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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## I-485 Express Lanes



**Question: What are Express Lanes?**

**Answer:** Express Lanes are designated lanes that allow you, the driver, to avoid traffic congestion by offering you a choice—pay a toll and ride the express lanes for more reliable travel times, or continue using general purpose lanes for free. Entrance and exit points are constructed along the express lanes to save you time. You have the option to use the express lanes for short segments of a trip, for the whole length or not at all.

**Question: Why Express Lanes?**

**Answer:** In growing urban areas such as Charlotte, new, free general purpose lanes only temporarily relieve congestion, especially during rush hours. As growth continues, more and more drivers will use the same major commuting routes. Highway lanes that usually flow freely can come to a standstill when many people are trying to get to work or home from a busy day. This is especially true when a crash occurs. When highway lanes are overwhelmed with more cars than they can handle, there is congestion. Tolls ensure that express lanes are not overwhelmed, so traffic flows freely in them. When time matters most to you, Express Lanes are available to take you out of congestion and get you to your destination at a more reliable, predictable time.

**Question: How is the price determined?**

**Answer:** Ultimately, the market drives the toll rates. Toll rates are based on how many drivers choose to avoid the congestion in general purpose lanes at a given time. When the number of cars in an express lane is low, the toll is lower in order to encourage use. As the number of cars in an express lane increases, the toll rises to prevent the express lane from being overwhelmed with congestion. Traffic in the express lane is kept flowing smoothly, and you can be more confident in knowing how long your trip will take. Current toll rates will be posted on signs located before the entrance point of the express lane segments. The toll you pay will not change after you enter the express lane segment. Free general purpose lanes will still be available.

**Question: How do you pay?**

**Answer:** The most convenient thing about North Carolina's Express Lanes is you never have to stop and pay at a toll booth. Tolls are captured electronically at highway speed. If you decide to take advantage of the reliability express lanes offer, you have two options to pay. The first option is to purchase a Quick Pass® transponder. The use of a Quick Pass® will allow you to ride at a discounted rate and will automatically deduct the toll from your pre-paid account. The second option is Bill by Mail. Bill by Mail allows drivers without a Quick Pass® to use the Express Lanes. Overhead toll equipment will capture a picture of the vehicle's license plate, and an invoice will be mailed to the owner's address on file with the DMV.



**Question: Can you use the Express Lanes for free?**

**Answer:** NCDOT is currently evaluating what is best for each express lanes project and will announce details on whether carpools, motorcycles, transit vehicles or others can drive free at a later date.

**Question: Who develops, manages and operates the express lanes?**

**Answer:** NCDOT is in charge of the Express Lanes projects and will oversee the planning, construction, management and operations of the express lanes. Electronic toll systems and toll collections are managed by the North Carolina Turnpike Authority.