

# Northwest Corridor Express Lanes

## Frequently Asked Questions



## Project Overview

### What is the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes Project?

The Georgia Department of Transportation's (Georgia DOT) Northwest Corridor Express Lanes project adds 29.7 miles of express lanes along I-75 from Akers Mill Road to Hickory Grove Road and along I-575 from I-75 to Sixes Road in Cobb and Cherokee Counties.

Two new express lanes were built to the west of the existing lanes along I-75 between I-285 and I-575. From that interchange, one new express lane was added along I-75 north to Hickory Grove Road, and one new express lane was added along I-575 to Sixes Road.

These lanes are designed to offer drivers and transit customers the option to use the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes to bypass traffic congestion and provide more reliable trip times.

### How do the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes work?

These newly constructed, barrier-separated express lanes are managed by dynamic pricing, with the cost rising as demand increases during morning and evening peak travel times and decreasing during off-peak travel times. These reversible express lanes maximize commuter mobility options by operating southbound in the morning and northbound in the evening.

Drivers are able to access the express lanes from six interchanges along I-75: I-285, Terrell Mill Road, Roswell Road, I-575, Big Shanty Road, and Hickory Grove Road, as well as

three slip ramps along I-575, which allow commuters to enter or exit the facility from the general lanes on I-575 and I-75.

In order to use the express lanes, drivers must register and obtain a Peach Pass transponder through the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA). Placed inside the car, the Peach Pass will automatically deduct the correct express lanes fee for each trip in the express lanes.

### What was the schedule for the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

Construction for this project began in October 2014, and the express lanes opened to traffic on September 8, 2018.

### Who is able to use the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

All drivers with two axles and six wheels or less are able to use the express lanes if they register and obtain a Peach Pass. Regardless of the number of occupants in a car (e.g. solo driver, or driver and two passengers, etc.), commuters who wish to access the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes are required to pay a fee.

However, registered transit, vanpools, and emergency vehicles are exempt from paying a fee. Clear signage on how to use the system will be displayed along the corridor.

Information on obtaining and using the Peach Pass is available at [www.PeachPass.com](http://www.PeachPass.com) or by calling the Peach Pass Customer Service Center at 1-855-PCH-PASS (724-7277).



## What are the benefits of using the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

The Northwest Corridor Express Lanes offer drivers and transit customers a host of benefits, including:

- More reliable trip times
- Improved traffic flow
- More travel options for motorists and transit customers
- A more free-flowing trip
- Cost-free trips for transit riders and registered vanpools

## Who owns and operates the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

Georgia DOT managed the development of the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes through a public-private partnership with the Developer, Northwest Express Roadbuilders (NWER). NWER was responsible for the design and construction. Georgia DOT is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the roadway now that the express lanes have opened to traffic. Operation of the pricing aspects of the lanes, including all customer service functions related to the Peach Pass system, is managed by the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA).

## Are there other express lanes projects?

Yes. The Northwest Corridor Express Lanes are a part of the Georgia Express Lanes system, which is a network of express lanes that run alongside existing interstates in some of the most congested corridors around metro Atlanta. These lanes provide a choice for drivers to bypass congestion, provide a free option for transit operators, and provide more reliable trip times within these corridors.

In addition to the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes, the Georgia Express Lanes system includes the existing I-85 Express Lanes and the I-75 South Metro Express Lanes projects. An extension to the I-85 Express Lanes began construction in summer 2016 and is scheduled to open in 2018.

## What is dynamic-pricing?

The Northwest Corridor rates will be based on a “dynamic pricing” format, which increases the price during peak travel times and decreases the price during off-peak times. Dynamic rate pricing ensures express lanes provide more reliable trip times for those who choose to pay and for transit partners using the lanes. Dynamic pricing allows as many travelers as possible to use the lanes while still meeting expectations for free-flowing travel.



## Project Delivery Method

### How was this project delivered?

The Northwest Corridor Express Lanes project followed a Public Private Partnership (P3) Design-Build-Finance (DBF) delivery method.

A P3 is an arrangement between Georgia DOT and one or more private or public entities that provides one or more of the following to deliver a transportation project — planning, development, design, construction, reconstruction, extension, expansion, financing, operation, maintenance, and other services. The DBF project delivery allowed the State to transfer the project's design, construction, and a part of the initial financing responsibility to a private sector partner. This enables the State to leverage funding to accelerate project delivery as well as capture private sector innovations.

