



PRESS RELEASE

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I-85 OPEN TO TRAFFIC - FIVE WEEKS EARLY

USDOT Sec. Elaine Chao joins Gov. Deal, Georgia DOT and state officials for ceremonial opening

ATLANTA – The I-85 Bridges over Piedmont Road in metro Atlanta opened to traffic on May 13 - just six weeks after a March 30 fire and collapse closed the corridor. The opening occurred five weeks earlier than Georgia DOT's original completion commitment.

While U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Sec. Elaine Chao, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell McMurry and state officials celebrated the milestone opening today at the rebuild site on Piedmont Road, metro Atlanta motorists, who rose to the challenges in their daily commutes, were no doubt pleased as well.

“The workers who helped to make today possible - the men and women who worked tirelessly to build this bridge - have impressed the nation and earned our thanks,” said Secretary Chao. “The real heroes are right here, among us. Each one of them represents America’s best.”

With some 243,000 vehicles traveling this major route into and out of the City of Atlanta daily, Georgia DOT worked non-stop to rebuild and replace the 700-foot section of roadway and to re-open the corridor quickly and safely. In total, 13 million pounds of debris was removed, and 13 columns, 61 beams and four caps were replaced. A total of 505,296 pounds of steel and 2,103 cubic yards of concrete were used in the rebuild. Overall, 54,000 hours of manpower went into the construction resulting in an earlier than anticipated completion date, which generated an estimated \$27 million savings for motorists.

“I truly believe that Georgia’s ability to face this challenge head on and overcome it is a testament to the willpower and resolve of our citizens,” said Gov. Deal. “I am proud of the response and collaboration shown by all throughout the entirety of this rebuild.”

“Time was critical and the clock was ticking. Every day counted for motorists who use this corridor to get to and from their jobs and other activities, and for businesses needing to serve their

customers. We were very aware of the urgency,” McMurry said. “I have never been more proud of the Georgia Department of Transportation and the tireless efforts of our employees.”

To meet an aggressive schedule, time efficiencies were addressed in all stages of the process. C.W. Matthews Contracting Company, the chosen contractor, was offered incentives for early completion. To streamline the repairs, work was done concurrently, 24 hours a day seven days a week. The federal emergency relief was also streamlined, in part because the replacement was consistent with the footprint that was previously there and did not require a lengthy federal review. In addition, components were prefabricated and accelerated curing concrete was used as well as revised permitting, which allowed for the replacement beams to be delivered to the site 24/7.

Fortunately, no injuries or deaths resulted from the I-85 incident and the Commissioner acknowledged first responders for their bravery and quick thinking in preventing casualties.

“We appreciate the support we received from Gov. Deal and Sec. Chao. To our federal, state and local partners, members of the State Transportation Board, and to our employees - a heartfelt thank you,” McMurry said. “Above all, thank you to the people we serve—the citizens of Georgia—for your understanding, patience and resilience.”

Now that traffic is flowing on I-85, Georgia DOT asks that drivers consider continuing their use of public transit and the commute options they employed during the last six weeks. **Use these resources to help you plan your commute:**

- [Georgia Commute Options](#) for resources and information about cash incentives for using commute options
- www.itsmarta.com for MARTA routes and schedules
- www.xpressga.com for GRTA express routes

The public is urged to “know before you go.” For real-time information on active construction, incidents and more, call 511 or visit 511ga.org before you get into your car.

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