

Ohio Turnpike's E-ZPass lanes expected to go live 'within a few weeks'

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – Changes that will let E-ZPass users drive through the Ohio Turnpike without stopping are expected to go live in the coming weeks as the toll road also readies to implement a new system for calculating fees.

Turnpike Director Ferzan Ahmed told the Ohio Turnpike Commission on Monday that construction was complete for the new toll collection system and that new toll machines would be installed after Thanksgiving.

Additional testing still needs to be done, but that means the new system is on track to go live “within a few weeks.” In October, turnpike officials said they expected to [implement the changes in late November](#), but Ahmed said Monday that those would be phased in because of ongoing testing and the holiday.

“With a brand-new system and equipment, there are many scenarios with vehicle movements and traffic patterns that have to be tested to make sure our comfort level is high with the settings and configuration,” Ahmed said, according to his prepared remarks.

Changes at the Turnpike have been in the works for years. Ahmed told the commission that its estimated capital costs for the project is up to \$246 million.

When it's done, dedicated E-ZPass lanes will allow drivers to cruise past toll collection sites at low speeds (10 miles per hour) while electronic sensors automatically determine how much to charge their account.

A new system for calculating tolls also is coming soon.

For years, turnpike drivers have been charged tolls based on where they get on and off the highway. The new system requires drivers coming from Indiana or

Pennsylvania to pay a flat rate toll when they enter Ohio, with rates contingent on the size of the vehicle and whether it has an E-ZPass transponder.

Westbound passenger vehicles headed out of Ohio into Indiana will also have to pay an additional toll of \$2 for E-ZPass holders, and \$3 for people paying with cash or credit card; eastbound traffic, however, won't be charged any toll at the Pennsylvania border.

Turnpike drivers will also still have to pay a mileage-based toll, but only if they drive somewhere between toll plazas near Swanton (mile marker 49) and Newton Falls (mile marker 211).

The amount drivers between those two toll plazas will have to pay will still depend on how far they drive on the turnpike. Compared with turnpike toll rates entering 2023, the new toll rates will be more expensive for some routes, but the same or cheaper than before for others.

Motorists who don't drive between the Swanton and Newton Falls toll plazas, meanwhile, will not have to pay any mileage-based tolls at all. There will no longer be toll plazas at the exits closest to the Indiana and Pennsylvania borders – exits 13, 25, 34, and 39 in Northwest Ohio, and exits 215, 216, 218, 232, and 234 in the Youngstown area.

The new toll calculation system is expected to fully take effect on Jan. 1. Turnpike changes are expected to save about \$257 million in operating costs over 30 years.

Jeremy Pelzer contributed reporting.