



EXPRESS LANES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an “Express Lane”?

An Express Lane is a tolled lane on a highway that drivers can choose to use for a reliable, shorter travel time. Express Lanes are tolled and offered next to the free general purpose lanes. Some Express Lanes offer transit, free carpooling and motorcycle. Express Lanes are managed by CDOT and the High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE).

Why has CDOT been constructing Express Lanes instead of regular lanes?

Colorado’s population is expected to increase 47 percent to 7.8 million residents by 2040. Colorado can’t build its way out of congestion. As Colorado’s population continues to grow, Express Lanes are a long-term solution to make sure drivers will be able to get where they are going, and get there on time. Also, Express Lanes offer mobility choices to drivers and commuters.

Why not just build a new regular lane?

Because that new regular lane will be congested again in just a few years. Transportation planners have a technical term for this concept (“induced demand”). We’ve seen this before when we added a new regular lane to I-25 through the heart of Denver as part of the TREX project in 2009. When it first opened, everyone moved through that section reliably. But now, less than ten years later, it’s more congested than before.

Why won’t the same thing happen with an Express Lane?

Express Lanes are priced to have just the right amount of traffic in the lane to give that driver a reliable, shorter travel time for the price of a toll. The less traffic, the lower the price. As traffic increases, so does the toll to keep the Express Lane moving.

Do I have to use the Express Lane?

No. Taking the Express Lane is always a choice. You can always choose to use the adjacent, non-tolled regular lanes. Express Lanes can deliver more consistent, faster speeds and reduced travel times for the entire corridor, including the general purpose lanes; so everyone benefits.

Are all Express Lanes the same?

No. CDOT builds Express Lanes to meet each community’s needs and after extensive planning. Some offer bus rapid transit, some allow free motorcycle and carpools with 3 or more people, and some only operate part of the time; but, all offer a toll for a reliable shorter travel time.

My friend tells me that if I pay to use the Express Lane, I’m paying for the lane twice: once with my taxes, and again to use the Express Lane. Isn’t he right?

Not really. When you pay to fuel up your vehicle, a portion of the fuel tax goes to CDOT for us to maintain the roadways, plow the snow and build new regular lanes. If you choose to use an Express Lane, the fee you pay goes to pay for the operation and maintenance of the Express Lane itself and sometimes for construction of that lane.

How many Express Lanes has CDOT built?

CDOT currently has three Express Lanes: US 36, from Boulder to Denver; on I-25 from downtown Denver to 120th Avenue; and the I-70 Mountain Express Lane, from Empire to Idaho Springs in the eastbound direction. Four more Express Lanes are currently under construction (or will be this summer): on I-25 from 120th Avenue to Northwest Parkway/E-470; on I-70 between Brighton Boulevard and Chambers Road; on C-470, from I-25 to Wadsworth; and on I-25 from Johnstown to Ft. Collins.

Do Express Lanes work?

Yes! On CDOT’s three Express Lane corridors, travelers in all lanes (including the regular lanes) see time savings of anywhere from up to 20-50%. Drivers in the regular lanes are getting to home and work faster because some of the other drivers are choosing to pay a toll and use an Express Lane. Express Lanes can deliver faster speeds and more consistent and reduced travel times for the entire corridor, including the non-tolled regular lanes.

Where are you getting this data?

We use a system called INRIX to determine travel times.



What about the people who can't afford to pay?

You always have a choice to use the Express Lane or the regular lane. You can also travel in some Express Lanes for free by motorcycle, as a carpooler with 3 or more people, or by using transit.

How do you set the Express Lane toll rates?

The HPTE Board of Directors establishes toll rates annually and communicates with the corridor communities on toll rate changes.

Will you continue to build Express Lanes if a new source of transportation funding is identified?

Probably. Express Lanes are how we help ensure that folks will be able to have a reliable, shorter travel time as Colorado grows. While some Express Lanes can contribute funds to capital construction costs, not all do.