

- HOME >
- NEWS >
- LOCAL

## Pike U-turn ramp opening delayed The Boston Globe Travelers must wait for toll increases

By Andrea Estes, Globe Staff | September 10, 2007

Even though construction is complete, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority has decided to delay opening a new turnaround ramp that is expected to relieve one of the most confounding features of the Pike, a lack of exits and onramps around the Back Bay.

The reason: public relations.

Officials say they want to wait to open the turnaround ramp until new turnpike tolls go into effect in January. Hoping to avoid a public outcry, they do not want to set a toll for the ramp now, only to raise it in a few months.

That means travelers negotiating clogged city streets to get to Logan International Airport or the convention center from the Back Bay, or going in the opposite direction, will have to wait four months for a solution. The ramp had already been delayed by engineering problems for months.

"Rather than establish a new toll months before the new increases are set to take effect in January, it was decided it would be easier for our customers to simply open the U-turn with a new toll in January," said Turnpike Authority spokesman Mac Daniel.

The Turnpike Authority is expected to propose new tolls later this month, then hold public hearings before implementing the increases Jan. 1.

Construction of the \$1.8 million ramp - which will be open only to taxis and buses, at least at first - stalled after the fatal Big Dig tunnel ceiling collapse last summer and after soil problems were discovered at the site. Construction was completed this month, officials said. All that remains is for the electronic toll system to be installed and lanes painted, officials said.

Business leaders and tourism officials said they welcome the ramp, even if it is opening more than a year later than scheduled.

"The sooner the better," said Meg Mainzer-Cohen, president of the Back Bay Association, which represents Back Bay businesses. "Anything that's going to make traveling between Back Bay and South Boston easier is a benefit we support."

For years, city transportation and tourism officials called for the U-turn ramp as a relatively easy way to give visitors staying in Back Bay hotels easy access to the turnpike. Currently, there are no eastbound onramps or westbound exits in downtown Boston. With the new ramp, travelers will be able to commute west on the turnpike, turn around in Allston, head back downtown, and get off in South Boston or the airport.

During the 2004 Democratic National Convention, delegates were allowed to make a U-turn in Allston, with the help of state troopers.

"It proved this was a flawless way to decrease congestion and traffic impact coming from the Seaport District to Back Bay hotels," said Patrick Moscaritolo, president of the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, who predicted the ramp will have a "net positive impact on moving [convention] delegates back to their hotels quickly and seamlessly."

With the opening that year of the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center on the South Boston waterfront, the need for such a ramp dramatically increased, officials said. The route, though indirect, will cut travel time, reduce downtown traffic, and eliminate emissions from idling buses, Turnpike Authority and city officials said.

Advertisement

### LATEST LOCAL NEWS

▶ [More local news](#)

BOSTON.COM'S MOST E-MAILED

SEARCH THE ARCHIVES

 

All Globe stories since 2003 are now FREE

- Today
- Yesterday
- Past 30 days
- Last 12 months
- Since 1979

▶ [More search options](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement

"Every bus, every truck, every taxi that can be on the highway sooner is one less burden on the citizens and visitors to the city," said Jim Gillooly, deputy commissioner for the Boston Transportation Department.

But even when the ramp opens, it is unclear whether all of the city's taxi drivers will take advantage of it. The ramp will accommodate electronic tolls only and while all of Boston's 1,825 taxicabs are now outfitted with Fast Lane electronic toll transponders, many drivers still resist using them. Some don't want to pay a monthly bill; others think their customers would prefer seeing them pay a cash toll, drivers said.

In addition, some cab operators are bristling at the idea of traveling miles out of the way to arrive at their destination.

"It's a scam," said Larry Meister, a member of the Independent Taxi Operators Association. "I figure the fare will be about \$10 or \$12 more, plus the extra toll. I don't think it's good for business. They're doing it to keep traffic off city streets, but it's not a significant time savings. At least give us an incentive - don't charge tolls for taxis."

The Turnpike Authority's current plan is to open the ramp only for taxis and buses, but authority officials said they may consider opening the ramp to the public at some point. At first, Turnpike Authority officials said, State Police details will patrol the site to catch violators.

"It's public property. It should be open to the public," said Mary Connaughton, a Turnpike Authority board member.

Richard Dimino, president of A Better City, a group that monitors the Big Dig and other transportation projects, said Turnpike Authority officials should make sure the toll is not so expensive it discourages drivers from using the ramp.

"We want companies and drivers to see this as a benefit; we don't want to do anything to deter its use," he said. ■

© Copyright 2007 Globe Newspaper Company.

◀ 1 2 ▶

**More from Boston.com**

powered by **Inform**

More:

- [Globe City/Region stories](#) |
- [Latest local news](#) |
- [Globe front page](#) |
- [Boston.com](#)

Sign up for:

- [Globe Headlines e-mail](#) |
- [Breaking News Alerts](#)

- [Printer friendly](#)
- [Single page](#)
- [E-mail to a friend](#)
- [Local RSS feed](#)
- [Available RSS feeds](#)
- [Most e-mailed](#)
- [Reprints & Licensing](#)
- [Share on Digg](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Save this article](#)
- powered by [Del.icio.us](#)

[feedback form](#) | [help](#) | [site map](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [rss](#)

© 2014 The New York Times Company

 kate spade  
NEW YORK

**sale!**

TAKE AN EXTRA  
**25% OFF**

WITH CODE  
**MORESALE**

**SHOP NOW ▶**