

DRAFT

Capital Blvd. multimodal freeway: FAQs for study of accelerating corridor upgrade via toll revenue

What is the need for upgrading Capital Blvd. between I-540 and Franklin County to a multimodal freeway?

Growing congestion, delays, and unpredictable travel times on US 1 are causing increasing challenges for mobility, economic development, and quality of life for northern Wake and Franklin Co. residents, businesses, and visitors. NCDOT has a plan to upgrade Capital Blvd. north of I-540 to a 10+ mile, 70 MPH freeway (STIP U-5307 A-D). When complete, there will be no stoplights, no left turns, and no driveways, saving travelers substantial time and stress.

How much time could travelers save during peak periods if Capital Boulevard becomes a freeway?

It will take less than 10 minutes to drive the entire signal-free, 10+ mile freeway from I-540 to Franklin County. With no improvements, projected 2035 peak period delays will be 12 minutes at a single signalized intersection (e.g., Burlington Mills Rd.) and continue to worsen at other locations (e.g., 6 minutes at US 1-A / S. Main St.)

The freeway upgrade is largely delayed due to lack of funding. Could toll revenue accelerate the construction?

Yes. The current cost of the freeway upgrade project exceeds \$600m, which is more than 2x the identified revenue (\$291m) for the next decade. Available funding is only sufficient to upgrade less than two miles of freeway. A preliminary sketch-level analysis by the NC Turnpike Authority, as requested by Capital Area Metro Planning Organization (CAMPO) staff, and in coordination with Division 5 and RTA, indicates that toll revenue can accelerate the completion of the entire 10+ mile corridor. A detailed traffic and revenue study can provide more specifics.

Can the state help contribute funding for the road to minimize tolls and/or accelerate construction?

Yes. NCDOT has already committed \$291m in funding for this corridor. That money can be coupled with future toll user revenue to dramatically accelerate the upgrade of more than ten miles of Capital Boulevard to a freeway.

Why are tolls needed for US 1 in northern Wake Co., if there are no tolls on the US 1 freeway in southern Wake?

Funding was available to build US 1 in southern Wake County as a freeway years ago; current funding is insufficient to upgrade US 1 to a freeway in northern Wake between I-540 and Franklin Co. today. The reverse situation is true in Wake County for 540: since there was sufficient funding at the time, I-540 in northern Wake County was not constructed as a toll facility. The western, southern, and eastern Wake sections of 540 are, or are being constructed as, toll roads due to insufficient funding.

Will tolls be activated on Capital Boulevard even before the freeway is completed?

No. Tolls will not activate until all ramps, bridges, and service roads are open and all US 1 signals are removed.

How much would tolls be?

Based on a preliminary, sketch-level analysis from the NC Turnpike Authority in 2023, a toll in the range of \$2 - \$3 for the entire ten mile trip from I-540 to Franklin County would be a reasonable initial estimate, consistent with the approximate \$0.25 rate/mile for the existing Triangle Expressway system. These rates apply to pre-paid transponder users; post-paid Bill-by-Mail users are billed a slightly higher rate.

Will people pay lower tolls if they do not travel the entire ten mile upgraded corridor?

Yes. The estimated transponder toll of \$2 - \$3 from the preliminary sketch-level analysis applies to travelers who make the entire ten mile trip from I-540 to Franklin County. Shorter trips would pay a lower rate.

Will tolls be collected electronically, like the 540 Triangle Expressway corridor?

Yes. All North Carolina turnpikes collect tolls electronically; there won't be any toll booths installed on Capital Blvd. either. Tolls can be paid in advance with a transponder, at lower rates, or post-paid via pay-by-plate recognition. A

If I have a NC QuickPass transponder for the 540 Triangle Expressway, or E-ZPass, will that work on Capital Blvd?

