



I-85 EXPRESS LANES Partnership for Progress

www.dot.ga.gov/I85hotlanes

JUNE 2010

More HOT News

This is the fourth issue of the I-85 Express Lanes newsletter, which is designed to keep members of the community informed on the progress of the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane project. The proposed 16-mile HOT lane along I-85 will run from Chamblee Tucker Road just south of I-285 to Old Peachtree Road in Gwinnett County.

Readers are encouraged to forward the newsletter to others that may be interested in the project. For more information, visit www.dot.ga.gov/I85ExpressLanes.

Green Light Given for Project Construction

On Thursday, June 17, the State Transportation Board approved the July bid letting for the construction of the HOV to HOT I-85 Express Project. Assuming acceptable bids are received and a contract awarded, construction on the conversion project is scheduled to begin in mid-August, with the HOT lane opening to traffic in summer 2011.

The Georgia DOT will also begin an extensive public education campaign on the construction project to educate stakeholders, local businesses within the corridor and motorists on the times of lane closures and other information about the project.

Once completed, the I-85 Express Lanes project will provide more options for commuters and serve as a key transportation alternative to help relieve congestion on one of metro Atlanta's major corridors.

Express Lanes May Turn Rush Hour Frowns Into Smiles



Vance Smith introduces the expert panel to attendees at the "Successful HOT Lane Projects – A National Perspective." Panelists (seated from left) are Regina McElroy, Tina Geiselbrecht, Peggy Catlin, and Linda Koblick. (Photo by Cedric Mohr, GDOT).

Some Atlanta motorists may frown on the idea of adding tolls to their daily commutes, but those negative attitudes may turn into smiles when toll lanes are implemented, say a group of U.S. transportation experts who experienced similar experiences in their respective communities.

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Office of Governor Sonny Perdue



A panel of transportation experts from across the United States met at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot in Atlanta on Tuesday, February 16th to discuss "Successful HOT Lane Projects – A National Perspective." The event was sponsored by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Georgia State Road & Tollway Authority (SRTA) as an educational program on HOT lanes, which are currently being planned for the Atlanta Metropolitan Area.

According to the panelists, when HOV lanes in their respective communities were designated for conversion to HOT lanes, the initial reaction of many commuters was negative. But after the toll lanes were implemented, those attitudes changed.



[Click image to view video highlights of the event on GDOT's website](#)

Tina Geiselbrecht, Associate Transportation Researcher with the Texas Transportation Institute and a member of the four-person panel, told the nearly 170-person audience of Georgia legislators, businesspeople, civic organizations, media, transportation industry, and other interested parties that the key factor influencing public acceptance of HOT lanes was that the lanes provide commuters a choice. "They can use the toll lanes or stay in the general purpose lanes," she stated.

Surveys where HOT lanes have been implemented show that all income groups overwhelmingly support them. "In San Diego the lowest income group expressed the most support for the HOT lanes once they were operational," said Geiselbrecht.

Peggy Catlin, Deputy Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, told the group that a seven-mile Denver stretch has been so successful that there are plans to introduce additional HOT lanes.

Former Commissioner of Hennepin County, Minnesota, Linda Koblick said that when an 11-mile stretch of HOT lanes was proposed for her state, she was initially very skeptical. "I am not an engineer, but a politician and that's how I looked at it," she said. "But the more I investigated, the more convinced I became of its value."

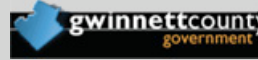
The panelists collectively agreed that the fact that HOT lanes provide consistently fast and predictable travel times contributes to the positive public attitudes.

Regina McElroy, Director of the Office of Innovative Program Delivery for the Federal Highway Administration in Washington D.C., provided a timeline of HOT lanes and cited examples of how other countries helped to pioneer the concept, including Singapore, Norway, Italy, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Vance Smith, Commissioner of GDOT, opened the two-hour session and served as moderator, while SRTA Executive Director Gena Evans provided the closing remarks.



Georgia Department of Public Safety



An Atlanta crowd of 170 listens to presentations from a panel of experts at a February forum to discuss successful HOT lanes in other communities. The event was held at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot. (Photo by Cedric Mohr, GDOT).

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Carpoolers Say Public Transit an Option if it Can Move at Steady Speeds in Express Lanes

Carpoolers who have adopted ride sharing as an essential part of their daily commuting routine would also consider public transit if it would speed up their ride according to the results of an SRTA survey of I-85 corridor carpoolers registered with the Clean Air Campaign.

The survey was conducted by SRTA to help the authority measure the community's perception and knowledge of the HOV to HOT lane conversion as well as how to best communicate the program's progress.

Cost savings in terms of gas, parking, and vehicle maintenance is the incentive for ride-sharing said 75 percent of those responding to the survey. Some 46 percent said that they use the HOV lanes three or more times a week. Almost 65 percent of carpoolers polled who regularly use I-85 for their daily work commutes said that they would continue to share a ride even if the current HOV lanes did not exist. In addition, some 43 percent of those surveyed said that they would use public transportation if it offered consistent travel times and faster speeds than vehicles in slower lanes.

According to Benita Dodd, Vice President of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation, as stated in a Dalton Daily Citizen opinion-editorial, fears of getting tangled up in traffic are unwarranted after the Express Lanes open. "Growing challenges for the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority's popular express buses are its standing room-only routes and getting stuck in the same interstate peak-hour traffic jams as the rest of traffic. Embracing public transit is easier when van pool and bus passengers get a toll-free trip in the HOT lane with the assurance of reliable and improved trip times."

