

Northern Section Of I-77 Toll Lane Project Opens Saturday

By DAVID BORAKS · MAY 31, 2019



Barriers separate free lanes from toll lanes (left) on I-77 north of Charlotte. The northern section of the toll lanes is scheduled to open to traffic on Saturday, June 1.

David Boraks / WFAE

After nearly four years of construction, and months of delays, the northern section of the I-77 toll lanes near Charlotte is scheduled to open Saturday morning, June 1. Beginning at 10 a.m., the I-77 Express Lanes will be open in both directions, from Exit 36 in Mooresville to Hambright Road in Huntersville.

The optional toll lanes are built and operated by a private company, I-77 Mobility Partners. CEO Javier Tamargo said for now, users will get a break on toll rates.

"We're not providing full service to our customers, so we cannot charge the full price. So we are discounting all the rates by 25%," he said.

That means if you ride all 15-miles in the toll lanes from Mooresville to Huntersville, you'll pay \$3.35 at rush hour, or \$1.95 off-peak. Rates will be lower if you only drive part of the route in the toll lanes. You'll need an electronic toll transponder, or you can let them send a bill in the mail - for 35% more.

Tamargo says the remaining 11 miles of the toll lanes from Huntersville to uptown Charlotte will open in September or October.

Tolls will be fixed for the first six months of operation, according to the contractor. Eventually, rates will change continuously, depending on the amount of

traffic in the toll lanes. If traffic in the free lanes is heavy and more drivers use the toll lanes, prices will rise.

Vehicles with three or more people can use the lanes free, by flipping a button on the toll transponder. Buses also will be free. Commercial trucks are not allowed in the lanes.

The partial opening comes after a five-month delay. The entire project had been expected to open by the end of 2018, but weather, construction delays and project changes pushed it back, the contractor said. I-77 Mobility Partners is a subsidiary of Spanish construction giant Cintra.

Even as the lanes open, toll lane opponents in the Lake Norman area are hoping for changes in the project. After a series of meetings with local leaders last year, NCDOT agreed to consider changes. They include using highway shoulders as auxiliary lanes at rush hour and converting one toll lane to a free lane. NCDOT has said it would push for the changes with I-77 Mobility Partners. But Tamargo said Friday that he has not discussed any of the ideas with the DOT.

MORE INFORMATION

NC Quick Pass transponders are available at the NC Quick Pass Customer Service Center, 8015 West W.T. Harris Blvd. The office will be open this Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more about transponders, rates and a map of entry and exit points for the lanes, visit I77Express.com. The site also has a virtual tour of the toll lanes, so you can see how they work.