

PRESS RELEASE



CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL
MOBILITY AUTHORITY

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Southbound MoPac Express Lane to Open This Weekend

(Austin, Texas)— The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (Mobility Authority) announced today that the full southbound MoPac Express Lane will open to traffic on Saturday, October 28, 2017. The 11-mile Express Lane begins at Parmer Lane and extends to the Cesar Chavez/5th Street exit to downtown. This milestone follows the opening of the full northbound Express Lane earlier this month. Drivers will now be able to travel the full Express Lane in either direction when they need a reliable alternative. The final elements of the MoPac Improvement Project, including sound walls and landscaping, will continue in the coming months.

“This weekend marks a significant milestone for Austin commuters,” said Ray Wilkerson, Chairman of the Mobility Authority Board of Directors. “With the Express Lane open to traffic in both directions, this innovative congestion management tool will be able to fully function as it was intended.”

Beginning Saturday, October 28, drivers can access the southbound Express Lane from the inner-most general-purpose lane near Parmer Lane, or centrally near RM 2222. Driver can exit either near RM 2222, or continue traveling the full length of the Express Lane to the downtown connection. Drivers taking the Express Lane towards the river will either merge into the general-purpose lanes and continue southbound on MoPac across the river, or take the ramp towards downtown via 5th Street/Cesar Chavez Street. Drivers should note the Express Lane introduces new merge conditions along the corridor, similar to many others in the Austin area. Drivers are encouraged to use “alternate merging” where motorists alternate in a “zipper” fashion, utilizing the full length of the merge area.

“We are excited to deliver this important project for Central Texas,” said Nikelle Meade, Vice Chair of the Mobility Authority Board of Directors. “With our region’s limited north-south corridors at or nearing capacity, the MoPac Express Lane is critical to preserving our quality of life and ability to move from place to place. And the benefits extend to non-tolled travel. Every vehicle in the Express Lane is one less vehicle in the general purpose lanes, freeing up capacity and equating to time savings for all drivers.”

Prior to entering the Express Lane near Parmer Lane, drivers will see signage posting two prices: 1) The price of a trip to near RM 2222; and 2) The price of a full-length trip to downtown. Both posted prices are for drivers with a TxTag or other electronic toll tags. Pay By Mail prices are 33% higher. If the price increases after drivers have already entered the lane, they will still pay the price they saw on the sign prior to entering.

The toll will be variably-priced. As traffic increases, the price rises to maximize the number of vehicles that can be carried in the Lane. For the Lane to work as intended, the toll rate must be tied solely to demand, and adjust with the number of vehicles that are using the lane. Demand for the southbound

Express Lane is projected to be high, particularly during the morning and afternoon peak periods. A high variable toll rate may accompany the high demand.

“What we’ve seen with the northbound Express Lane is that commuters are excited to take advantage of this congestion-free route. We believe that many are entering the lane without looking at the posted toll rate.” Dailey said. “Traffic counts indicate there will even greater demand for the southbound lane because there will be rush two hours—morning and afternoon. We encourage drivers to look at the pricing signs before entering the lane to determine whether the trip is worth that price to them.”

All drivers are asked to remain alert and exercise caution, especially as the community becomes accustomed to using the northbound and southbound Express Lanes. With new traffic patterns to get used to, there will be a learning curve for drivers. Backing up or slowing down while approaching the Express Lane is strictly prohibited. Similarly, drivers are encouraged to make safe lane changes in advance of the Express Lane entrances rather than cutting over multiple general-purpose lanes in a short distance to access the Express Lane.

The weekend opening will provide drivers an opportunity to adjust to the new traffic pattern in advance of the first peak weekday travel period. It will also allow some additional time to make technical adjustments, as needed, or work out potential challenges with tolling equipment. The Mobility Authority’s Traffic & Incident Management Center (TIM) allows for Express Lane monitoring and maintenance, and enables resource coordination for incident response. High definition cameras and vehicle detectors along the MoPac corridor assist with monitoring operations so that the variable-priced toll rates can be adjusted with traffic volumes, leveraging supply and demand principles to manage congestion. The operation can be controlled remotely as well.

EDITOR’S NOTE: No media vehicles are allowed to be parked in or near the Express Lane at any point. For access to areas along the corridor with the best capability for video footage of the lane and traffic, contact Steve Pustelnyk at 512-680-9997.

About the Mobility Authority

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is a local, independent government agency created in 2002 to improve the regional transportation system in Travis and Williamson Counties. The Mobility Authority implements innovative and sustainable transportation options to enhance quality of life and economic vitality in Central Texas. The Mobility Authority operates 183A Toll in Williamson County, 290 Toll in east Austin, the 71 Toll Lane in east Austin, and the MoPac Express Lane. The agency is also finishing construction of the MoPac Improvement Project, building the eight-mile 183 South in east Austin, and constructing the four-mile SH 45SW toll road between FM 1626 and MoPac in southern Travis and northern Hays counties. For more information about the Mobility Authority, visit www.MobilityAuthority.com.

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