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Would you pay for fast lane on tollways?



IDOT chief Randy Blankenhorn meets with tollway directors Thursday.

By Marni Pyke | Staff Photographer



Marni Pyke

Are you willing to pay for life in the fast lane?

Known as congestion pricing or express toll lanes, it's an idea state Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn called a priority Thursday at an Illinois tollway meeting.

"I want us to work together find solutions for tomorrow, not today," Blankenhorn told tollway directors.

"Express toll lanes are on my agenda. It's something I'm very interested in ... and how do we partner with the

tollway to make sure that we have a system that works together. What is our relationship on toll collections on something like this?"

Congestion pricing involves designating a lane that drivers would pay to use with the guarantee it would offer faster, more reliable travel times during rush hour. The price could be "calibrated to manage demand," a report from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning said.

Blankenhorn was executive director at CMAP before becoming transportation secretary. The planning think tank has supported using congestion pricing on the rebuilt Jane Addams Tollway and proposed Route 53 extension.

IDOT already is analyzing express toll lanes as part of future improvements to the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) or Eisenhower Expressway (I-290).

When drivers shift to express toll lanes, it eases traffic on other lanes, planners reported. The strategy has been used successfully in Orange County, California, CMAP said.

Tollway Chairman Robert Schillerstrom promised cooperation with IDOT on its initiatives.

"We don't have the liberty in Illinois anymore to silo our agencies," he said.