Yes. NC toll roads accept N.C. QuickPass, E-ZPass, SunPass, and PeachPass for toll payments and lower transponder rates. A NC QuickPass transponder is free and available online or in-person. However, tolls can also be paid via license plate recognition without a transponder.

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Will tolls ever be removed?

Yes. Existing NC General Statutes require the removal of tolls upon completion of debt payments for all turnpikes in North Carolina. This provision already applies to the NC 540 turnpike and it would apply to Capital Blvd. as well.

A toll removal policy also applies to turnpikes in nearby states. The Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike and Va. Beach-Norfolk Expressway in Virginia and Georgia 400 in Atlanta are all former toll roads in the southeastern US.

How will people access existing businesses or other locations once the freeway is in place?

The freeway design will redirect access to properties and side streets via new service roads, ramps, and bridges.

Will there be viable alternate routes available?

Yes. There are a number of alternative routes for all or part of the corridor, including portions of US 401, Falls of Neuse, US 1-A, I-540, and several secondary routes, for those who do not want or need to travel on the turnpike.

The multimodal freeway design includes the construction of miles of new parallel service roads, which will create a new, non-toll travel way parallel to the US 1 freeway, in concert with and accessible from all proposed exits.

An initial analysis commissioned by RTA of projected future peak period corridor travel times found that travel along a parallel service road routing would take far less time than travel along an unimproved Capital Boulevard.

What about pedestrians and bicyclists – will they be better off if Capital is upgraded to a multimodal freeway?

Yes. The project will construct miles of new service roads with multiuse paths and/or sidewalks. Traveling across Capital will also be simplified since bridges will separate crossing and through traffic.

Will there be any provisions for transit?

Yes. The removal of traffic signals from US 1 will increase capacity and eliminate delay for all through vehicles, including transit. The design includes a 12' outside shoulder for future bus on shoulder system (BOSS) operation.

The regional business community has also requested the inclusion of a 14' dynamic transit priority inside shoulder.

Is there local support for studying the potential for accelerating the upgrade of Capital Blvd. using toll revenue?

Yes. The towns of Wake Forest, Youngsville, and Franklinton, the Wake Forest Area Chamber of Commerce, the Raleigh Chamber, the RTA regional business leadership group, and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) have endorsed a study of accelerating the upgrade of US 1 to a freeway using toll revenue.

How does this project relate to the City of Raleigh's plans for Capital Boulevard south of I-540?

In July 2022 Raleigh adopted a complementary plan for Capital south of 540 that would upgrade and reconstruct the corridor between I-440 and I-540 as a "multiway boulevard" with no stoplights in the center through lanes.

The two projects north and south of I-540 would create a signal-free pathway between I-440 and Franklin County.

Will legislative changes be required to accelerate the upgrade of Capital Boulevard using toll revenue?

Probably. The regional business community believes that the NC General Statutes would need to authorize tolls on Capital Blvd. and to include as part of the Triangle turnpike network to minimize financing risk and reduce toll rates.

CAMPO requested a study of the acceleration opportunity using toll revenue in January 2024. If the study results are favorable, CAMPO would need to approve the acceleration of the multimodal freeway using toll revenue.

What is the overall business case for considering tolls to accelerate the upgrade of Capital Blvd. to a freeway?

The enormous travel time savings of a reliable, signal-free turnpike freeway compared with an increasingly congested signalized roadway would be game changing for mobility, safety, commerce, and quality of life.

A preliminary sketch-level analysis by the NC Turnpike Authority indicates that tolls are a viable way to accelerate the upgrade to freeway. A detailed traffic and revenue study can provide more specifics on the opportunity.

How would upgrading US 1 / Capital Boulevard to a turnpike freeway compare with S-line passenger rail?

The two proposed projects would complement each other. An upgraded Capital Blvd. freeway will enhance mobility, safety, and accessibility and support current and future commerce needs. Activating S-line passenger rail would provide a high-speed, reliable, station-to-station travel option that helps shape land use along the corridor.