

Express Toll Lanes

An Alternative to Gridlock



fast, safe, reliable!

The Congestion Challenge



Maryland's roadways are among the most congested in the country. Millions of people who rely on the State's highways to travel to work or school or for other everyday travel are paying too high a price – a "congestion tax" – in time lost sitting idle in traffic. This same "tax" is being assessed on Maryland's businesses that rely on the transportation network.

Limited resources hinder Maryland's ability to improve traffic flow in many parts of the State. Given the State's severe fiscal constraints, creative approaches must be found to reduce the "congestion tax."

Committed to Improvements

The Ehrlich Administration has made a promise to Maryland's residents and businesses to make tangible and near-term improvements to traffic flow throughout the State and to achieve Governor Ehrlich's vision of a *More Mobile Maryland*. Significant near-term improvements, however, cannot be achieved without looking to new methods and new funding.

Express Toll Lanes Can Help

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), State Highway Administration (SHA), and Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) are considering a new initiative to help deliver

on the Administration's promise and to provide Maryland's residents, employers, businesses, and visitors with an alternative to sitting idle in traffic: **Express Toll Lanes**.

Express Toll Lanes could offer Maryland's drivers and transit users a choice of relatively congestion-free travel and reliable travel times whenever they need it most. An integrated system of Express Toll Lanes could help ease the impact of traffic congestion on Marylanders' lives and do so decades sooner than traditional approaches would allow.

What Are Express Toll Lanes?

The addition of Express Toll Lanes to some of the State's most severely congested major highways would give motorists the option of paying a fee to drive in separate, relatively free-flowing highway lanes on a given trip. This does not mean traditional toll roads with waits at tollbooths. Instead, **tolls would be collected 100 percent electronically** via the use of electronic transponders at highway speeds. Toll rates would vary based on demand – either by time of day or based on actual traffic conditions – increasing when the lanes are relatively full and decreasing when the lanes have extra capacity.

The Express Toll Lane concept under consideration would add new lanes to some of the State's most severely congested controlled access highways such as Interstates.

In some cases, consideration also will be given to converting an existing travel lane to an Express Toll Lane to achieve optimal traffic flow. But, in all cases, roadway capacity would be expanded and everyone would benefit – both drivers who choose to pay for less congestion and those who choose to continue to drive in the non-tolled lanes.



How do Express Toll Lanes differ from traditional toll roads?

Express Toll Lanes differ from traditional toll roads in a number of important ways. With Express Toll Lanes:

- **General-purpose (non-tolled) lanes and toll lanes exist together in the same corridor, offering the choice of using the Express Toll Lanes when time is most valuable and using the general-purpose (non-tolled) lanes at other times.**
- **Fees are collected electronically at highway speeds and without the need for tollbooths.**
- **Tolls can vary between rush hours and non-rush hours based on the levels of demand and congestion.**

Express Toll Lanes based on variable-pricing structures work in much the same way as familiar peak-period pricing and discount programs routinely offered by utilities, airlines, transit systems, parking garages, movie theatres, and telephone companies to manage demand – charging a premium when demand is high and offering a discount when demand is lower.

Express Toll Lane programs can be structured to encourage motorists to travel during off-peak traffic hours and simultaneously provide alternatives for motorists who do not have the flexibility of switching their travel time – i.e., the option to pay a fee to drive in the express lanes.

What Are the Benefits of Express Toll Lanes?

The primary benefits of the Express Toll Lanes concept are:

- **The ability to provide needed highway lane capacity** much sooner than traditional approaches allow
- **A new viable travel choice for commuters** – and an alternative to spending valuable time stuck in traffic
- **Travel-time reliability** – when predictable travel times are most critical to area motorists
- **Access for buses to free-flowing lanes** – offering travel-time savings, travel-time reliability, and operating efficiency for transit
- **The ability to manage customer demand for and use of the lanes through variable pricing** – to keep traffic flowing smoothly over time, even as demand for the lanes increases
- **The ability to generate revenue directly from users** – to help pay for construction, maintenance, and operation of the lanes
- **Improved traffic conditions and safety**
- **Potential community and environmental benefits**

Who can benefit from Express Toll Lanes?

Express Toll Lanes give people the option of paying a fee for something they can count on: more reliable travel times when they need to get where they are going on time. All kinds of drivers will choose to use the Express Toll Lanes when the benefit of reliable travel is worth more to them than the cost. Examples include:

- *A parent who needs a reliable travel time to pick up a child at daycare*
- *A delivery company that must stay on schedule throughout the day*
- *Individuals who ride buses that travel on controlled access highways*
- *A service technician working to make more service calls in a day*
- *A taxicab or van service driver making trips to and from the airport*
- *An employee trying to get to a meeting on time*



Are Express Toll Lanes Right for Maryland?

Express Toll Lanes and similar traffic management concepts have been implemented successfully in several locations throughout the country and internationally where chronic congestion exists. Research from these locations provides strong

evidence of overall public support – from both regular and occasional users of the toll lanes.

Maryland shares many similarities with these communities, most notably severe traffic congestion on existing roadways, growing travel demand for the foreseeable future, and limited funding from traditional sources to address the needs.

Where Might Express Toll Lanes Be Effective?

Express Toll Lanes have the potential to be effective on any controlled access highway that experiences chronic and severe congestion, in particular during peak travel times (e.g., morning and evening rush hours). Several project-planning studies now underway include evaluation of Express Toll Lanes for a number of the State's busiest highway segments:

- Portions of I-95 north of Baltimore
- I-95/I-495 (Capital Beltway)
- I-270

Studies also are being proposed that would consider Express Toll Lanes to manage traffic and complete improvements on I-695 (Baltimore Beltway).

Conclusion

Use of Express Toll Lanes is by no means a cure for all traffic congestion – and it is not the only response being considered. Deployed wisely and in concert with other elements of the Maryland Transportation Plan and Governor Ehrlich's vision for a More Mobile Maryland, however, the targeted addition of Express Toll Lanes could help.

Express Toll Lanes will be considered where they can be expected to help ease the impact of congestion by providing transportation improvements decades sooner than could otherwise be achieved, offering Marylanders an alternative to spending valuable time sitting in traffic, and facilitating sustainable travel options throughout the State.



For more information on Maryland's Express Toll Lanes studies and activities, please go to: www.marylandtransportation.com and click on the Express Toll Lanes icon, or call 1-800-323-MSHA (6742)

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.

Governor of Maryland

Robert L. Flanagan

Secretary of Transportation

Neil J. Pedersen

Administrator
State Highway Administration

Trent M. Kittleman

Executive Secretary
Maryland Transportation Authority



7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

