

## 1. What is the 15 Express Lanes Project?

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and its project partners, the California Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, are investing \$471 million to improve Interstate 15. The 15 Express Lanes Project will add two express lanes to I-15 in both directions, from Cajalco Road to State Route 60, widen bridges and add soundwalls. The design-build project will be built within the existing median, extend the region's express lane network and offer multiple entry and exit points to the express lanes.

## 2. Why is the project needed?

Traffic and growth forecasts indicate traffic volumes will continue to increase along the corridor, thus reducing mobility and travel time reliability along I-15. By 2040, traffic volumes are expected to grow by 37 percent, and travel times are forecast to increase by 170 percent. Federal, state and local funds are not sufficient to provide additional lanes to I-15; therefore, express lanes are the most feasible and timely solution.

## 3. What are the benefits of express lanes on I-15 in Riverside County?

- Express lanes offer drivers a choice for a faster, more reliable trip, when they need it most.
- Drivers that use the express lanes reduce the number of vehicles in the general purpose lanes, which results in improved travel times and less congestion for all lanes.
- Express lanes provide a benefit for express buses and emergency vehicles by providing reliable travel times.
- Carpoolers with three or more occupants will have access to the express lanes at a reduced rate, which encourages carpooling and reduces the number of vehicles in the corridor.
- The project will expand the regional express lanes network, including the 91 Express Lanes.

## 4. How will the express lanes work?

Drivers will enter and exit the express lanes at multiple access points. Users will pay the rate displayed when entering the express lanes, through the use of a FasTrak<sup>®</sup> transponder linked to a prepaid account. Express lane rates will adjust to real-time traffic conditions to keep vehicles moving. This type of dynamic pricing will increase the ability to manage traffic in real-time and maintain free-flowing conditions in the express lanes. All express lane users, including carpoolers, will be required to have a FasTrak<sup>®</sup> transponder, which may be purchased directly from RCTC at the 91 Express Lanes Customer Service Center located at 2275 Sampson Avenue, Suite 100 in Corona or from any California toll agency.

## 5. What happens if I don't have a FasTrak<sup>®</sup> transponder?

Drivers who use the express lanes without a transponder will receive a violation notice, accompanied by a photograph taken of the license plate. A FasTrak<sup>®</sup> transponder issued by any California toll agency will be accepted in the 15 Express Lanes.

## 6. Will there be incentives for drivers who carpool?

Yes, vehicles with three or more occupants will be able to use the express lanes for a reduced rate. Carpoolers will be required to have an active FasTrak<sup>®</sup> account and a FasTrak<sup>®</sup> Flex (switchable) transponder to use the 15 Express Lanes and receive the High Occupancy Vehicle 3+ discount.

## 7. Will there be a discount for zero emission vehicles?

Qualifying zero emission vehicles, as listed in California Vehicle Code 5205.5, will receive a discount when using the 15 Express Lanes if they have a zero emission vehicle FasTrak<sup>®</sup> transponder issued by their account holding agency. The new zero emission transponders are expected to be available in 2019.

## **8. Will there be a direct connection between the new 15 Express Lanes and the 91 Express Lanes?**

Yes, a direct connection already exists from northbound I-15 to the westbound 91 Express Lanes and from the eastbound 91 Express Lanes to southbound I-15. A 15/91 Express Lanes Connector is being planned from southbound I-15 to the westbound 91 Express Lanes and from the eastbound 91 Express Lanes to northbound I-15. Funding was secured for this project in 2017, thanks to the Governor and State Legislature. This 15/91 Express Lanes Connector is expected to be open by 2022. The existing and future express lane connectors will allow customers to seamlessly access both the 91 and 15 express lanes. For more information regarding the 15/91 Express Lanes Connector, visit [15-91connector.info](http://15-91connector.info).

## **9. How is the 15 Express Lanes construction funded?**

RCTC is using a combination of federal and local sources to fund this \$471 million project. Federal sources include a federal Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan, and allocations from the federal Congestion Management Air Quality program and the Surface Transportation Block Grant program. Local funding is provided by Measure A, the voter-approved half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements in Riverside County.

## **10. If taxes are paying for the new lanes, why must I also pay a toll?**

The 15 Express Lanes are funded from three primary sources: 1) toll revenue, 2) a federal loan, and 3) Measure A, the voter-approved half-cent sales tax. Measure A requires one new lane to be built on I-15 in both directions throughout Riverside County. With express lanes, toll revenue makes it possible to add two lanes to I-15 for greater traffic relief and the ability to provide more reliable trips. This revenue will be used to keep the new lanes in a good state of repair.

## **11. How will the 15 Express Lanes revenue be used?**

Revenue will be used to operate and maintain the express lanes and repay the federal loan that was used to finance the project. Any additional revenue, by state law, must be used for future transportation improvements within the I-15 corridor, including freeway, interchange, and transit enhancements. Expenditure of additional toll revenue must be approved by the RCTC Commission in a public meeting.

## **12. Why are no new general purpose lanes being added as part of this project?**

RCTC is delivering on its Measure A commitment to add at least one lane in each direction to the I-15 corridor. The 15 Express Lanes Project is adding two express lanes along the corridor, with one lane in certain transitional areas. The 15 Express Lanes will offer travel choices and accommodates traffic demand more efficiently than general purpose lanes. The express lanes will help manage congestion in the corridor and benefit both express lanes and general purpose lanes users. Without revenue from the 15 Express Lanes, improvements to I-15 would not be possible for many years.

## **13. When will the 15 Express Lanes open?**

Pre-construction activities are occurring now, and construction in the median will begin in spring 2018. The new lanes are anticipated to open in 2020.

## **14. Who can I contact for more information about the 15 Express Lanes Project?**

For more information, send an email to [15project@rtc.org](mailto:15project@rtc.org) or visit the project website at [15project.info](http://15project.info). You also may call the project helpline at (844) 415-9777 and please follow us on our social media platforms, @15ExpressLanes.

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