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HOV lanes are disappearing on Interstate 30 - to be replaced by toll lanes

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BY GORDON DICKSON
gdickson@star-telegram.com

Read more in the Honkin' Mad traffic blog

ARLINGTON — Carpoolers are losing their special lanes on Interstate 30 between Arlington and Dallas for the next couple of years.

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Beginning Friday morning, the high-occupancy vehicle lanes will be closed for an 18-mile stretch from west of Fielder Road in Arlington to Sylvan Avenue in Dallas. The closure is expected to last about two years, and during that time drivers won't have access to the single HOV lane in each direction connecting Arlington's entertainment district and AT&T Stadium to downtown Dallas.

The plan calls for expanding the area to two lanes in each direction, and making it possible for drivers of single-occupant vehicles to use the lanes for a toll.

It's one of the region's early steps in what promises to be a years-long process - the conversion of the highway system to a network of lanes that offer motorists the choice of driving on the more crowded main lanes at no charge, or paying a toll to hop on special express lanes.

The new toll lanes will be branded TEXPress lanes, to symbolize how the lanes will be designed expressly for those who wish to travel long distances without exiting. Unlike the old HOV lanes, which were open for eastbound traffic in the morning and westbound traffic in the afternoon, the new lanes beginning in 2015 will be open in both directions, around the clock.

The lanes will have entries and exits at Belt Line Road and MacArthur Boulevard, and Cockrell Hill Road and Westmoreland Road.

"It will be the first conversion of HOV lanes to express - or TEXPress - lanes," said Tony Hartzel, Texas Department of Transportation spokesman.

The contractor for the \$63 million project is Austin Bridge and Road.

The new lanes are expected to open in 2015, but the precise timing will depend upon how construction of the I-30/I-35E "Horseshoe" project is progressing at that time, Hartzel said. The new TEXPress lanes won't be opened until they can be integrated with the new lanes being built at I-30 and I-35E, he said.

The HOV lanes south of downtown Dallas on I-35E and US 67 will also close in the coming months as workers prepare to begin the Horseshoe project.

Gordon Dickson, 817-390-7796 Twitter: [@gdickson](https://twitter.com/gdickson)

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