



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. They are commonly referred to as “Express Lanes” in other states. Choice Lanes allow motorists to maintain consistent travel speeds even when the adjacent existing lanes are congested. Choice Lanes are new lanes and typically operate at around 45 mph during rush hours.

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 a Public-Private Partnership (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.

How are Choice Lanes different from a toll road?

Unlike toll roads, with Choice Lanes, motorists have the choice of using existing lanes (general purpose lanes) where a user fee is never assessed. TDOT is not proposing toll roads, just Choice Lanes.

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 shown on overhead signs along the roadway well in advance of the Choice Lanes. The driver will be guaranteed to pay only the price that was

displayed at the time they entered the lane. User fee parameters and policies have been established by the Transportation Modernization Board. The private-sector partner/developer will 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 lanes where a user fee is never charged. Those who opt not to use Choice Lanes also benefit because there are fewer vehicles in the existing lanes.

What is a Public-Private Partnership (P3) and why is Tennessee using it?

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.



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Why build Choice Lanes instead of rail or another mass transit facility?

As a multimodal transportation organization, serving the nearly 7.5 million residents of the state of Tennessee with safe and efficient travel is at the heart of everything we do at TDOT. We work closely with stakeholders in every region to ensure we are executing with excellence the transportation mandate that has been delivered through the legislative process. For the I-24 Southeast Choice Lanes Project, TDOT continues to be engaged with local and regional transit providers (WeGo, RTA and Murfreesboro Transit), regional and local planning organizations such as the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), Metro Nashville, La Vergne, Smyrna, Murfreesboro and Rutherford County as well as Choose How You Move (CHYM) and the voter-approved plans for the region. Prior to beginning the Choice Lanes Project, multiple transit options – including bus rapid transit, light rail, heavy rail/subway, monorail, commuter rail and high-speed rail – were considered for the 30-mile corridor between Nashville and Murfreesboro. The Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which is housed in GNRC prepared the Southeast Corridor High-Performance Transit Alternative Study and concluded that these options (including rail) were found to have prohibitively high capital costs, and the projected ridership was insufficient to justify such investments, hence these alternatives were eliminated from further consideration. While rail options are not part of the I-24 Southeast Choice Lanes Project, the project does fully incorporate transit options and services which will be able to operate for free in the choice lanes. This option shows very favorable benefits for transit riders affording bus service the same reliable travel times as those in the managed lanes compared to operating in general purpose lanes. TDOT remains committed to being responsible stewards of the transportation investments entrusted to our care by the people of Tennessee.

Are there other proposed Choice Lanes projects?

Based on TDOT's congestion studies, feasibility studies, initial outreach to the industry and results from Traffic and Revenue studies, I-24 between Nashville and Murfreesboro in Region 3 will be the first project recommended to the Transportation Modernization Board.

Other corridors being considered include I-65 between Nashville and Spring Hill in Middle Tennessee, I-24 in Chattanooga (Region 2) and I-40 in Knoxville (Region 1).

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Scan the QR code to visit the Choice Lanes website.