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FORECAST

TRAFFIC

Project closing I-30 HOV lanes between Dallas, Arlington for 2 years



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Commuters used to cruising on Interstate 30's HOV lanes west of downtown Dallas will have to slog through the main lanes with everyone else starting Friday.

Those express lanes, which have been open to eastbound drivers in the morning and westbound drivers at night, will be closed for at least two years. The Texas Department of Transportation is spending \$63 million to rebuild and expand the lanes from Arlington to Dallas.

When the express lanes are completed in 2015, they will feature additional access points and allow for 24-hour, two-way traffic. The lanes also will be "tolled managed lanes," meaning single-occupant vehicles will be able to pay a fee to use them when there's excess capacity.

Tolled managed lanes of a slightly different variety are the centerpiece of major highway projects like LBJ Express and the DFW Connector. But the I-30 work is the area's first such HOV lane transition that's not part of a larger overhaul.

North Texas drivers should get used to the concept. More tolled managed lanes — called TEXpress lanes in Dallas-Fort Worth — are planned in the coming years for highways across the region.

"This is one of the early ones," TxDOT spokesman Tony Hartzel said. "This is part of that bigger system of managed lanes that's going to open."

The lane closures also will require some shifts to the main lanes, as the overall roadway is widened to accommodate the larger express area. Some early work by contractor Austin Bridge and Road has been underway since March.

And that's not all ...

The project is part of an upcoming one-two punch for commuters driving to downtown Dallas from the west and south.

In the coming months, HOV lanes also will be closed south of downtown on Interstate 35E and U.S. Highway 67. Work is getting ready to ramp up on the Horseshoe Project, which will overhaul Interstates 30 and 35E in downtown Dallas.

Those HOV lanes aren't being converted to tolled managed lanes yet, although they're on the list to make that transition in the future.

Once all the closures are in effect, thousands of commuters will have to alter their daily routines. Even the easternmost portion of the I-30 HOV lanes could be affected beyond 2015 by the four-year Horseshoe Project, which abuts the managed-lane work.

"There's no other way around it," Hartzel said. "We just ask for motorists' patience for the duration of these projects."

Project differences

The I-30 tolled managed lanes are a bit different than those on LBJ Express and elsewhere.

Those on LBJ Express feature variable pricing based on traffic flow and offer discounts — at least to start — for vehicles with two or more occupants. The I-30 express lanes will be free for two-plus-occupant vehicles, while single-occupant vehicles will pay a flat rate when there's room. The price for single-occupant vehicles hasn't been determined.

The setup, which will require the installation of new technology, will give transportation officials more control over traffic flow. And it could help generate a good chunk of revenue, if lots of drivers without passengers opt to pay for the right to drive in the fast lane.

Another major component of the I-30 HOV lane overhaul will be additional direct-connector on- and off-ramps. As the express lanes are currently configured, most of the access is limited to the beginning and end of the 18-mile stretch.

But the new configuration will improve access to and from frontage roads. That increased mobility will include connections to a park-and-ride facility being built near Belt Line Road. The lot could potentially allow commuters to leave behind their cars and hop on a bus for the rest of their trip.

The I-30 project also will widen the express lanes, so there are always two lanes operating in each direction. That's a significant upgrade over the current setup, which requires both machines and manpower to switch the one-way flow of traffic.

Sometimes, as it stands, the HOV lanes aren't open for anyone to use.

"It's a really good deal all the way around," TxDOT spokeswoman Michelle Releford said, listing some of the benefits. "No cumbersome gates. No way for the machine to fail and not be able to open it one day."

TxDOT officials said the changes also would make it easier for emergency response vehicles to reach accidents in the express lanes. And they added that the new lanes would improve traffic for major events like Texas Rangers and Dallas Cowboys games.

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5 Comments

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Paul Davidson 3 hours ago

ANOTHER toll road. Where is the incentive to carpool, Governor Goodhairdye???

3 1
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Pat Patterson 18 hours ago

That whole section of I-30 from Dallas through Arlington should have been done some 15 years ago when the highway was first modified.

4 0
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donsanedrin 18 hours ago

The eventual toll prices are based on how many bushes they plant alongside the highway, and what type of artwork they put on the walls.

If you want a whole bunch of stars and two-tone colors, that'll be an extra 20 years the NTTA controls it.

[1 reply](#)

6 1
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Charlena Reyna 17 hours ago

Looks like I'm not the only one who thinks that is a waste of money!! I hope to not be sitting long enough get a look at the fancy plants and art work and two-tone colors, don't you??

5 0
- 

Otein Rehtaeh 19 hours ago

They were open?

3 0