

## **I-25 North Express Lanes FAQs**

### **Where will the new North I-25 Express Lanes be located?**

The I-25 North Express Lanes include a six-mile stretch of I-25 from 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Wagon Road Park-n-Ride in the north to the existing I-25 Express Lanes in the south that continue into downtown Denver. This six-mile segment of I-25 currently has three general purpose lanes in each direction. The project adds a fourth travel lane in both directions to be operated as a managed toll lane. Currently, this portion of I-25 carries approximately 175,000 cars and 4,300 bus transit riders every day. The additional capacity will provide congestion relief and provide motorists with additional travel options.

### **What are the benefits of the project?**

By adding an Express Lane in each direction of I-25, safety and mobility will be improved by providing nearly a 20-minute travel time savings for vehicles in the Express Lanes and four-minute travel time savings for vehicles in the general purposes lanes. The added capacity through the Express Lanes will also enhance existing travel for carpools, vanpools and buses as they will be able to bypass the congestion.

Some of the benefits we often do not realize through transportation improvements include increased access to residential areas, businesses, health care services and recreation as well as improved mobility for freight carriers. At an even larger scale, the much needed improvements to I-25 will better support both economic and job growth.

### **How are these lanes being constructed?**

CDOT is using the inside shoulder to construct the new lanes. This eliminates the need for costly right-of-way or additional paved surface providing a huge cost savings and making the most use of the infrastructure we already have in place. By using the existing infrastructure, the project will be completed nearly two decades earlier than if CDOT had waited for funding to fully widen the highway.

### **What are the traffic impacts during construction?**

To date, the construction schedule has not been finalized; however construction is anticipated to begin in September 2013. In general, lane closures will take place during non-peak hours, typically Sunday through Thursday from 9 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. More information will be released regarding lane closures and traffic impacts as we get nearer to the start of construction.

### **When will the I-25 North Express Lanes be complete?**

Final design of the I-25 North Express Lanes is currently underway with construction scheduled to begin by fall 2013. CDOT anticipates construction to be complete and the new express lanes open to the traveling public by fall 2015.

### **How will emergency vehicles get through the congestion if the shoulder is being used for the express lane?**

A minimum outside 8-foot shoulder will be provided throughout the corridor for emergency vehicles to use. This typical cross section variance was submitted to and approved by FHWA as part of the TIGER grant application, and exactly replicates the inside shoulder configuration found along many extended stretches of the I-25 and I70 interstate corridors throughout the Denver metro area. In addition, increased courtesy patrols will be provided on the I-25 managed lanes corridor to assist disabled vehicles to keep the shoulder clear, and ATM and ITS devices and signs will be implemented, to ensure adequate emergency vehicle mobility.

### **Will there be room for vehicles to pull off the highway in the event of an emergency?**

A minimum 8-foot outside shoulder will be available 24-7 for vehicle refuge. Additionally, accessible and usable unpaved grassed area is available adjacent to the shoulder over the majority of the corridor, and increased courtesy patrols will be provided on the I-25 managed lanes corridor to assist or remove disabled vehicles. ATM and ITS devices and signs will be implemented to alleviate congestion in the event of a disabled vehicle.

### **Why don't the I-25 North Express Lanes go any further north than 120th Avenue?**

It was determined during the I-25 North Environmental Study that the highly congested six-mile stretch of I-25 between US 36 and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue was the first logical and affordable segment for improvements in the corridor. Future improvements north of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue are dependent on funding sources not yet identified by CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration.

### **So is this all CDOT is doing to address congestion on I-25N?**

- While we expect the new managed lanes to make significant improvements to congestion along I-25, CDOT recognizes that more needs to be done. There are several efforts underway, including:
  - Working with our local partners to study additional near term options to relieve congestion and improve safety between US 36 and SH 7. This study is evaluating the need for and impact of a range of improvements, including additional auxiliary lanes, new park and rides, and expanded bus service. (<http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/northI25PEL>)
  - Examining funding options, including CDOT's recently announced RAMP program to extend managed lanes north of 120<sup>th</sup> (<http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/RAMP>).
  - Establishing a new regional commuter bus program that would operate between Denver and Fort Collins during peak commute times. Subject to Transportation Commission approval, the new service could begin operation in the Fall of 2014.
  - Working with our stakeholders to study high-speed rail options along the I-25 corridor through a Interconnectivity Rail Study. This study is examining possible alignments, financial/funding options, travel demand and ridership, and possible high-speed technologies. <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/ICS>

### **How are the I-25 North Express Lane improvements being funded?**

On June 22, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) a \$15 million federal TIGER grant to complete the funding package of a \$60 million investment to build the I-25 North Express Lanes Project between US 36 and 120th Avenue. In addition, FASTER safety and FASTER transit funds are also being utilized. Funding Advancements for Surface Treatment and Economic Recovery (FASTER) was passed by the General Assembly in 2009 and utilizes a portion of vehicle registration fees to improve safety on Colorado highways. Several local agencies along the corridor are contributing to this project, including RTD.

