



MOPAC EXPRESS LANE FAQs

WHAT IS THE MOPAC EXPRESS LANE?

The MoPac Express Lanes are special buffer-separated lanes that use variable tolls to keep traffic moving even when the adjacent lanes are congested. This is accomplished by raising the toll when traffic is heavy and lowering the toll when traffic is light to ensure drivers have a reliable, congestion-free route to their destination. The Express Lane is in the middle of the MoPac corridor, separated from the existing general purpose lanes by a four- to five-foot-wide striped buffer zone with flexible white plastic delineator sticks.

HOW DO I ACCESS THE EXPRESS LANE?

Northbound drivers can access the MoPac Express Lane from downtown near Cesar Chavez St, or centrally near RM 2222. Southbound drivers can access the Express Lane near Parmer Lane or centrally near RM 2222.

WHAT IS VARIABLE-PRICED TOLLING?

Instead of fixed tolls, the MoPac Express Lane charges a variable priced toll that increases when traffic is heavy, and decreases when it is light to either encourage or discourage use. It leverages supply and demand principles to manage the number of vehicles entering the Lane. Toll rates fluctuate with traffic volumes to maximize the number of cars that can use the Lane while ensuring traffic remains free-flowing.

HOW WILL I KNOW THE TOLL RATE?

Northbound and southbound drivers will see the toll rate posted on overhead electronic message boards, visible 1/2 mile in advance of the Express lane entrance. Signage near the downtown entrance for northbound drivers will indicate: 1) The price of a trip to near RM 2222; and 2) the price of a full length, 11-mile trip to Parmer Lane. For Southbound drivers, signage near Parmer Lane will indicate 1) The price of a trip to near RM 2222; and 2) The price of a full-length trip to downtown. For northbound and southbound drivers entering near RM 2222, signage will post the rate for that segment only.

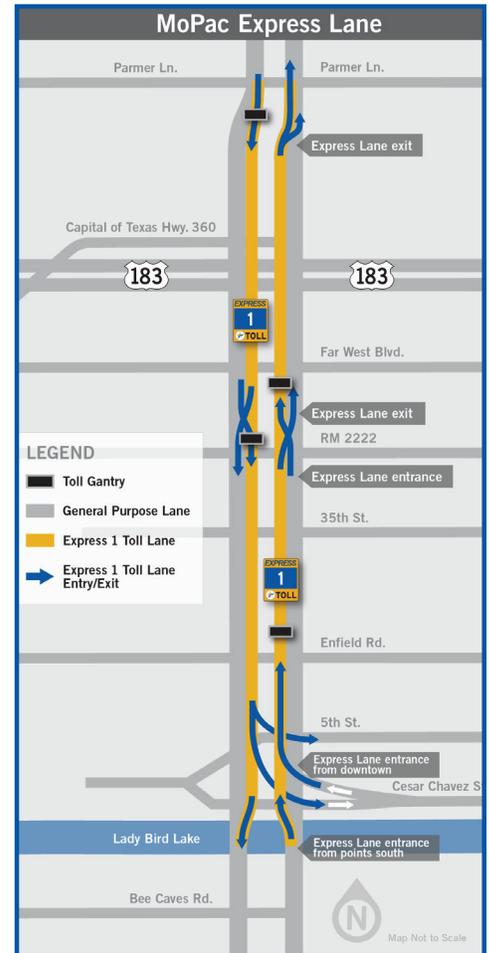
These posted prices are for drivers with a TxTag or other electronic toll tag. The Pay By Mail rate will be 33% higher. The lowest toll rate will begin at \$0.25 per Express Lane segment.

WHY DID WE BUILD EXPRESS LANES?

On a central, urban corridor like MoPac with limited right of way, building an additional general purpose lane would not alleviate congestion because that lane would soon reach capacity, perpetuating the congestion problem. Express Lanes are an innovative congestion management tool that allow drivers to bypass congestion when they need a reliable alternative for a special occasion. They allow drivers to take back the time they would have wasted sitting in traffic, while also offering Capital Metro buses and registered van pools toll-free access to their destination. The MoPac Express Lane is the first in the Austin area.

WHY NOT BUILD HOV LANES?