"Leverage that," she said, "into an efficient HOT lane network providing for express buses to leave the interstate and continue travel with priority, with traffic signal preemption on major arterial roads. The result is a more efficient, flexible mode of transit that enables the state to maximize the number of people served by transit."

In addition to public hearings, press releases, and meetings with civic and other organizations, surveys are another tool used by SRTA to determine public perceptions about HOT lanes. According to SRTA officials, their objective is to understand and address any concerns motorists have and give them easy access to information, particularly for those who expect to have personal experience with HOT lanes in their respective communities.

The I-85 carpoolers would be receiving the option of using increased transit; the one survey item that they agreed was a choice they wanted.

While the I-85 Express Lanes do not open until summer 2011, project funding is already improving transit services in both the I-85 corridor and throughout the metro Atlanta region. In the I-85 corridor, Xpress bus service from the Mall of Georgia to downtown Atlanta on Route 411 is anticipated to begin in July. In addition, construction of the new Hamilton Mill and expanded I-985/GA 20 park and ride lots were let in June, with an expected opening of summer 2011.

Elsewhere in the metro Atlanta region, the new Tara Boulevard park and ride lot is open and serving transit riders. Also, the new Douglas Boulevard, Town Center, and Sigman Road park and ride lots are all scheduled to open later this summer.

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Technology Paving Way for I-85 Express Lanes



An example of a TransCore transponder that is placed on a vehicle's windshield.

A transponder, a small thin device similar to the GA Cruise Card, will help speed motorists along the new 16-mile stretch of I-85 Express Lanes when they open in summer 2011.

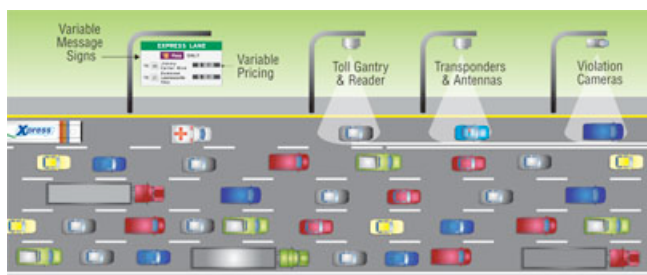
In August 2009, SRTA initiated a procurement process to seek a system of integrated technology for its new Express Lanes that would not require toll booths and would provide state-of-the-art enforcement, accuracy, ensure privacy, be simple to operate, and have the capability to calculate price changes based on traffic patterns and volume.

SRTA recently announced the selection of Electronic Transaction Consultants Corporation (ETC) as the tolling systems integrator for the implementation and maintenance of the Express Lanes. ETC Corp will provide toll collection, account management, and violation enforcement services for the I-85 Express Lanes and GA 400.

SRTA has also awarded a contract to TransCore, L.P. for open protocol Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Transponders, Reader Subsystems and support services. The TransCore transponder will adhere to a vehicle windshield or front bumper. It is connected to an account established with SRTA and automatically deducts proper tolls when used on the I-85 Express Lanes. The transponder sends radio signals to roadside readers that will be installed along the I-85 corridor. It stores basic information, such as an identification number, toll facility, and vehicle type and then interacts with the roadside reader to complete transactions.

"Now we can move forward with a program that has proved successful in communities such as San Diego, Minneapolis and Miami," said SRTA Executive Director Gena L. Evans. "We are extremely pleased with the outcome of the tolling technology procurement," she said. "The technology will be the centerpiece of a tolling program that is safe, seamless, reliable and customer-centered."

The Express Lanes project contracts may be the first in the country to use open protocol procurement for HOT lanes, which gives SRTA more options as they are not forced to use single-sourced technologies or pieces of equipment. It is anticipated that the electronic tolling system that results will be used on I-85 and on future tolling projects in Georgia.



HOT Lane Innovative Solutions

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HOT Lanes in the News*

For the past several years, HOT lanes have generated local and national news stories and editorials around the country. Following are three items

about HOT lane projects in Virginia, California, and Florida.

HOT Lanes to Deliver \$3.5 Billion in Virginia

The Journal of Commerce
May 7, 2009

A 14-mile stretch of High Occupancy Toll lanes will generate billions of dollars in economic activity for the Washington area long before the first toll is collected.

HOT lanes being built on the I-495 Capital Beltway in Northern Virginia will support 11,800 jobs over the next five years and pump \$3.5 billion into the region's economy, says Stephen Fuller of George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis.

[\(Read Article\)](#)

Editorial: HOT lanes to benefit all travelers

The San Francisco Examiner
July 23, 2008

University studies have found that only 20 percent of toll-lane users are daily commuters. The overwhelming 80 percent majority chooses to pay just once a week or so, saving the tolls for important trips. Perhaps they might be late for work or rushing to an airport flight.

Yes, optional tolls for diamond lanes are a proven success at reducing congestion. They have existed for a decade in car-crazy Southern California without serious opposition. The high-occupancy toll lanes became known as HOT lanes in Orange County and San Diego County, where the system of charging variable fees based on congestion was established.

[\(Read Article\)](#)

High tolls lure drivers to I-95's pay lanes

Miami Herald
March 31, 2010

One thing is certain: Florida's first experiment with High Occupancy Toll, or HOT, has been a hit since it began in December 2008. The Express Lanes had their first 1 million-car month in January. By the end of February, the count was up another 40 percent; average daily traffic was exceeding the daily peaks of a year before.

[\(Read Article\)](#)

**The above links provide information about successful HOT implementations in other states. The ideas and concepts discussed are being shared as information only and do not necessarily represent or reflect the policies, practices, plans or operations of Georgia's proposed I-85 Express Lanes project.*

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