



COLORADO

Transportation
Investment Office

I-70 Mountain Express Lanes Updates

CTIO Board Meeting
May 20, 2026

I-70 Mountain Express Lanes (MEXL) Background

- 24 miles long (12 miles in each direction)
- Eastbound direction opened for tolling in December 2015 and the Westbound direction opened in 2022.
- They both use a Hard Shoulder Running concept, whereby the inside shoulder lane is used as a single-lane Express Lane to provide additional capacity in the corridor, during peak travel periods.
- Operations governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CTIO, FHWA and CDOT

Current MEXL Operating Parameters

Number of Hours	
EB Fixed Hours	1,250
WB Fixed Hours	1,350
<i>Flex Hours Allowance</i>	<i>400-550*</i>

Number of days	
EB Fixed Days	125 days
WB Fixed Days	135 days
<i>Flex Days Allowance</i>	<i>40 days-60*</i>

(* 4-year growth)

- The Board approved an amended MOU with FHWA in June 2025 memorializing new hours and days
- Increased hours by 41% and days by 33% to meet changing demands along the corridor
- Fixed days/hours are for days with significant historical congestion where CTIO knows the lanes will need to be open (holidays, weekends, leaf peeping etc.)
- Flex days/hours are for days on “the cusp” where CTIO historically sees at a minimum 1-3 hours of congestion
- The growth percentage is based on an assumed 3% and would help keep up with growth in the corridor until 2028

