

I-70 Mountain Express Lane Comments, Questions/Answers

The following comments, questions and answers are from the two public meetings held Sept. 21 and Sept. 29, 2015 on the use of and the proposed toll rates. For more information, including the audio file for the telephone town hall on Sept. 21, click [here](#).

COMMENTS:

1. Locals pass!!
2. Why are there comment clipboard s and the 1 comment box empty? People obviously have things to say Please give us a forum to address our concerns.
Q&A
3. Exit 214 - Bridge should have been done last November
4. Just basic bridge Others are designed more nicely on I-25
5. Lanes should be open all year long
6. \$72 million for 13 miles
7. I didn't even know the Veteran's Memorial Tunnels were open; they are always closed
8. CDOT did a great job on the tunnels
9. Difference since Twin Tunnels opened
10. Concerned about the traffic exiting toll lane to do business in the towns without penalty
11. Wants roundabouts at Downieville and Dumont
12. Worried that it is not currently financially possible
13. "Danger zone"
14. Cost, cost, cost
15. Financial concerns
16. Flaggers aren't trained enough and its becoming a safety issue
17. Upset about the Q&A format of the meeting
18. Concerned that building more toll roads will just flood the local streets with more traffic - look at how E470 has affected SH 7. No one is on E470 but everyone is on SH 7 and traffic backs up for miles
19. Didn't' like the format of meeting - CDOT did more enemies tonight, and did more harm than if they didn't have a meeting at all
20. Should have an open house for those who don't' want to speak in from of a crowd, and a Q&A session for those who do. The meeting was publicized as a town hall and it's not, this is an open house. We were promised a Q&A session and we didn't get one.
21. Locals should not have to pay
22. Suggestion: I appreciate what doing to help alleviate traffic; need to get I70 train going; add \$5 fee from out-of-state people. Summer heavier traffic.
23. The lights on the ramps is a horrible idea.
24. Why bicyclists shouldn't pay for a licenses and plates to help pay for this

25. Why are we not looking at other modes of transportation? Biggest problem is trucks

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

TOLL RANGE PRICING:

1. If driving and get halfway through, do tolls change? What notification will there be of the toll price change? How long will the prices remain the same? Will disabled people have lower fares?
 - Drivers will be charged the toll price posted when they enter the Express Lane. If the price should increase or decrease while they are in the lane, drivers will pay the price posted upon entry, not pay the difference.
 - Drivers will be notified of the toll price by overhead highway signage. It will also be posted at cotrip.org and drivers can sign up to receive updates on tolls to be sent by email or text to them, too.
2. How much are the tolls going to be and is this for everyone? Please explain the toll range.
 - The toll price is a range between \$3-30 for ExpressToll pass holders. It is higher for those without a pass and can be as much as \$10 more than the toll for passholders.
3. Who approves the toll prices?
 - CDOT's High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE) Board reviews staff recommendations as well as the public outreach conducted for the I-70 Mountain Express Lane for setting toll prices and take action to approve the proposed toll rate range.

ACCIDENT/EMERGENCY VEHICLES:

4. What happens to the toll and traffic if there is an accident? What is the plan for the three lanes and no shoulders? What happens with an accident or emergency vehicle? How will traffic be directed if there is an accident? If there is an accident in the toll lane and traffic backs up - will everyone still be charged the same fee?
 - If there is an accident or emergency vehicle that needs to use the Express Lane, drivers will not be charged to use the lane.
 - Drivers will not be charged a toll if there is an accident that affects the Express Lane.
 - If drivers are moved into the Express Lane due to an accident in the general purpose lanes, they will not be charged a toll.

- The I-70 Mountain Express Lane uses the inside shoulder and therefore, there is no shoulder during its operation. When this lane is not in operation, it is used for emergency use only.
5. In the event of a mechanical failure, where do you go?
 - If a driver in an accident is able to exit the highway that is preferred. If a lane is blocked and without a shoulder, traffic will be diverted to use the other two lanes.

PROJECT COST:

6. How much will this program cost, i.e. construction?
 - The project's cost is \$72 million that includes a loan of \$24.6 million.
7. Will all toll revenue go to the State of Colorado or are there any private enterprises involved like in Boulder? How long is the term of the loan? Where will the additional revenue go after paid off the road? Could additional toll revenue go to public transit like the green bus in Evergreen?
 - The project's cost is \$72 million that includes a loan of \$24.6 million to be paid back in seven years.
 - CDOT is collecting the toll revenues and will use that to repay the loan. Additional toll revenue will be used for operations and maintenance costs.
8. Once the \$25 million loan has been paid, would that lane become free of charge or remain a toll lane?
 - The lane will remain an Express Lane in order to provide a reliable travel time. This is to allow a reliable travel time for drivers and to reduce congestion.
9. There is surplus money from the lottery. Can that money be used?
 - Lottery funds can't be used for this project. Colorado statute directs the funding for the lottery funds.

WHY EXPRESS LANES?

10. How did you decide to make a toll road in the first place? Can you explain how you set priorities? Why are we doing this? Why is there a toll? This favors the wealthy; is there a more fair for all Colorado residents?
 - CDOT knows that we are not able to build our way out of congestion and is offering drivers choice for mobility such as express lanes for corridors.

- The I-70 Mountain Express Lane can divert 750-900 cars from the general purpose lanes, which should allow them and even the frontage roads to be less congested.
- The I-70 Mountain Express Lane is part of several improvements made to the I-70 corridor to improve congestion.