### Who was the private sector partner for the Northwest Corridor?

The private sector partner, responsible for design, construction and partial financing of the project, was the Northwest Express Roadbuilders (NWER), a joint venture of Archer Western and Hubbard Construction. The project contract with NWER was executed in November 2013.



## Project Funding

### What is the cost of the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes Project?

The total project cost estimate was \$834 million.

### How will money raised through dynamic pricing be used?

Dynamic pricing revenue pays for the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes' capital costs and pricing operation, maintenance, renewal and replacement costs.

### What will be done with any excess revenue from the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

Once all debt repayment is complete, any revenue above and beyond the amount required to fund ongoing operation and maintenance of the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes is available for other transportation needs.



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## Using The Northwest Corridor Express Lanes

### How are fees collected on the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?

The Northwest Corridor Express Lanes do not use toll booths. Instead, all fees are collected electronically using the Peach Pass, a small electronic sticker that adheres to a vehicle's windshield. This technology, already in use on the I-85 Express Lanes and I-75 South Metro Express Lanes, allows travelers to maintain optimum traveling speed at all times. Complete information on Peach Pass is available at [www.PeachPass.com](http://www.PeachPass.com).

### How do drivers obtain a Peach Pass?

All Georgia Express Lanes users, including the Northwest Corridor, can visit [www.PeachPass.com](http://www.PeachPass.com) or call the Peach Pass Customer Service Center at 1-855-PCH-PASS (724-

7277) to open a Peach Pass account and register their vehicle(s). The Pay n GO! Peach Pass can also be obtained at local retailers, including Walgreens and CVS.

Each vehicle in a household must be registered for a separate Peach Pass transponder. However, households with multiple vehicles can list up to ten vehicles on one Peach Pass personal account.

As an added benefit, Georgia has also partnered with Florida and North Carolina to allow travelers to use the Peach Pass with dynamic pricing systems in these states. In the coming years, the number of states in which the Peach Pass is interoperable will continue to expand. SRTA is currently negotiating with E-Z Pass, which encompasses express lane systems in 14 states, including New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

### Is there an option to obtain a Peach Pass without a credit or debit card?

Yes, the Pay n GO! Peach Pass is available for customers who wish to open a Peach Pass account with cash rather than an assigned debit or credit card. No personal or vehicle information is required for this purchase. Much like a prepaid calling card, the Pay n GO! Peach Pass can be purchased and reloaded with cash for credits (\$20-\$500) at participating CVS and Walgreens stores. The Pay n GO! Peach Pass Starter Kit includes a Peach Pass transponder and a reloadable card. There is a one-time fee of \$2.50 when purchasing the starter kit. Each time money is applied to the reloadable card, a \$1.50 convenience fee will be included.

### How much does a Peach Pass cost?

The Peach Pass transponder is free when obtained from SRTA. A minimum prepayment of \$20 and a credit or debit card for future payment is required to set up a Peach Pass account. Walgreens and CVS stores charge a convenience fee for the Pay n GO! Peach Pass.



## Incident Management

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

In the event of a vehicle stall or breakdown on the express lanes, drivers should use the emergency shoulder and call 511 for HERO assistance. HERO units will patrol express lanes to assist motorists who may have experienced problems with their vehicles or been involved in an accident. If an accident

occurs, emergency access gates, located throughout the express lanes, allow first responders to quickly enter the lanes to assist. These gates are designed to allow fire trucks and first responders to easily access the express lanes.

Cameras that communicate with NaviGator and the Transportation 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.



## Transit

### **What transit systems will be able to use the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes?**

Public transit providers that operate in this corridor including Xpress, CobbLinc, the Cherokee Area Transportation System, and state-registered vanpools will be able to use Northwest Corridor Express Lanes free of charge.

### **Are transit riders required to pay anything beyond normal fares on routes that access express lanes?**

No, there are no additional costs to access the lanes for public transit riders, state-registered vanpools, or public transit providers.

For more information about the Georgia Express Lanes system, please visit [www.dot.ga.gov/expresslanes](http://www.dot.ga.gov/expresslanes).