2025-26 Regular Days/Hours Used/Planned

East Bound Regular Operational Days/Hours

Allowed Hours of Operation
1250

Hours Used
511.07

Hours Rem...
738.93

Allowed Days of Operation
125

Days Used
52

Remaining ...
73

Days Planned
73

Days Suggested
0

West Bound Regular Operational Days/Hours

Allowed Hours of Operation
1350

Hours Used
579.52

Hours Rem...
770.48

Allowed Days of Operation
135

Days Used
60

Remaining ...
75

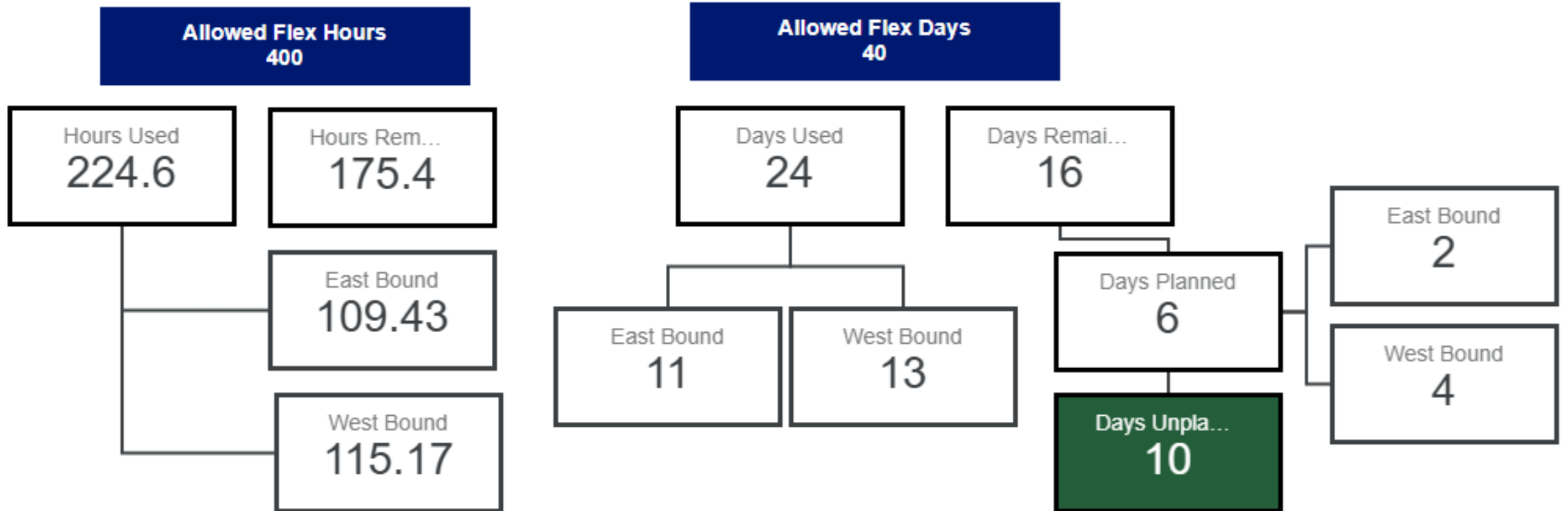
Days Planned
70

Days Suggested
5

Unplanned ...
5

2025-26 Flex Days/Hours Used/Planned

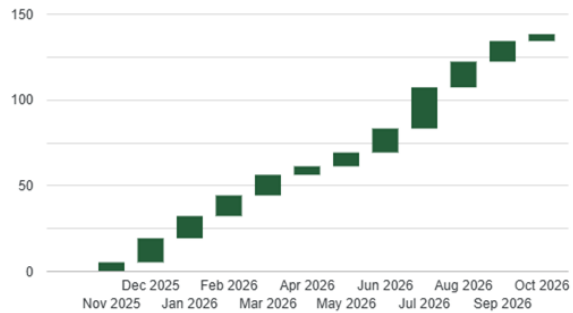
Operational Flex Days/Hours



2025-26 Days/Hours Used/Planned & Flex Overview

Eastbound

Days Used/Planned/Suggested by Month



Regular Hours Used
511.07

Regular Hours Remaining
738.93

Days Used
52

Remaining Days
73

Days Planned
73

Unplanned Days
0

Flex Days and Hours

Flex Hours Used
109.43

Flex Hours Remaining (EB...)
175.4

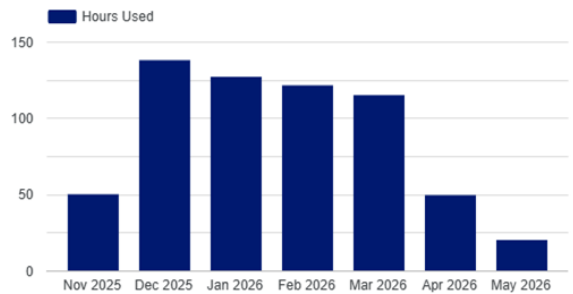
Flex Days Used
11

Flex Days Unplanned (EB...)
10

Flex Days Planned
2

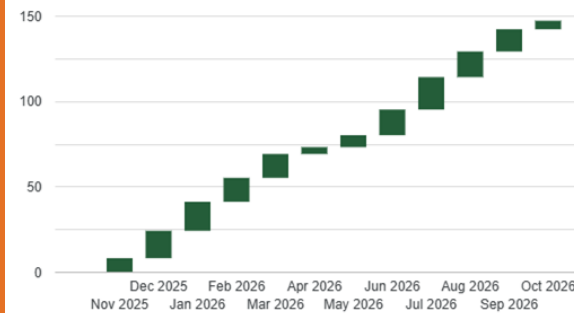
Days Suggested (10 days ...)
0

Hours Used/Planned by Month



Westbound

Days Used/Planned/Suggested by Month



Regular Hours Used
579.52

Regular Hours Remaining
770.48

Days Used
60

Remaining Days
75

Days Planned
70

Unplanned Days
5

Flex Days and Hours

Flex Hours Used
115.17

Flex Hours Remaining (EB...)
175.4

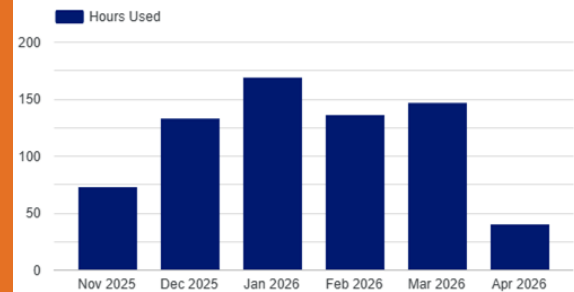
Flex Days Used
13

Flex Days Unplanned (EB...)
10

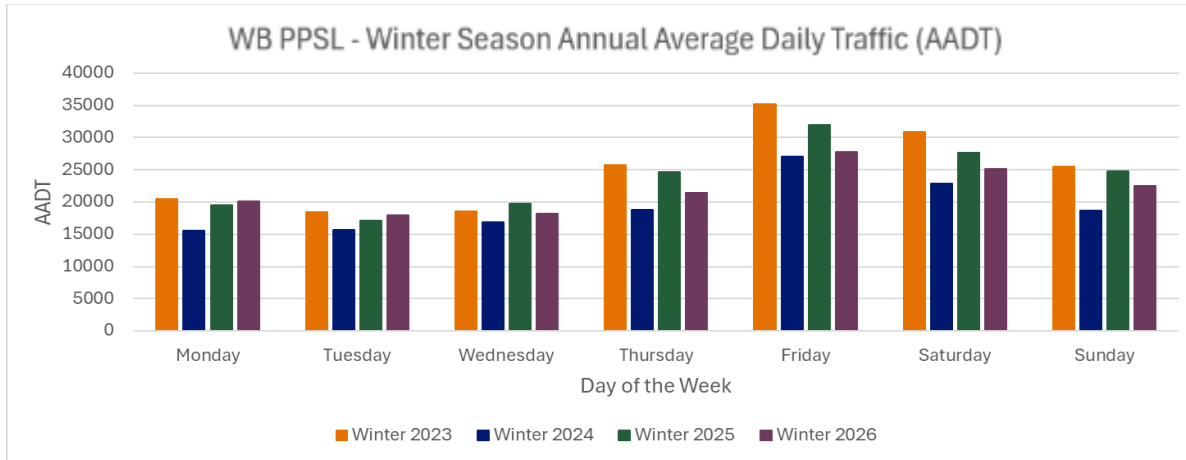
Flex Days Planned
4

Days Suggested (10 days ...)
5

Hours Used/Planned by Month



Winter 2026 Traffic Trends



Seasonal Traffic Drivers: Winter 2023-2026

Winter 2023

High traffic totals due to heavy, consistent snow.

Winter 2024

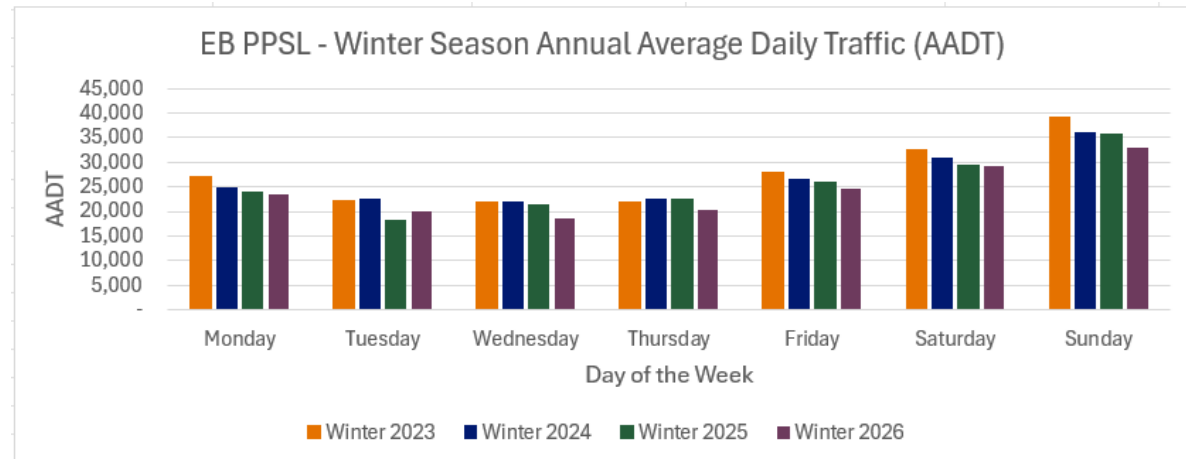
Lower early traffic due to late snow.

Winter 2025

Traffic increased again following early-season snow.

Winter 2026

Less traffic overall due to record-low snowfall levels.