EXPRESSTOLL ACCOUNTS AND PASS/LICENSE PLATE TOLLING:

11. Explain more about the transponders and passes.
 - ExpressToll accounts and passes can be ordered at www.expresstoll.com or (303) 537-3470.
 - The ExpressToll sticker tags or switchable HOV transponder, in TOLL mode, will work on this Express Lane, all of Colorado's Express Lanes and the toll roads such as E-470 and the Northwest Parkway.
12. How would temporary tags work? What about people that use your car?
 - All drivers choosing to use Colorado's Express Lanes or toll roads such as E-470 or Northwest Parkway will save money every time by having an ExpressToll account and pass.
 - Drivers will either pay the toll using an ExpressToll pass or pay a License Plate Toll (LPT), for those vehicles without an ExpressToll account and pass.
 - Drivers will pay the toll and a charge, which on the I-70 Mountain Express Lane can be up to \$10 more than the toll, if they choose to use License Plate Tolling.
 - ExpressToll accounts and passes can be ordered at www.expresstoll.com or (303) 537-3470.

OPERATIONS AND USAGE:

13. How far will it go? Are there plans to extend it?
 - The I-70 Mountain Express Lane runs eastbound for 13 miles from Empire through the Veterans Memorial Tunnels in Idaho Springs.
 - CDOT will monitor how this express lane performs in the mountains.
14. What is the full capacity estimate of the toll lane and what speed are you targeting in the lane?
 - CDOT estimates between 750-900 cars per hour will be able to use the I-70 Mountain express Lane. This should help to relieve congestion in the two free general purpose lanes. Drivers in the Express Lane should be able to travel at a speed of 45 mph.
15. What are the days of operations?

- CDOT will operate 72 days a year, and only during periods of peak travel such as the weekends and holidays.
16. What vehicles will be allowed in the Express Lane? Semis?
- The Express Lane will not be available for vehicles longer than 25 feet, trailers or those with more than two axles. HOV/Carpoolers and motorcyclists will pay to use the lane. The average vehicle has an occupancy of 3.2 in this corridor.
17. The lane has no drainage. What will happen when it snows?
- CDOT may choose to not open the I-70 Mountain Express Lane during snow and weather events.
18. Concern about toll lane speed and normal lanes? Are these lanes narrow?
- These lanes are narrow since a shoulder is being used as the express lane. The speed limit is the same for all lanes, whether general purpose or an express lane.
19. If going to Idaho Springs, will you be charged the full amount?
- Drivers using the Express Lane will be charged once toll price listed on the signage when no matter where they enter the lane.
20. Want specifics about the project and it will be finished. Worried about safety.
- The Express Lane will open by the end of the year, in December.
 - The I-70 Mountain Express Lane is one additional toll lane available 72 days per year. Drivers will always have the choice of using the Express Lane or the two free adjacent general purpose lanes. The Express Lane will open typically on Saturdays, Sundays and holiday. This should help to relieve congestion in the two free general purpose lanes .drivers in the Express Lane should be able to travel at a speed of 45 mph.

OTHER I-70 MOUNTAIN CORRIDOR:

21. Northern Silverthorne is horrible. Will this be in the plan?
22. Can you explain how you set priorities for the mountain corridor?
23. Has adding 3 or 4 lanes heading west been entertained?
24. What are the long-term solutions?
25. Why do stop-gap benefit in the future?
26. What is the impact of cost west of the toll road? Why should we have to pay tolls?
- To learn more about the statewide planning and the I-70 Mountain Corridor planning, visit <https://www.codot.gov/projects/i-70-old->

CLEAR CREEK RESIDENTS:

27. Will Clear Creek residents get a discount or waiver?
28. Why are we allotting lanes for people coming up and locals who end up paying?
 - All drivers choosing to use the I-70 Mountain Express Lane will need to pay a toll. Drivers can save money every time with an ExpressToll account and pass.
 - The two free general purpose lanes will always be open and available when the express Lanes is open, providing drivers a choice.

EXPRESS LANE ACCESS AND EXITS:

29. Do you need to stay on the whole 13 miles or can you get off at Idaho Springs?
30. How do you ensure success of keeping people from weaving in and out?
31. How are you going to restrict drivers from going in and out of that lane to pass people? How will the lane work because you tried similar on 470 and 25 and they failed because of zigging in and out?
32. Can I enter the Express Lane from Fall River?
 - CDOT is currently working to resolve these local access questions. Additional information will be provided as soon as available.

PROJECT-RELATED:

33. Is the sound barrier still in the plan?
 - There was no sound barrier in the plan.
34. Is Hidden Valley exit open?
 - Yes, it is open.

OTHER QUESTIONS:

35. Are you considering shortening the metering lights from US 40 onto eastbound I-70?
 - CDOT constantly monitors the metering to optimize efficiency in the corridor.
36. Has this experiment been done in other states and what kind of lessons have been learned? Where has this pricing model been used and what are the lessons learned?
 - Many states have tolled Express Lanes. However, CDOT's I-70 Mountain Express Lane is the only one that is offered only during peak times (weekends and holidays), for 72 days maximum a year and is based on recreational drivers, not commuters such as all other Express Lanes.

CDOT has worked with other states on lessons learned for educating the public on how to use Express Lanes.

37. Is it feasible to have park and rides at the bottom? Take more public transportation instead of using the money to do road work?

- CDOT has worked with communities, such as Golden, to increase park and ride lot capacity to encourage carpooling and reduce congestion.
- The average vehicle has an occupancy of 3.2 in this corridor.

38. Why do we pay taxes and gas tax?

- Gas tax has not risen with inflation and as vehicles become more fuel efficient and the state's population continues to grow, there are more and more demands for transportation.
- The gas tax funds and state budget meet the state's transportation maintenance costs.

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