

What you need to know as work begins on U.S. 183 South tollway

LOCAL

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Highlights

- The project, not counting financing expenses, will cost \$743 million and take more than four years to build.
- The toll, when the road is fully open in late 2020, will be less than \$3 for the whole length, officials say.
- U.S. 183 will have six toll lanes and four to six frontage lanes, along with bike and pedestrian paths.

Work begins this week in East Austin on a **major expansion of eight miles** of U.S. 183, a four-lane highway built in the 1960s (and dubbed Ed Bluestein Boulevard) that has five traffic lights and severe rush hour traffic congestion. Here are five things to know about the project:

1. The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is building a six-lane tollway from south of U.S. 290 to Texas 71 south of the river at **a cost of \$743 million, not counting financing expenses**. There will also be two to three free frontage lanes on each side, each with bike lanes and sidewalks, replacing the current free road. **A consortium led by Fluor Corp.** has the design and construction contract.
2. Lane closures during construction will generally be limited to overnight hours, starting at 8 p.m. and ending by 6 a.m., except on weekends when the closures could last until 10 a.m. The contractor will likely build new frontage roads first, transfer traffic to them, and then build the toll lanes in the center.
3. Construction will take 4½ years, ending in 2020. But a first phase on the north end, from U.S. 290 to Techni Center Drive, should open in 2019.
4. The project will eliminate five places where people can cross U.S. 183: at East 51st Street, Techni Center Drive, Bolm Road, Vargas Road and Thompson Lane. Drivers looking to get to the other side will have to turn right and use U-turn drives under nearby underpasses. But the

project will also eliminate three of those five traffic lights.



Construction will start this week on the toll lanes for U.S. 183 in East Austin.

5. Driving the full tollway would cost less than \$3 in tolls at the beginning, officials say.



