

NEW ALEXA SKILL PROVIDES CURRENT I-66 TOLLS

VIENNA, VA, April 22, 2019 – High Occupancy Toll lanes and roads are becoming increasingly prevalent across the United States. One such roadway is Interstate 66 in Northern Virginia, running from the Interstate 495 Beltway to Washington, DC. The tolls are highly variable, and commuters must decide whether to pay the current toll, change their travel time or mode, or take an alternate route. A new Alexa Skill now provides real-time toll information so that commuters can make a more informed decision.



This new Alexa skill, [Sixty Six Tolls](#), provides the current toll rate between any inbound or outbound entrance and exit, and can also provide the current travel speeds on I-66 and an alternate route, US Route 50, inside the beltway. The skill works on any Alexa-enabled device. To use it, one must first enable it by saying "Enable Sixty Six Tolls." Then, whenever one wants to use it, they just say "Open Sixty Six Tolls."



"The skill uses the open data that VDOT makes available through their [SmarterRoads](#) portal," said developer Mike McGurrin. "While the toll may change between checking the cost at home and the time a driver reaches their entrance, it's still useful to have an idea of the highly variable toll, especially since tolls for the entire 10-mile length have sometimes spiked at over \$40. As Alexa is integrated into new cars, the skill will be accessible by voice while en-route." To add convenience and minimize distractions, Mr. McGurrin also said that users can save their most frequent inbound and outbound entrances and exits to make it even easier to use the skill.

Sixty Six Tolls is one of over 15,000 skills that have been developed for the Alexa voice service, and smart speakers are becoming more and more common across the country. It's been estimated that over 25% of Americans own a smart speaker, and that this number will rise to 55% by 2022. Both after-market companies and automakers are integrating these systems into their vehicles to provide hands-free information. Traffic and traveler information is a natural service for these systems to provide. Billionaire investor Mark Cuban has said, "[There's no future that doesn't have ambient computing or voice activation... none.](#)"

The information for the skill is obtained from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). [SmarterRoads](#) is a free data portal that VDOT uses to provide automated access to over 2 dozen data sets, ranging from annual safety statistics to the second by second status of each traffic signal. One of the data sets provides the current toll rates for I-66 inside the Beltway. Travel speeds is obtained from VDOT's 511 traveler information website. VDOT provides this information so that industry, entrepreneurs, and the general public can add value and develop new and improved products as well as conduct research.

For questions or if you'd like to learn more, contact the developer, Mike McGurrin, at 202-670-two six two three or email him at mike@mcgurrin.com

Technical details on the skill, including a link to the open sourced code can be found at <https://www.hackster.io/mike-mcgurrin/check-current-toll-rates-with-alexa-345160>.