



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NEW RAMP METERS ON DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR

ATLANTA, Ga. – The Georgia Department of Transportation will sequentially activate 11 new meters on I-75/I-85 (Downtown Connector) entrance ramps between University Avenue and Freedom Parkway. The first three meters will be turned on during afternoon rush hour on Monday, October 20. The remaining eight will be activated over the next two days, with the entire corridor operational by Wednesday October 22.

Ramp meters are turned on just before heavy rush hour traffic begins, and stay on until traffic begins to subside at the end of the peak period. They resemble standard traffic lights, and are installed approximately two-thirds of the way down the entrance ramps. Every 3-5 seconds the meter cycles from red to green, allowing one vehicle at a time to merge onto the freeway. On two-lane ramps, the left and right lanes have alternating green lights, so the left lane goes while the right is stopped, and vice versa.

“Although motorists will spend a little extra time on the ramp, they should see a decrease in overall travel time,” Georgia DOT Operations Director Steve Henry said. “We’ll monitor these new ramp meters very carefully. If traffic starts to back up on the ramp, sensors will speed up the meters to allow more vehicles to move through. If our cameras show traffic spilling out onto the surface streets, we can turn them off completely.”

Seventy-two ramp meters currently operate in metro Atlanta:

- 4 on I-75 northbound between Midtown and Cumberland Mall (operating since 1996)
- 4 on I-75/85 southbound (operating since 2005)
- 14 on I-285 (north side)
- 11 on I-85 (northeast)
- 11 on I-285 (east side)
- 8 on I-75 (south side)
- 20 on I-75 (northwest side)

They have collectively reduced average rush-hour commute times in these corridors by significant margins. Early studies show the strongest results to date on I-285 westbound between GA 400 and I-75. Other benefits include reductions in merging accidents and vehicle emissions.

“There will be a short learning curve period in the first few days as the public adjusts,” Georgia DOT Atlanta Regional Media Coordinator Mark McKinnon said. “We realize that we may need to tweak specific meters. Please bear with us, and keep in mind that there is no one ‘silver bullet’ solution to eliminate congestion. Ramp meters are just one of several tools that can help fight it.”

Ramp meters have been used for over 20 years in more than 20 cities across the country. They are placed on entrance ramps to help control the flow of traffic from the surface streets onto the freeway. Without metering, vehicles push their way all at once onto the interstate in a disorderly and potentially dangerous manner. Once these vehicles reach the merge point, they force their way into the travel lanes, causing additional congestion due to stop-and-go merging activity on the freeway. When this happens on already traffic-heavy freeways, there is a total breakdown of free-flow near the on-ramps, which has a ripple effect on traffic for many miles. Even with no stalls or accidents, heavy on-ramp traffic causes congestion that both extends and continues throughout the rush-hour.

The new ramps that will be operational during the week of October 20th are:

- University Avenue to I-75/I-85 north and southbound
- Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard to I-75/I-85 southbound

- Pulliam Street to I-75/I-85 southbound
- Fulton Street to I-75/I-85 northbound
- 10th Street to I-75/I-85 southbound
- MLK Drive to I-75/I-85 northbound
- J. W. Dobbs Avenue to I-75/I-85 northbound
- Spring Street / Linden Avenue to I-75/I-85 northbound
- Freedom Parkway to I-75/I-85 northbound (two meters)

The Georgia DOT urges travelers to call 511 for updated information about this or any other construction project on interstates and state routes. Georgia 511 is a free phone service that provides real-time traffic and travel information statewide, such as traffic conditions, incidents, lane closures, and delays due to inclement weather. Callers also can transfer to operators to request assistance or report incidents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More information is available at www.511ga.org.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is committed to providing a safe, seamless and sustainable transportation system that supports Georgia's economy and is sensitive to both its citizens and its environment. For general information on the Georgia DOT, please visit our Web site (www.dot.ga.gov).

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