



CHOICE LANES

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Choice Lane?

Choice Lanes are priced managed lanes that use pricing to proactively manage demand and provide travel-time reliability. Choice Lanes allow motorists to maintain consistent travel speeds even when the adjacent general purpose lanes are congested. Choice Lanes are new lanes and typically operate at around 50 mph during rush hours when traditional lanes are barely moving or even at a standstill during peak periods.

Why build Choice Lanes?

The number one benefit is the ability to ensure a reliable travel speed and travel time for the customers of the Choice Lanes. Other benefits include:

- Generates revenue from the customers of the lanes that can be used to offset the costs of the lanes.
- Provides more balance to quality of life due to less time spent in traffic.
- Offers enhanced transit options as transit buses can use the lanes to also benefit from the reliable travel speed and travel time.
- Impacts regional economic prosperity positively.
- Improves air quality due to less idling as a result of reduced traffic congestion.
- Improves traffic conditions for motorists using general purpose lanes as there are fewer vehicles utilizing the general purpose lanes.

How are Choice Lanes different from a toll road?

Unlike toll roads, drivers have an option or choice to use general purpose lanes where a user fee is not charged. TDOT is not proposing toll roads, just Choice Lanes.

Who would own, operate and maintain the Choice Lanes?

TDOT would own any future Choice Lanes in Tennessee. They would be designed, built, financed, operated and maintained by a private-sector partner through Public-Private Partnership

(P3) in exchange for the user fees from the Choice Lanes.

What is a Public-Private Partnership (P3)?

Public-Private Partnerships (P3) are partnerships formed between public entities like TDOT and private companies, allowing Tennessee to better allocate the limited resources for transportation projects by leveraging private-sector innovation and capital.

Private-sector partners would design, build, finance, operate and maintain Choice Lane projects. P3s allow for shared risks, accelerated project delivery, provide access to additional capital, enable a longer-term view of asset management, and can reduce public cost and any debt would be privately financed without any obligations to the state. As a result, Tennessee can offer enhanced and expanded mobility options faster and with improved quality, all while freeing up state funds to continue providing transportation improvements in rural communities such as widening the interstate system to three lanes.

Why build Choice Lanes instead of more traditional highway lanes?

Choice Lanes make sense in congested, urban areas. New traditional highway lanes, or general purpose lanes, in those areas would only continue to fill up with vehicles while Choice Lanes are managed by pricing to combat traffic congestion. By implementing a user fee, motorists who choose to use a Choice Lane would experience a reliable and expedited trip time, while also reducing congestion in the general purpose lanes.

By funding future Choice Lanes through P3 where the private sector bears the investment costs needed to deliver and maintain the projects, state funds are freed up to be allocated to other needed projects across the state, such as widening rural interstates to three lanes.



CHOICE LANES

Frequently Asked Questions

How much will it cost to use the Choice Lanes?

The cost to use the Choice Lanes will change during the day based on how many vehicles are using them, which is called variable pricing. This is similar to how airline ticket prices go up and down to try to completely fill an airplane. The user fees will be advertised well in advanced of using the lanes and once a driver enters the lane, they will be guaranteed to only pay the price they saw.

User fee parameters and policies for any future Choice Lanes would be established by a statutorily created oversight authority. The private-sector partner/developer would set the user fee based on usage.

Why do I have to pay to use the Choice Lanes? Don't my taxes already fund the road?

Typical road construction in Tennessee is funded through state gas tax collections. When Choice Lanes are funded through a P3, private capital is used to pay for the construction and maintenance of the facility. Drivers can choose to use, or not use, the new Choice Lanes or continue to utilize the existing general purpose lanes where a user fee is never charged.

Paying to use the Choice Lanes seems unfair. How does TDOT plan to make sure everyone has a chance to use them regardless of income?

If anyone chooses to not use the Choice Lanes and remain the general purpose lanes, they do not have to pay. This empowers motorists to use the travel mode that works best for them and their circumstance; however, motorists in the general purpose lanes still enjoy the benefit of decreased congestion as other motorists opt to utilize the Choice Lanes. For example, Georgia experienced speeds increase in general purpose lanes by 20 mph once their Choice Lanes opened.

How are the user fees collected?

In other states, user fees are collected electronically using a transponder registered to the vehicle. TDOT is very early in the process of determining Choice Lane policies and will continue to provide updates.

Where else have Choice Lanes been built?

Currently, there are around 70 Choice Lane corridors open in 12 metro areas across the U.S. with just as many being designed and under construction. States like Texas, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina have used Choice Lanes to address urban congestion with much success. Choice Lanes have been called priced managed lanes or express lanes and were first introduced in 1996 and have been rapidly expanding as a proven congestion mitigation solution for two decades.