### **Why isn't CDOT adding a free general purpose lane instead of a toll lane?**

In December of 2011, CDOT published an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that identified and evaluated a range of multi-modal transportation improvements along the I-25 transportation corridor from the Fort Collins/Wellington area to Denver. One outcome of this extensive, multiple-year effort was a recommendation to extend the current express lanes on I-25 north of US 36 into Adams County.

Managed lanes provide numerous benefits to our transportation system, including:

- Providing a congestion-free alternative for travelers when they choose to carpool, take transit, or pay a toll to access the lanes.
- Creating an incentive for alternatives to single occupant travel. High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) and public transit vehicles will have access to the managed lanes free of charge, while Single Occupant Vehicles (SOV) will pay a toll to use these lanes.
- Reducing the need to add additional capacity in the future

### **Will the new I-25 North Express Lanes be reversible or two-way?**

The North I-25 Express Lanes will feature one lane in each direction and will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, between US 36 and 120<sup>th</sup> Ave. The existing I-25 express lanes in north Denver will remain a two-lane reversible facility.

**How do I enter and exit the I-25 Express Lanes?**

There will be designated entrance/exit zones between each interchange that will be clearly identified by overhead signing and pavement marking. Travelers will enter the lanes where the pavement stripes are a single, broken white dash. This dash zone will occur between every interchange. At all other areas, the Express Lanes will be separated by a solid, double white line. Crossing double, solid white lines will be prohibited.

**Are the I-25 North Express Lanes accessible from US 36 and I-76?**

There will be no direct connection provided between US 36 and the North I-25 Express Lanes. Any travel to these corridors from the North I-25 Express Lanes must exit after 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Motorists needing access to I-270 will have an exit direct to the I-270 exit ramp. Travelers from US 36 and I-76 will be able to enter the North I-25 express lanes within designated areas once on I-25, south of 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Are vehicles with one or more passengers allowed to travel in the express lanes free of charge?**

Yes, high occupancy vehicles (HOV) such as carpools and vanpools will be allowed to use the I-25 North Express Lanes free of charge, while solo drivers will be required to pay a toll. Initially, vehicles with two or more passengers will be considered HOVs and allowed toll-free travel. As of January 1, 2017 toll-free travel offered to high occupancy vehicles will be limited to vehicles with 3 or more occupants (i.e., an HOV 3+ requirement). This policy also applies to US 36.

Additionally, motorcycles and RTD buses will have toll-free access to the lanes. In all cases, a transponder will be required in order to use the North I-25 Express Lanes toll-free.

**How do I pay for using the Express Lanes?**

There will be no toll booths, but rather all electronic tolling. Vehicles traveling in the Express Lanes with an E-470 transponder or sticker tag will be billed through their EXpressToll(R) account. Electronic toll tag readers detect the transponder and users are billed for each time their vehicle passes through a toll collection point.

All vehicles traveling in the North I-25 Express Lanes without a transponder--regardless of vehicle occupancy-- will be subject to a license plate toll. Cameras will photograph the front and rear license plates and a bill will be sent one month later to the registered owner of the vehicle, for all the tolls incurred. It's important to note that License Plate Toll customers are billed an additional surcharge of 25% upon the value of the toll.

**Do I need a transponder if I'm a carpool or motorcycle?**

All HOV vehicles that wish to use the facility toll-free must have a new transponder that informs the system they are using the lanes as an eligible, toll-free user. This transponder is called a "switchable" toll tag. Prior to starting each trip, the driver will indicate the number of occupants in the vehicle by moving the switch on the transponder to the appropriate setting (drive alone, or carpool).

**How do I get a transponder?**

Switchable transponders are not yet available, but will be provided by E-470 for use on I-25 and US 36.

**Will my transponder or sticker from another toll road be valid for use on the I-25 Express Lanes?**

All transponders and accounts issued by a Colorado based toll authority (such as E-470, Northwest Parkway, etc.) will be compatible with the I-25 North Express Lanes. Currently, out-of-state transponders are not supported; however, Colorado DOT is working with other states and the US DOT to provide for a nationally compatible toll collection system by December 2016.

4/29/2013

**What are the toll rates?**

While the toll rates have not yet been determined, the amount of the toll will vary by the time of day based on congestion levels (the heavier the traffic, the higher the toll).

**How can I encourage my employer/employees to utilize carpooling, vanpooling and RTD Transit Pass Programs?**

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) launched a new initiative "Way to Go" which educates Denver metro area commuters about the impacts of single occupant vehicles (SOV). Visit [www.stopbeingansov.com](http://www.stopbeingansov.com) for more information.

Employers can contact Smart Commute Metro North at [www.smartcommutemetronorth.org](http://www.smartcommutemetronorth.org) to coordinate alternative ways for employees to commute to work such as RTD's Transit Pass Programs, vanpooling, carpooling, teleworking, biking and walking instead of driving just one day a week in an effort to reduce traffic, improve air quality, and save time and money during construction and after the project is complete.

**How can I find out more about the project?**

Visit CDOT's project website at <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/I25NorthExpressLanes>. This site also includes a link where you can sign up for project updates via email. Look for the green cell phone icon.