IMPROVING U.S. 69 CORRIDOR

FACT SHEET: OPTIONS TO FUND

Kansas Department of Transportation

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Expanding U.S. 69 is a top priority for Overland Park: Commuters and travelers on the U.S. 69 corridor are frustrated with congestion and increasing travel times. As development continues, traffic volume is projected to double, and travel times are projected to triple by 2045. Transportation improvements are needed to address congestion and safety issues and keep the economy moving.

- **Improving U.S. 69 sooner than later:** The City of Overland Park and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) are exploring options to improve the U.S. 69 corridor. At KDOT's recent Local Consult meetings, the U.S. 69 corridor, a six-lane freeway from 119th Street north to I-435 (two miles) and 119th Street south to 159th Street (six miles), were two of the most highly-rated expansion projects in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Projects are scored on engineering, economic analysis and local input.
- **Funding partnership needed:** KDOT has been clear that there isn't enough money to fund all improvement projects that are needed across the state. One way a community can accelerate project schedules is to provide some level of matching funds, and tolling is one option for funding a partnership. Overland Park has been a good partner in helping to fund transportation improvement projects, and as the city's top transportation project, Overland Park recognizes the need to help fund a portion of the U.S. 69 improvement.

KDOT Local Consult Scoring Guide

- U.S. 69: 119th Street north to I-435 scored 49/50 engineering points.
- U.S. 69: 119th Street south to 159th Street scored 49/50 engineering points.
- Both projects received the maximum economic score of 25 points each.
- Engineering points focus on physical attributes such as congestion, truck traffic and safety. Economic points include impacts to gross regional product, impacts to traveler benefit and cost.

KANSAS TOLLING LEGISLATION

Kansas' approach to tolling was modernized in 2019, giving communities and the state an additional tool to help fund transportation projects. Tolling the new lanes can be an option to generate a local funding match. The 2019 Kansas Legislature approved Tolling Projects (HB 2369), which allows Kansas communities to request KDOT conduct a high-level Phase 1 toll feasibility study.

- **ONLY NEW LANE(S) CAN BE TOLLED. ANY EXISTING 'FREE' LANE MUST REMAIN WITHOUT TOLLING** (note: nothing is really free – existing lanes are supported by gasoline tax, sales tax, etc).
- If the results of the Phase 1 toll feasibility study are positive, a Phase 2 detailed feasibility study may be conducted by KDOT and the community. **Community engagement** is a key component of the Phase 2 detailed feasibility study along with examining potential toll rates. Based on those results, KDOT and the community could take a proposal to the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA) for review and approval and then on to the State Finance Council.
- Toll revenue can be used to offset a portion of the cost to design, construct and maintain the new lane(s).

Building Improvements Sooner

No toll booths are envisioned on future tolled corridors. Electronic tolling can help KDOT and local communities – collectively and collaboratively – address bottlenecks in our transportation system quicker.

