

OVERVIEW

What are express lanes?

Express lanes are optional toll lanes that run alongside existing interstates in some of the most congested corridors around metro Atlanta. Known as Georgia Express, these lanes allow drivers to pay a toll to bypass congestion if they choose, offer a clear path for transit operators and offer an additional alternative to the roadways that exist today.

How do I get more information on Georgia Express and ongoing projects?

Visit www.dot.ga.gov/expresslanes for more information on Georgia Express lanes.

TOLLING AND FUNDING

How are toll rates determined?

Georgia Express toll rates are essentially set by those who choose to use the lanes. Rates are variable, rising as demand increases during peak travel times and falling at off-peak times. The goal is to balance rates in order for express lanes to provide more reliable trip times for those who choose to pay and to ensure that transit relying on the lanes runs efficiently. If rates are too low, congestion occurs and reduces the benefit of lanes. If rates are too high, too few travelers will choose to use the lanes. Because tolls offset the cost of construction, operation and maintenance of Georgia Express lanes, the state seeks to allow as many travelers as possible to use the lanes while still meeting expectations for free-flowing travel.

Isn't tolling just another way of taxing drivers who already pay taxes that fund roads?

No, unlike a tax that everyone pays, tolls on express lanes are user fees. Only those who choose to use those lanes are charged. Motorists always have the option to use the existing highways at no cost just as they do today.

Are express lanes fair or do they cater to those with higher income levels?

Georgia Express lanes offer an option for all travelers based on their own needs and desires, not on income level. Whether you're a transit rider enjoying quicker trip times, a commuter who chooses to pay a toll to avoid congestion, or a service provider who uses them to get from job to job more efficiently, Georgia Express lanes are available to everyone. Express lanes around the country show that they are used by people of all income levels.

Will tolls be removed once the express lanes are paid off?

No, express lanes are designed to offer another travel alternative in addition to the lanes that exist today. They rely on tolling not only to help pay for the construction, operation and maintenance, but to manage use in order to provide more reliable and predictable trip times for those who choose to travel in them.

How will money raised through tolling be used?

Toll revenue will pay for the construction, ongoing operation and maintenance of the Georgia Express lanes.

Why isn't the state using fuel taxes and federal funds to add new lanes instead of toll lanes?

There simply aren't enough funds available to pay for Georgia's extensive transportation needs. Toll revenue offsets construction, maintenance and operation costs, while preserving budget for other projects throughout the state. Further, it has been proven that simply adding more lanes does not provide a solution to congestion. Georgia Express lanes offer a true alternative, giving travelers a choice beyond existing roadways and greater control over their time and schedule.



OPERATIONS

Who owns and operates Georgia Express?

The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for the design, construction and maintenance of Georgia Express lanes. Operation of the lanes will be managed by the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA).

How are tolls collected on Georgia Express lanes?

Georgia Express does not use toll booths. Instead, all tolls are collected electronically through Peach Pass, a small electronic sticker that attaches to a vehicle's windshield. This technology, already in use on the I-85 Georgia Express lanes, allows travelers to maintain highway speed at all times. Complete information on Peach Pass is available at www.peachpass.com.

How do I use Georgia Express lanes?

In order to travel on Georgia Express lanes, a driver will need to obtain a Peach Pass electronic sticker for the vehicle and attach it to the windshield. When the driver travels through the express lane, the toll amount will automatically be deducted from the driver's pre-established account. Please visit www.peachpass.com or call 1-855-PCH-PASS (724-7277) for more information.

Will there be differences in Georgia Express lanes from corridor to corridor?

All Georgia Express lanes will operate in the same manner, but there will be variables designed to address specific needs or work within the constraints of each corridor. For example, the existing I-85 Express lanes are essentially part of the existing interstate, separated from general lanes by a striped buffer. Other projects in development, such as the Northwest Corridor Express and the I-75 South Metro Express project south of Atlanta will include all new lane construction that will be separated by a barrier.

Regardless of the design, all Georgia Express lanes projects will rely on electronic tolling and congestion-based pricing to manage traffic.

Will there be any differences in who can use Georgia Express lanes from corridor to corridor?

Georgia Express allows for some variance based on a number of factors. All policies are developed in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration and based on extensive analysis of how corridors are currently used, anticipated usage and other factors. Variables will address select users such as those with alternative fuel vehicles, carpools, vanpools or motorcycles. Each corridor will have clear signage on approved use, and as the lanes prepare to open, comprehensive information on each corridor will be available through SRTA's Peach Pass website at www.peachpass.com.

These lanes are described as limited access. What does that mean?

Express lanes are designed to help move traffic through heavily traveled corridors, especially during peak travel times like morning and evening rush hours. Limited access means that these lanes have select entrance points and bypass some exits along the interstate. This controls the number of vehicles coming in and out of the lanes, helping ensure they flow freely and prevent disruption to existing travel lanes. Clear signage ensures drivers are properly informed of access points and toll rates between those points.

TRANSIT

Why not invest in transit systems rather than more roads?

There is no single budget from which all types of projects are funded, and budgets are typically allocated for specific needs by the state legislature. Accordingly, funds used by the Georgia DOT for Georgia Express do not come from a budget that would be otherwise earmarked for transit. However, Georgia Express is an investment that supports transit. Dedicated express lanes offer speedier trip times to transit riders and greater reliability and predictability for transit operators. Improved service along these corridors makes transit a more attractive alternative, which can help reduce the number of vehicles on those routes.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

What happens if a vehicle stalls, breaks down or has an accident in the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

A shoulder is available in the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes so that a driver can safely pull out of the lane in the event of a vehicle stall or break down. HERO units will be patrolling the express lanes to help motorists and move vehicles to shoulders. If an accident occurs, emergency access gates will be located throughout the express lanes to allow first responders to quickly enter the lanes to assist. Gates are designed to allow fire trucks and standard vehicles, like an ambulance, to pull into the express lanes.

The project team continues to meet with local emergency responders to develop processes and procedures for responding to any incidents in the lanes once they open to traffic. Cameras that communicate with NaviGator and the Traffic Management Center (TMC) are also located throughout the lanes. TMC operators and Georgia DOT HEROs will monitor both the express lanes and general purpose lanes in the corridor.

