the region.

Motorists without TollTags or who drive large trucks will pay higher prices, officials said.

Jeff Austin, a member of the Texas Transportation Commission, said private partners are needed to build highway projects in Texas because the Texas Department of Transportation can't afford to pay for all the projects.

He said the agency has limited funds to play catch-up on long-standing congestion problems, ongoing maintenance across the state and to build for continued population growth.

For North Texans, that means continued construction to meet infrastructure needs will likely be financed with some sort of tolling component.

"Our needs have outstripped our resources," Austin said.

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AT A GLANCE: LBJ Freeway expansion

LBJ Freeway is undergoing a \$2.6 billion reconstruction that includes tolled lanes, rebuilt main lanes that will remain free and redone access roads. The project will roll out in three major phases:

**Dec. 14:** From Preston Road to Greenville Avenue

**Mid-2014:** LBJ interchange with Interstate 35E

**December 2015:** Josey Lane to Preston Road

TEXPress lanes in North Texas

Texans are about to be introduced to fluctuating toll prices. The concept is meant to manage traffic flow and, like previous tollways, help finance needed construction projects. The following five highway projects will have tolled TEXPress lanes in addition to reconstructed main lanes that will remain free:

**LBJ Freeway**

**DFW Connector**

**Interstate 35E**

**Interstate 35W**

**State Highways 121 and 183**

Dynamic pricing

During the first four weeks, there will be a range of minimum and maximum prices to get North Texas drivers used to the new concept. Here's a look at the base ranges for TollTag users on the 3.2-mile portion from Preston Road to Greenville Avenue:

Time of day	Eastbound	Westbound
6:30-9 a.m. weekdays	30-95 cents	30-75 cents
3-6:30 p.m. weekdays	30-95 cents	30-75 cents
All other times	15-65 cents	15-45 cents

SOURCE: Regional Transportation Council

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## 22 Comments

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**Jerry Holding** 4 minutes ago

I'm a liberal and I think people should travel the toll roads for free

Reply

0   0



**Jerry Holding** 5 minutes ago

Maybe Moochelle Obama can recommend a friend to work on a tollway website.

Reply

0   0



**Peter Schulte** 29 minutes ago

So.... If I'm using these lanes and traffic gets below 50mph I get a refund??? I think this company is biting off more then it can chew....

Reply

0   0



**Alex** 36 minutes ago

People.....there were still be 4 free lanes in each direction just like there is now. In addition to the 4 free lanes, they are building the toll lanes in a trench, 3 in each direction. Those will have the dynamic pricing. Simmer down!

Reply

[▼ 2 replies](#)

1   0



**jack frost** 30 minutes ago

And your money will go to Spain.

Reply

[▼ 1 reply](#)

0   0



**Alex** 29 minutes ago

Then don't drive the toll lanes, and your money stays in your pocket. For you, LBJ will be exactly like it is today. 4 lanes in both directions. Don't drive the toll lanes, no one is going to force you

Reply

0   1



**Jude Martins** 45 minutes ago

'Dynamic pricing'.....I don't like the sound of that.

Too bad the extra gas taxes, road use fees, registration fees, etc. no longer pay for our roads and we have to pay extra for something that use to be free to everyone.

Reply

0   1



**Manu Dance** 50 minutes ago

Sounds like another toll scam. Folks its triple taxation without representation. We fund the bonds, pay the fees, and we pay gas taxes. The officials running this are unelected and suffer no consequences at the polls. Demand refund of our gas taxes!!! We are paying the bill of one of the board members under FBI investigation bill is around \$ 200,000 dollars. Is he still riding these toll roads. Whole tollway scam needs a FBI Investigation. .Texas legislature is for sale to the highest bidder not for We the People. Sheeple wake up!!

Reply

2   1



**Jerry Holding** 59 minutes ago

The road is still free. If you want extra to save time you pay for it. Not a new concept.

Reply

[▼ 3 replies](#)

2   3

 **jack frost** 53 minutes ago  
 So your buddy Perry can fund a 2 billion slush fund for their water project, hand out 600+ million from the enterprise fund, and give nothing for the infrastructure. The contracts were given to a company from Spain, who keep the tolls for 50 years. ARE YOU UN AMERICAN??????

Reply [▼ 1 reply](#) 1   1

 **Jerry Holding** 7 minutes ago  
 so Your buddy Obama can fund throw trillions at Obamacase and cant even get the website up. Yes we will need to toll roads to get to the emergency room since we no longer have policies.

Reply 0   0

 **John Beckett** 36 minutes ago  
 Correct - not a new concept. Just a bad concept.

Reply 1   1

 **jack frost** 2 hours ago  
 Perry and the gop sold out the citizen's of Texas, they gave these toll road contracts to foreign countries, who keep the tolls for 50 years, and can increases prices anytime they want..

Reply [▼ 2 replies](#) 4   2

 **Jerry Holding** 58 minutes ago  
 Roght now you need to worry about your scum president. He is costing people their insurance policies and their life.

Reply [▼ 1 reply](#) 3   3

 **jack frost** 56 minutes ago  
 ANOTHER BAGGER DEFLECTION.

Reply 1   1

 **CyranodeTylerac** 2 hours ago  
 ...or not. Since I refuse to drive on toll roads, it won't cost me any mote money. Too bad more people don't boycott the attempt to turn us into Oklahoma.

Reply 1   2

 **Melissa** 7 hours ago  
 ok....let me get this right.....when there is a higher amount of traffic(and you need the toll lanes) it's going to cost more to use these new toll lanes.....and when there is no traffic the tolls are cheaper.....doesn't make sense to me.....sounds like literally legal highway robbery.....

Reply [▼ 3 replies](#) 5   2

 **CyranodeTylerac** 2 hours ago  
 exactly; all part of Governor Goodhairdye's "low cost/no services" state.

Reply 4   2

 **Darren Dupre** 1 hour ago  
 Whether or not toll roads themselves are the right thing is another topic, but from an economics standpoint, it makes sense. Supply/demand. When there is more traffic and less capacity for more cars, the price goes up. When there is light traffic and plenty of capacity, the price goes down.

Reply 2   1

 **Alex** 30 minutes ago  
 Yes, the tolls are higher when the toll lanes are more congested to discourage too much traffic. No one will want to pay \$\$ for toll lanes that are a parking lot, when there are 4 free lanes right next to them that are also a parking lot. This article doesn't do a good job of explaining that there will still be 4 free lanes in each direction on LBJ, just like there are today. The toll lanes will be in addition to the 4 free lanes...so don't pay the tolls, you won't be forced to.

Reply 0   0

**William Brown** 9 hours ago



This concept is one of the worst ideas I've ever heard. "Counter-intuitive" is red flag.

Reply

▼ [1 reply](#)

2   3



**Randell Weatherall** 45 minutes ago

makes sense. Basically if too many people get on the toll road and it makes the speed go down, they raise the price, so less people will want to get on, which will speed the traffic up again. If you don't want to deal with that, just take the free lanes and take your chances. I know its conceding that there will be traffic before the road even opens, but you simply can't outrun traffic needs. Certainly can't when Texans and Texan leadership refuses to change or increase the funding mechanism.

Reply

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