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Chisholm Trail Parkway opens - slowly

Posted Sunday, May. 11, 2014 4 comments Print Reprints Share Like

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BY GORDON DICKSON
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One by one, curious motorists pulled up to construction workers Sunday along the new Chisholm Trail Parkway and asked essentially the same question: "When is the road going to open?"

Workers said they remained confident the 28-mile toll road connecting Interstate 30 near downtown Fort Worth to U.S. 67 in Cleburne would be open well in time for Monday morning rush hour. As of 7 p.m. Sunday, the entire northbound side of the road was open, and workers were quickly opening the southbound side.

Crews were working feverishly to get the next northbound intersection at Arborlawn Drive open, making it possible for motorists to travel about two miles to University Drive.

At another new intersection, at Edwards Ranch Road just south of Montgomery Street and north of Arborlawn Drive, the decision was made not to open to northbound traffic, at least for now. The northbound on-ramp at Edwards Ranch Road was littered with reinforcing bar and other construction materials and workers placed temporary tape over a sign pointing traffic to the north, so motorists wouldn't think the entrance was open. But the southbound side for traffic headed toward southwest Fort Worth and Cleburne appeared to be nearly ready for traffic.

For workers, the mission was to prepare not just the tollway for traffic, but also surrounding intersections. For example, temporary stop signs were placed at the access roads to Chisholm Trail Parkway, near the Edwards Ranch Road underpass, to improve traffic flow for vehicles heading to and from the toll road.

Also on Sunday afternoon, a street sweeper was combing through the area.

"If you don't sweep, and you open a road, it's amazing how much dust gets on the roadway," said Paul Robertson, a project engineer for Webber Construction, one of the contractors.

50 mph speed limit

Once the road is fully open, motorists will find an unusual arrangement of speed limits.

Roughly the northernmost four miles of the road, from Texas 183 — also known as Southwest Boulevard — to Interstate 30 the speed limit is 50 mph. The road was engineered for that speed, with tight curves and hills, as a concession to leaders in several Fort Worth



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Tolls on the new road

- If a vehicle doesn't have a TollTag, its license plate will be photographed and the bill will be sent to the registered owner. Motorists who use this method, known as ZipCash, will be charged toll rates 50 percent higher than those with TollTags.
- TollTags are stickers placed on windshields that allow the cost to be deducted automatically as a driver travels on North Texas toll roads.
- TollTags require an upfront deposit, usually \$40. Most account holders use a credit card to automatically replenish their accounts whenever the balance dips below \$10.
- To apply for a TollTag, visit NTTA.org or call 972-818-6882.

Source: North Texas Tollway Authority

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neighborhoods concerned about traffic noise and other pollution.

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Will police officers be monitoring with radar guns? That isn't immediately clear.

DPS troopers often respond to car crashes and other 911 calls on tollways, but also could stop speeders, said DPS spokesman Sgt. Lonny Haschel.

The Texas Department of Public Safety, which has law enforcement jurisdiction statewide, is being hired under a special contractual arrangement to patrol Chisholm Trail Parkway. The agency also provides a police presence for North Texas Tollway Authority roads in the Dallas area.

"They will do traffic enforcement out there, absolutely," Haschel said. "We just want to make sure everybody is following the rules. And, when crashes occur — which is a fact of life — troopers will respond to those."

The troopers working Chisholm Trail Parkway probably will be stationed out of a DPS office in either Tarrant County or Johnson County. The agency has offices in Hurst as well as Cleburne.

But other agencies, including municipal police in Fort Worth and Cleburne, also share jurisdiction on Chisholm Trail Parkway and could write speeding tickets on the road, too, he said.

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