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## YOUR COMMUTE

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# Longhorns told to steer clear of Chisholm Trail Parkway

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FORT WORTH — Authorities are not allowing longhorns with the Fort Worth Herd to roam on the new Chisholm Trail Parkway during a weekend of festivities to open the tollway.

Seems the North Texas Tollway Authority has decided the road is for cars, not cattle.

The 28-mile toll road, named after the historical cattle trails that led to Oklahoma, Kansas and beyond in the mid-1800s, is scheduled to open to traffic Sunday. It will connect Interstate 30 near downtown Fort Worth to U.S. 67 in Cleburne. Crews will open one on- and off-ramp at a time beginning about 8 a.m. Sunday, starting near University Drive and working south. The process of getting the entire road open is likely to take several hours, one tollway authority official said.

Fort Worth officials, who have been pushing for a road in the southwest corridor of their city for five decades, wanted to celebrate the impending opening of the toll road Friday morning by inviting a procession of the Fort Worth Herd, a collection of cattle that marches daily through the city's historic Stockyards tourist area and makes appearance at other big events.

But officials at the Plano-based tollway authority ruled out the possibility that the herd would be allowed to ceremoniously trot its stuff on the shiny new, \$1.6 billion roadway.

Several Fort Worth officials say they were told the NTTA's risk management office was concerned about the possibility that, if an old-fashioned cattle drive took place on the toll road, some of the animals could get loose —and perhaps cause property damage, or hurt a bystander.

"It would have been a lot more fun having them go down the road, but Dallas folks are involved in the opening ceremony and they're a little paranoid," said cowboy Steve Murrin, the unofficial mayor of the Stockyards and friend of the Herd. "I don't think they've even seen a cow before."

So instead, five longhorn steers stood aimlessly Friday morning in a roughly 400-square-foot makeshift pen — occasionally letting out a bored-sounding "moo" — while about 300 dignitaries took part in a ceremonial ribbon-cutting under a white tent on the Tarrant County-Johnson County line.

They were little more than a beefy backdrop.



View photos

### Chisholm Trail Parkway

- A number of events are scheduled this weekend to celebrated the opening of the Chisholm Trail Parkway, a 28-mile toll road connecting Interstate 30 near downtown Fort Worth to U.S. 67 in Cleburne.
- On Saturday, several events will take place on and around the toll road, beginning at daybreak. Among them are a half-marathon, 5k and 1-mile kids run, and several bicycle rides. For more information, visit [CTPrunride.org](http://CTPrunride.org).
- On Sunday, crew members will begin opening toll road exits. They will start on the north end of the road, near University Drive, and work their way southbound, opening one stretch at a time. Once the workers reach Cleburne, the entire northbound side of the road will be open, and the workers will begin working their way back toward Fort Worth. The process of getting both directions of the toll road entirely open likely will take several hours, officials said.
- Information: [NTTA.org](http://NTTA.org).

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### 'It puts us at risk'

"The first plan was to have them on the roadway, but they [tollway officials] said they might not be controllable," said Donna Parker, a longtime Fort Worth Chamber official and advocate for the road, as well as a former tollway authority board member.

Tollway authority officials say they wanted to be respectful of Fort Worth's western heritage, but also had to approach the ribbon-cutting — actually, the dignitaries used an oversized pair of scissors to cut a ceremonial rope, instead of a ribbon — with modern-day common sense. After all, nearly 300 people were milling about the roadway during the ceremony, and more than 100 vehicles were parked along the shoulders.

In all, there was too much potential for cattle chaos.

"That's the way to do it. Otherwise, it puts us at risk," tollway authority spokesman Michael Rey said. He added that several thousand runners who planned to take part in a half-marathon Saturday to celebrate the Chisholm Trail Parkway opening had all agreed to sign liability waivers.

But Murrin scoffed at the notion that the herd would cause any trouble. The steers make frequent appearances in public places, and the cowboys are trained to keep 'em moving along, he said.

The Fort Worth Herd makes it way along Exchange Avenue through the Stockyards twice daily, often with tourists excitedly lining the sidewalks just a few feet away from the cattle drive.

And herds have been known to pop up elsewhere in Fort Worth. For example, in November, cowboys on horseback drove a herd of cattle around Ridgmar Mall in west Fort Worth to kick off the Salvation Army's annual fund-raising drive.

Murrin also objected to signing a liability waiver.

"I told them it's kind of like asking a neighbor to come cook for you and then ask them to sign a waiver," Murrin said. "But that's Dallas. They don't know any better. We'll make do. We'll get the toll road open and that's the main thing. Everyone in that part of the county is excited about it."

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