Safety Patrol Sponsorship Background

- The CTIO Board Approved an Intra-Agency Agreement (IAA) with CDOT Division of Maintenance & Operations (DMO) to support the Safety Patrol services serving the MEXL lanes in February 2025
- STEP revenues sponsored the year 1 cost for a total of \$450,000
- Win-Win for CDOT and CTIO
 - Supported DMO
 - Helped CTIO publicly support safety with its civil penalty revenues
- Terms of the IAA required CDOT to report out on the results of the program after the first year to determine if the Board wanted to continue the sponsorship

Safety Patrol Sponsorship Details

As of September 2025, there are 9 vehicles (6 Pickup Trucks and 3 Rollback Tow) covering the MEXL area of the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

Safety Patrol currently provides the following coverage hours:

- Light Duty (Pick Up) Trucks: Friday/Saturday/Sunday 05:30 AM - 8:00 PM
- Flatbed Tow Truck: Friday/Saturday/Sunday 05:30 AM - 8:00 PM
- Flatbed Tow Truck: Monday-Thursday 09:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Average Time of Coverage is 13.1 Hours/day



Safety Patrol Sponsorship Outcomes

CTIO reached over 30,371 vehicles with our Express Lanes brand

The branded fleet of vehicles have assisted an average of:

- 297 drivers a month
- 3,560 drivers in total

Extensive positive comments from the public and stakeholders regarding the safety patrol support on the I-70 Mountain Express Lanes



I-70 Mountain Express Lanes Communications

CTIO committed to improving communications in the working group of stakeholders regarding when the lanes are open. To support this, CTIO recently added outreach steps beyond the overhead signs drivers see before reaching the PPSLs. They include:

- Look-ahead calendar: CTIO posts a “Fixed Days” calendar on the CTIO website that gives a two-month look-ahead of when the lanes will be open.
- A text alert service drivers can opt into

When will the Express Lanes be open?

