

# New Tarrant-Johnson toll road hailed as traffic reliever



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The drive from Cleburne to Fort Worth is about to get a lot easier. For a price, of course.

The North Texas Tollway Authority on Sunday will open Chisholm Trail Parkway, a 28-mile toll road that connects Interstate 30 near downtown Fort Worth to U.S. Highway 67 in Johnson County.

The north-south road has been planned for 40 years. It's seen as a milestone in giving Cleburne residents better access to Fort Worth.

"It is a motorist's nightmare in this area," said Elizabeth Mow, NTTA's assistant executive director of infrastructure.

But motorists won't be the first to take the road for a test drive. Runners, walkers and bicyclists will break in the thoroughfare Saturday. The parkway will serve as the backdrop to a series of events dubbed Run & Ride the Chisholm Trail Parkway.

"A once-in-a-lifetime event," Mow said.

The parkway will be six lanes from Forest Park Boulevard to Arborlawn Drive. It will go down to four lanes from Arborlawn to Altamesa Boulevard. It will be two lanes from Altamesa to Highway 67.

While the ramps connecting Chisholm Trail and I-30 will also open Sunday, some direct interchanges with State Highway 183 and Interstate 20 are not finished. They will open as they are completed.

"We do not want to hold the entire 28 miles up for a few ramps to get finished," Mow told NTTA board members in April.

Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley said a major obstacle for those living in the southwest section of the county will be eliminated. The options until now have been taking nondirect routes on crowded highways or taking surface streets that send drivers through dozens of traffic signals.

"It's going to be quality of life," Whitley said. "Folks down in that area right now have experienced a lot of traffic, a lot of difficulty both getting to the downtown area or at different times, just moving around."

Whitley said there are probably environmental benefits, too.

"By the folks not sitting there in congestion, that means it'll help our air quality," he said.

Besides the convenience, Whitley said it's already opening up the area to new development. He said new housing developments, shopping centers and other commercial centers are open or under construction.

"Once the developers saw dirt turning and were assured that the road was going to be built, they got in there so they could be open when the road opens," Whitley said.

The cost to drive the full length will be \$4.91. Like on other area toll roads, TollTags aren't required. But drivers who don't use them will pay a 50 percent higher rate when they are invoiced in the mail.

And to help get more drivers to buy TollTags, the NTTA is also introducing a purple one that has Texas Christian University's logo on it. (Don't get jealous, Southern Methodist University supporters: NTTA officials say a Mustang TollTag is also in the works.)

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