



North Texas Toll Road Opens To Controversy

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(CBS 11 News) COPPELL Tuesday marked the official opening of the new State Highway 121 Bypass. The stretch of road runs from north of Denton Creek to east of FM 2281, through Carrollton, Lewisville and Coppell.

Governor Rick Perry was on hand for the dedication. He said that the public/private partnership is a model for the state's future infrastructure needs. "There is not a highway fairy that will come and some way magically make highways appear. You can either pay for them with tax dollars or you can pay with tolls," Perry said.

North Texas drivers will have at least two more months of free driving on the highway before toll collection begins, however, the delay has done little to silence the highway's critics.

"They have not made their case," said Linda Curtis. She opposes the toll road. "It is a cash cow machine they're putting in place, and it has nothing to do with transportation."

Officials will not collect tolls until the middle of November or later. Governor Perry says that this decision was not influenced by critics or politicians, but rather, it was decided upon by the Texas Department of Transportation.

They are in no hurry to begin tolling.

"It may be January of February [before tolling begins]," said TxDOT chair Ric Williamson. "We're not going to start collecting people's money until we know it works."

Critics of the tolling say that taxpayers have already paid for the road's construction, and that it is not right to charge them again to drive on the highway.

However, transportation officials have made themselves very clear. Toll roads are here to stay, and looking forward, there will be a lot more of them.

"The fact of the matter is," said Perry, "there is no such thing as a free road."
(CBS 11 News)