



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 existing lanes are congested. Choice Lanes are new lanes and typically operate at around 55 mph during rush hours.

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 any existing lanes as there are fewer vehicles utilizing the existing 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.

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.

Tennessee would retain ownership of the roads.

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.

What are the 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).

Who are the Transportation Modernization Board, and what do they do?

The TMA established Tennessee's first Transportation Modernization Board (TMB). The Board is authorized to exercise powers and duties to approve the development and operation of TDOT's proposed Choice Lanes projects.



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Why build Choice Lanes instead of more traditional highway lanes?

Choice Lanes make sense in congested, urban areas. New traditional highway 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 existing lanes.

By funding future Choice Lanes through P3s 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 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 the Transportation Modernization Board. 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 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.

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 in the existing 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 existing lanes still enjoy the benefit of decreased congestion as other motorists opt to utilize the Choice Lanes. For example, Georgia experienced speeds increase in existing 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.

How will Choice Lanes impact me?

Building Choice Lanes in the most congested, urban areas will reduce congestion, improve travel time reliability and help get where you need to be on time. You'll make it home for dinner, to a concert with friends or your kid's soccer game. We at TDOT understand your time is valuable and with Choice Lanes you'll have more time to do what you enjoy.

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Scan the QR code to visit the Choice Lanes website.

