

2014-15 I-405 Express Toll Lanes Rate Setting FAQ

Background

To boost speed and travel time reliability on one of the state's most congested commutes, WSDOT is constructing express toll lanes on Interstate 405 between Bellevue and Lynnwood. Crews will build a new express toll lane adjacent to the general purpose lanes between Northeast 6th Street in Bellevue and State Route 522 in Bothell and convert the existing carpool lane between Bothell and Lynnwood to an express toll lane. When the project is complete in 2015, drivers will have the option to use the 17-mile corridor of express toll lanes from Bellevue to Lynnwood. This is phase one of a 40-mile express toll lane system on I-405 and SR 167. Express toll lanes revenue will be reinvested in future corridor improvements.

Questions and Answers

What are express toll lanes?

Express toll lanes give drivers who do not meet the carpool occupancy requirements the choice to use HOV lanes by paying a toll to avoid traffic. I-405 express toll lanes will operate as an expressway within a highway, similar to the SR 167 High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes.

Which vehicles will be able to use the express toll lanes toll-free?

Carpools with the required number of occupants, transit vehicles, registered vanpools, motorcycles, WSDOT maintenance vehicles, and emergency vehicles on a bona fide emergency call will be allowed to use the lanes for free.

What are the benefits of express toll lanes on I-405?

- Travel time reliability: Provides the choice for a reliable trip which does not exist for drivers in the corridor today.
- Reduces traffic congestion: Express toll lanes improve mobility for everyone in the corridor including transit, freight, and drivers in the regular lanes.
- Reliably manages congestion in real time: Toll rates adjust based on real-time traffic conditions to maintain an average speed of at least 45 mph in the express toll lanes.
- Helps fund future congestion relief: Express toll lanes will provide funding towards future I-405 corridor improvements.

When will the new express toll lanes open?

The I-405 express toll lanes between Bellevue and Lynnwood are scheduled to open by the end of 2015.

How many people will I need to have in my car to qualify as a carpool?

The Washington State Transportation Commission's proposal exempts carpools with three or more people at all times, and exempts carpools with two or more people except during peak period times of 5 a.m. to 9 a.m., and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays. Two or more people are required to be exempt on weekends.

What are the hours of operation on the express toll lanes?

The express toll lane system will operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

What will I pay for an average commute?

The typical peak hour toll for someone driving the express toll lanes is likely to be between 75 cents and \$4. It is estimated that 77 percent of the time, drivers will pay less than \$1. Toll rates will be dynamic, meaning they will automatically adjust based on how many drivers choose to use the express toll lanes. The toll will increase when traffic in the express toll lanes is heavier and speeds are slower. The toll will decrease when traffic is lighter, ensuring that express toll lane traffic moves at 45 miles per hour or faster.

How will I know what the express toll lane price is at a given time?

Electronic signs posted along the highway, located at clearly marked access points will indicate the price currently being charged in the express toll lanes for up to three destinations. Drivers will pay the price displayed on the sign when they enter the lanes, even if the price changes after entry.

How will drivers pay the toll on the I-405 express toll lanes?

Like the SR 520 bridge, tolls on I-405 express toll lanes will be collected electronically using *Good To Go!*. For vehicles without a *Good To Go!* account, the registered vehicle owner will be sent a bill in the mail at a higher Pay By Mail toll rate.

How can I use the I-405 express toll lanes as a toll-free carpool?

I-405 carpoolers must meet the new occupancy requirements and use the new *Good To Go!* Flex Pass to travel free in the express toll lanes. During peak hours, carpools need three or more people in the vehicle and the Flex Pass set to HOV mode. During off-peak hours, just two people are required with the Flex Pass set to HOV mode.

Are the express toll lanes fair to drivers of all income levels?

Research on existing express toll lane users in Washington and in other parts of the country reveals that people of all income levels choose to pay tolls when they need a faster trip, whether that be during regular daily commute, running late to an appointment, or picking up a child from school or day care. Our models also show that drivers who do not wish to pay to enter the express toll lanes should see improvements in speeds even in the regular lanes. As more vehicles opt to enter the express toll lanes, they free up space in the regular lanes.

How will revenue collected on the I-405 Express Toll Lanes be used?

Toll revenue collected on I-405 will first be used to maintain and operate the express toll lanes. Any additional revenues are dedicated for future I-405 corridor improvements.

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