When will the Express Lanes be open?

Westbound Days of Operation (May / June 2025/26)

Days when the Express Lanes are open are highlighted in orange.

May						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Text Alert Service

Messaging: Due to weather, traffic conditions and nearby construction, the Mountain Express Lanes may unexpectedly close, experience delays or be open in response to traffic conditions. Real-time text notifications are the most effective way to deliver timely updates to stakeholders who use the Express Lanes on a regular basis.

The image is a composite graphic. At the top, there is a red banner with the 'COLORADO EXPRESS LANES' logo on the left, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) logo in the center, and the text 'COLORADO Department of Transportation' on the right. Below the banner is a photograph of a highway sign. The sign is green and white, with 'EXPRESS LANE' at the top, 'ExpressToll' in a purple box, and 'TOLL TO 6 CLOSED' in a black box. A yellow arrow points from the banner to the sign. In the foreground, there is a white text message notification box with a green speech bubble icon and the word 'MESSAGES'. The message text reads: 'From: 21000 I-70 Mountain Express Lanes: Wondering if the I-70 Mountain Express Lanes have closed unexpectedly? Sign up for text alerts by texting 'xpresslanes' to 21000'.

Text Alerts Service Results

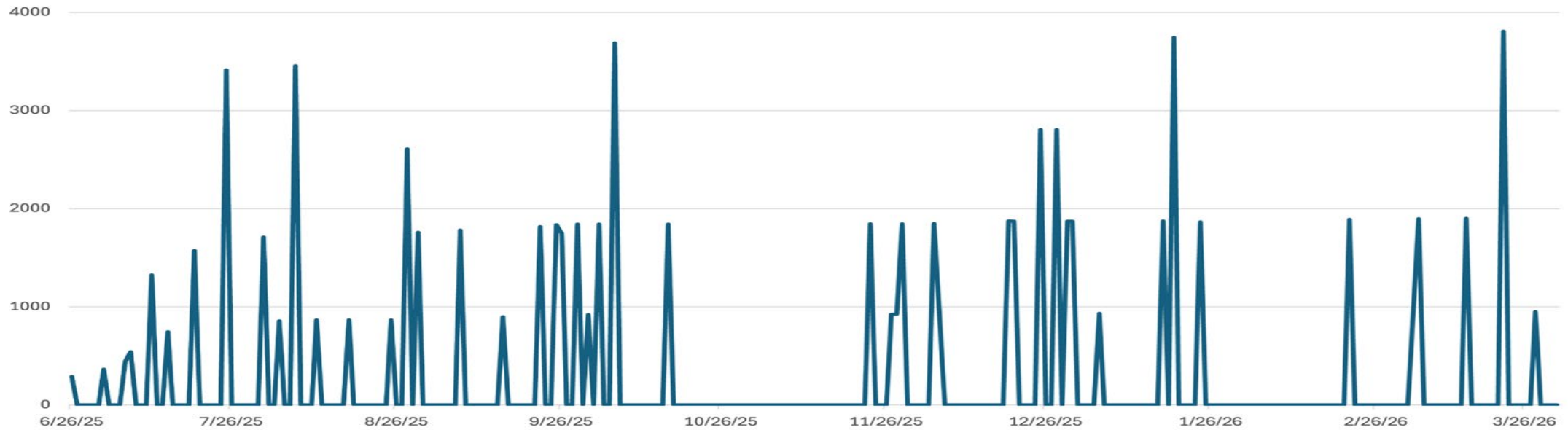
Subscribers: 954

In the past year, 1,029 people have opted-in and only 75 have later opted-out. Our opt-outs in the past six months have held steady at less than 9 each month, indicating our core subscriber base continues to find value in these text alerts.

Unique messages sent: 92

Total messages delivered: 91,337

Total Texts Sent by Date



Coming Soon

- Eastbound PPSL Dynamic Toll Rates Beginning in July
- 24/7/365 CTIO Toll Operations Coverage
- CTIO Tolling Operations Center

Questions?