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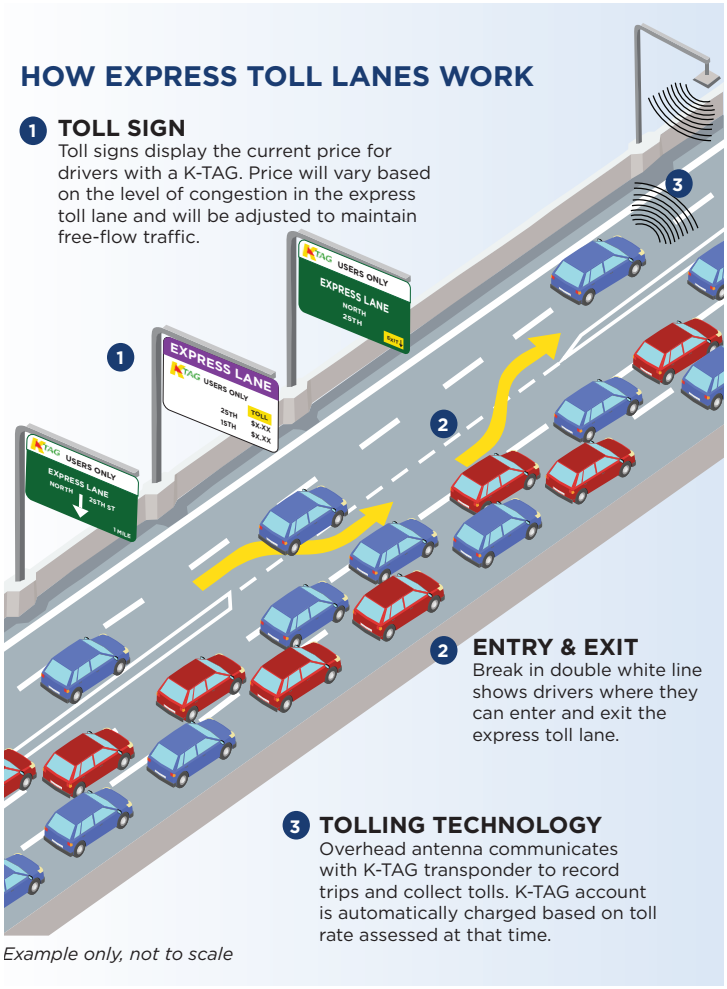
EXPRESS TOLL LANE USE

Express toll lanes could help manage congestion over the long term: On a central, urban corridor like U.S. 69, building an additional general-purpose lane would not alleviate congestion because that lane would soon be full, perpetuating the congestion problem. Express lanes are an innovative congestion management tool and could make sense on U.S. 69 where bottlenecks occur daily during peak travel times.

The express toll lane concept is used in many major metropolitan areas like Austin, Dallas, Denver and Minneapolis. Express lanes offer drivers more reliable timeframes to get to their destinations and take back the time they would have wasted sitting in traffic.

Essentially, the new lane is tolled, and the toll rate is increased during rush hour (peak time) to keep the toll lane flowing smoothly and the general-purpose "free" lanes also flowing better. The current price to enter the toll lane is communicated to drivers via signs so drivers **choose** for themselves whether they want to pay that price to drive in the free-flowing toll lane. Thus, the price of the toll varies with the amount of traffic in the corridor.

In busy periods when the toll price for using the lane rises, some drivers will choose not to enter the toll lane. The drivers who choose to pay a toll are provided faster, more consistent travel times. By offering a consistently (relatively) free-flowing lane at all times, there is less pressure to build additional highway lanes in the future.



Example only, not to scale

TECHNOLOGY MAKES IT EASIER

- Drivers choose if they want to pay to use the free-flowing express toll lane by using a K-TAG or other similar transponder. If they choose to enter the express toll lane, their K-TAG account is automatically charged based on the toll rate assessed at that time. For example, it's likely to cost more to use the free-flowing express toll lane at 7:30 a.m. than at 2:30 p.m. during the workweek.
- Technology makes it much easier for drivers to choose whether they want to use the express lane or drive for free in the general-purpose lanes. Electronic transponders, which exist today, makes it very easy to collect tolls from those drivers who choose to use the express toll lane. Signage and striping are used to make sure everyone understands the new lane is a toll lane.

HOW DO EXPRESS TOLL LANES AND TRANSIT WORK TOGETHER?

Express toll lanes and transit are complimentary; they can work together by offering transit a free pass on the express toll lane, improving on-time transit service reliability and encouraging more transit use.

Project Status

Overland Park, the KTA and KDOT are conducting a high-level Phase 1 toll feasibility study to determine if tolling a new lane could be a feasible option for improving the most congested part of U.S. 69. If results are positive, **significant community engagement** and conversations are needed along with detailed engineering and financial analysis to continue evaluating this approach.

For more information contact Lindsey Douglas, KDOT Deputy Secretary; 785.296.3285 or Lindsey.Douglas@ks.gov.