

No fooling: DFW Connector managed lanes to open April 1

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The Texas Department of Transportation will open managed toll lanes on Tuesday along the DFW Connector — just in time to handle increased traffic from sports fans flooding the area next weekend.

The managed lanes — officially called TEXpress lanes — will open on a 4-mile stretch of State Highway 114 just west of State Highway 26 to east of International Parkway.

The lanes will be free to the public until late spring while tolling equipment is being tested.

Officials don't have an exact date when the tolls will start being charged on the managed lanes that run parallel to the main lanes and frontage roads.

"As soon as we feel the equipment is ready to go, we'll start tolling," said Lisa Walzl, a TxDOT spokeswoman.

The rates will fluctuate depending on traffic congestion, time of day and other factors. "The goal is to keep traffic moving along those lanes at 50 mph," Walzl said.

TxDOT officials say the lanes will help ease traffic congestion expected to come with the NCAA's men's basketball Final Four tournament at AT&T Stadium in Arlington and the Duck Commander 500 NASCAR race at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth.

The Final Four, to be played April 5 and 7, is expected to draw at least 80,000 fans per game and may set tournament records.

The April 6 race could attract a crowd of 150,000 or more.

With thousands of people expected to come to the area for the two events, "we believe this is the perfect time to open this new system for congestion management," James Bass, TxDOT interim executive director, said in a prepared statement.

"This innovative corridor will provide a choice for commuters driving through this vital east-west route as well as reduce congestion and improve safety."

The DFW Connector's TEXpress lanes are the second to open in North Texas. The first opened in December on a 3.2-mile stretch of LBJ Freeway.

The North Tarrant Express lanes in Fort Worth are expected to open at the end of the year.

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