Constructing HOV lanes was considered, but ultimately not implemented due to lack of reliability. Ensuring a free-flowing lane requires either the use of variable tolling to keep traffic moving at a minimum speed, or instituting a three-passenger minimum, which would result in under-utilization. Conversely, research shows that instituting a two-passenger minimum often results in over-utilization. In short, HOV lanes do not solve the congestion problem. Express Lanes incentivize carpooling by guaranteeing a reliable trip and allowing riders to share the cost of the toll.



WHAT IS THE TIM CENTER?

The TIM is the Mobility Authority's Traffic & Incident Management (TIM) Center and the heart of our intelligent transportation system. Through the TIM Center, we monitor our toll facilities and coordinate resources for incident management and maintenance so that we can respond efficiently to accidents and other interruptions to traffic flow such as debris in the roadway. Seventeen high-definition cameras line the corridor with vehicle detectors set about ½ mile apart. These devices monitor every stretch of MoPac Expressway between Cesar Chavez and Parmer Lane with technicians monitoring live video feeds. Operators and an algorithm monitor traffic levels so the toll rates can be adjusted as needed to ensure they are having the desired effect on traffic volumes.

WHAT IF THERE IS AN ACCIDENT IN THE EXPRESS LANE? WILL THE TOLL RATE INCREASE?

Checks and balances are in place to protect against incident-related congestion from driving up the toll rate. If an incident occurs, detection devices will trigger an alarm. Operators will use the cameras to zoom in, assess the situation, and manually lock in the toll rate so it doesn't increase. To ensure smooth operations, technical staff is onsite 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at the TIM Center to manage any issues that arise. The whole operation can also be controlled remotely.

IF THERE IS AN ACCIDENT IN THE EXPRESS LANE AHEAD OF ME, WILL I BE STUCK?

The Express Lane is wide enough to allow vehicles to get around an incident that occurs in the Lane. Alternatively, in an emergency, vehicles can exit the Express Lane in between the white plastic delineator sticks that are spaced 12 feet apart. While driving over the delineators would cause vehicle damage, at a low speed, vehicles should be able to get in between them.

WHAT IF THE PRICE OF THE TOLL INCREASES WHILE I AM IN THE LANE?

The price is posted on electronic message boards and visible to drivers as they approach the entrance to the Lane so they can decide whether their trip is worth that amount. If the price increases while a driver is already in the lane, they still pay the price that was posted when they initially entered—or less. When the price increases, there is a delay between the time the higher price is posted on the message board and when the higher price is applied to transactions. However, there is no delay when the price decreases, so drivers immediately realize the benefit of the lower rate.

As an extra step to ensure accurate charges, the processing of transactions is delayed 72 hours, allowing time for any necessary price adjustments before customers receive their bills. In addition, cameras capture photos of the Express Lane pricing signs with time and date stamps at every transaction.

HOW DO I PAY MY TOLLS?

Toll payment on MoPac is electronic, meaning drivers do not have to stop—or slow down, to pay tolls. Drivers with an electronic toll tag—either a TxTag, an EZ-Tag or a TollTag—have their tolls automatically deducted from their tag account, while those without a tag receive a bill in the mail through the Pay By Mail program. The price posted on the electronic signs reflects the tag rates, while Pay By Mail rates are 33% higher.

For more information and a video showing how the Express Lane works, please visit www.MoPacExpress.com

DO I HAVE TO TAKE THE EXPRESS LANE?

No. Those who prefer not to pay a toll can continue to travel toll-free in the general-purpose lanes. They will still experience the benefits of the Express Lane, which diverts some traffic and frees up capacity in the general-purpose lanes.

Reading Express Lane Toll Pricing Signage

EXPRESS LANE PRICING:
Changeable electronic signs display the current toll rates in real time, so you'll know the price before you decide whether to enter the lane. Once you are in the lane, the price you saw is the price you'll pay.

DESTINATION EXIT:
The project is divided into two segments, each with a corresponding toll price.

PAY BY MAIL OPTION:
Drivers without a TxTag, Toll Tag or EzTag will have their license plate photographed and the vehicle owner will be mailed a bill with a 33% higher toll rate and an additional \$1.00 fee per invoice to cover the higher cost of processing.