Starting July 1, 2026, the U.S. Department of State will roll out a paid fast lane for certain visitor visa applicants.

Under a temporary final rule, B-1 (business visitor) and B-2 (tourist) applicants will be able to pay an additional **$750** to secure a **consular interview appointmentwithin ten business days**, but only at **participating U.S. embassies and consulates**. The State Department is expected to announce which posts will offer the service before the program begins.

The practical impact is simple. In places where interview wait times can stretch for weeks or months, some applicants will be able to buy access to a much earlier appointment slot. Not a different visa. Not a guaranteed approval. Just faster access to the interview.

What the premium option actually provides

The $750 fee is tied to one specific benefit: **an interview appointment within ten business days** at a post that is participating in the program.

It does not change the legal standard for eligibility, and it does not remove steps that normally apply to visitor visas. Applicants should still expect the usual requirements and potential outcomes, including:

- Completion of the DS-160 and payment of the standard visa application fee(s)
- Standard identity and security screening

- A consular officer interview and discretionary decision-making
- Possible **221(g)** refusal for additional documents or administrative processing, where applicable

So the premium service is best understood as an appointment scheduling tool, not a processing guarantee. It accelerates access to the window. It does not control what happens after.

Who this is for: B-1 and B-2 travel that cannot wait

The State Department's rationale is tied to short-notice travel needs. That includes, in very real terms, the types of trips that often pop up without much warning.

On the B-1 side, the use cases are familiar:

- Last minute meetings with U.S. partners or customers
- Contract discussions, project kickoffs, or deal related travel
- Conferences, trade shows, and industry events
- Internal business travel for consultations or client site visits

For B-2 tourism and family travel, it can be just as time sensitive:

- Weddings, graduations, anniversaries, milestone events
- Family visits that are scheduled quickly due to changing circumstances
- Time-bound tourism plans such as cruises, concerts, or major events
- Seasonal travel where dates are fixed and rescheduling is expensive

There is also a timing element that is hard to ignore. Summer 2026 overlaps with **FIFA World Cup 2026 (June 11, 2026 to July 19, 2026)**. Even though matches will be spread across North America, the overall effect is predictable: more cross-border movement, more last minute travel, and more pressure on consular capacity.

Participating posts will matter more than the rule itself

The premium interview option will launch only at **select consulates and embassies**, at least initially. That detail is not a footnote. It is the entire program in practice.

If a post is participating, the $750 option could be a meaningful workaround when standard appointment calendars are clogged. If a post is not participating, nothing changes.

The State Department has indicated it will announce participating locations before July 1, 2026. Until that list is published, it is hard to forecast availability by region. Historically, appointment delays and demand spikes vary dramatically by post, even

within the same country.

A premium lane, but not a premium outcome

It is important to separate speed from substance.

Paying for an interview within ten business days does not mean:

- a faster final visa issuance
- a higher likelihood of approval
- avoidance of administrative processing
- exemption from documentary requirements

In other words, the program aims to reduce one bottleneck. It does not eliminate the other ones.

And depending on the applicant’s circumstances, the appointment may not be the slowest part anyway. For some cases, the interview is quick and issuance follows within days. For others, the interview triggers follow-up questions, a request for more documentation, or administrative processing that takes longer than expected. The premium option does not appear designed to change that.

Why this is happening now: demand, backlogs, and capacity management

The announcement sits in a broader trend. Since the pandemic, consular sections in many locations have faced persistent demand, staffing constraints, and uneven recovery in appointment availability.

A paid expedited interview channel is a capacity management tool. It creates a separate track for travelers who place a high value on time certainty, particularly when travel plans are short-notice and the cost of missing the trip is high.

At the same time, it is also part of a wider compliance posture. The State Department has been experimenting with measures that try to reduce overstays and increase accountability in certain visitor visa populations. One recent example is the **visitor visa bond pilot**, which has required some applicants to post bonds of up to **$15,000** before receiving a visa, and has expanded to **fifty countries**, most of them in Africa.

Put together, these policies signal two things happening at once.

More tools to move high demand cases through the front end of the system. And more tools to manage perceived overstay risk on the back end.

Likely operational questions to watch before July 2026

Several practical details will determine how usable this premium option is.

1. How the $750 fee is paid and recorded

The mechanics matter. Whether the fee is collected through the existing appointment portal, through a separate payment channel, or through post-specific steps will affect how quickly applicants can actually access the ten business day interview window.

2. Whether there are eligibility limits inside B-1/B-2

The rule applies to B-1 and B-2 applicants generally, but posts may still implement internal guardrails based on capacity, local demand, or appointment volume.

3. What happens if the post cannot meet the ten business day commitment

The program is framed around a defined service level. If demand is high and capacity is limited, the remedy matters. Refund. Rescheduling. Priority over other expedited requests. Those details have not been publicly spelled out yet.

4. How this interacts with existing expedite requests

Many posts already accept expedite requests based on medical needs, funerals, humanitarian situations, or urgent business travel. It will be important to see whether the paid option becomes the main channel for time-sensitive travel, and what happens to the discretionary expedite process.

5. Whether the program expands beyond select posts

The initial approach is limited. If it proves workable, it could expand. If it creates operational strain or equity concerns, it could remain narrowly deployed.