

Zipper Merge FAQs



What is a Zipper Merge?

A conventional merge is the point where two streams of traffic travelling in the same direction are required to combine into a single through lane.

The zipper merge differs from a conventional merge in that vehicles do not immediately merge into the through lane when notified of a lane closure. Drivers fill both lanes up to the point of closure and take turns merging into the through lane, every other vehicle, like the teeth of a zipper.

Why do the Zipper Merge?

A zipper merge is safer than a conventional merge and reduces traffic congestion. With a conventional merge, vehicles slow down to merge early in heavy traffic situations. This may put drivers in danger, slowing traffic down too quickly, leading to unexpected crashes or angry motorists. These dangers are decreased using the zipper merge.

A zipper merge:

- Improves safety by reducing differences in speeds between two lanes.
- Reduces congestion by as much as 40 percent.
- Improves efficiency, as it uses more available road space for as long as possible.
- Creates a sense of fairness and equity that all lanes are moving at the same rate.

How does it work?

When you see a Lane Closed Ahead sign, continue to drive in your lane until you are prompted to merge. When you reach this point, take alternating turns with other drivers to merge into the single lane of traffic.

To be effective, everyone should be aware of the zipper merge and follow its rules.

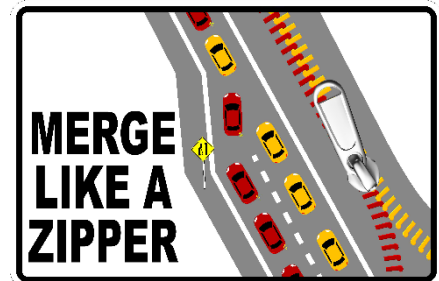
When driving in this situation, slow down and alternate while merging. The zipper merge allows for everyone to move at the same rate, minimizing delays for all. When traffic is heavy and slow, it is much safer for motorists to remain in their current lane until the point where traffic can orderly take turns merging.

Isn't it more courteous to merge early?

No, those that merge early and don't utilize lane capacity, incorrectly think a zipper merge is cutting in line, and they're sending a message to fellow drivers that they don't support reducing congestion.

A zipper merge, when performed properly, includes the following:

1. Not racing around others in low congestion traffic.
2. Matching the speed of traffic in the through lane. Again, high speeds lead to unsafe conditions.
3. Make sure you have enough space to merge when it's performed, including checking your blind spot.
4. Drivers in both lanes should be courteous, taking turns merging, like a zipper.



Is this new to Sedona?

- Yes, this is new in Sedona due to the two new merging lanes headed north into Uptown on SR 89A and Forest Road.
- Arizona has supported the zipper merge since 2016.
 - States across the country have recommended the zipper merge for over a decade including Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and others. Many other countries also recommend the zipper merge, with some supporting it for decades. In fact, it is now the law in Germany.