

SmartMove...

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE TOLLING INDUSTRY



www.georgiatolls.com
(855) 724-7277

Agency

State Road & Tollway Authority (SRTA), Georgia

Project

I-85 Express Lanes – HOV to HOT Conversion

Purpose

The I-85 was originally built in the 1950s as part of the Eisenhower Interstate System. Before the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, GA, High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes in both directions were implemented on I-85 and other major interstate corridors by reducing the width of existing adjacent lanes. Even with these non-priced managed lanes, congestion remained a problem for the High-Occupancy Toll corridor, and it was projected to get worse. SRTA opened its High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane conversion in October 2011 to offer drivers the option of paying a toll for more reliable travel times, and to open access to single-occupant vehicles that were not previously eligible to use the HOV lanes.

Vital Stats

- 16 miles in each direction in Metro Atlanta.
- 88 percent customer satisfaction after 12 months.

History

Before the HOT lanes opened, approximately 90 percent of the traffic through the corridor consisted of single-occupancy vehicles that had no access to the HOV lanes. The I-85 Express Lanes offer Peach Pass users the choice of saving time every day, paying a toll when timing matters most to them, or relying entirely on the general purpose lanes. The HOT lane is still toll-exempt for registered vehicles with three or more occupants.

Since I-85 was only the second toll road opened in Georgia in the last 20 years, and the state's first traffic demand management program, public education was

crucial to position tolling as part of the solution to highway

congestion. SRTA organized more than 120 public outreach, community and municipal meetings or events on the project, met with legislators who represented districts along the corridor, coordinated messaging with key project partners, produced a video in which satisfied users told their stories and held multiple media briefings, including special sessions for traffic reporters.

Despite weeks and months devoted to setting public expectations, the project encountered resistance when the HOT lanes first opened. SRTA responded by sharing daily data on the highest and lowest toll rates, travel time data and other trip related information. The Authority responded to queries within 24 to 48 hours and introduced an online feedback tool to welcome customer comments on how to make their daily commute efficient. Within six months, the performance data became the main focus for news coverage of the new lane.



SmartMove...State Road & Tollway Authority (SRTA), Georgia



Results

SRTA issued 75,000 new transponders before the Express Lanes opened, compared to an original target of 35,000 to 45,000 for the entire first year of operation. By early 2013, Peach Pass issuance had reached 220,000 new transponders and has shown no sign of levelling off. After 12 months, the average daily and monthly toll rates were less than \$1.50, with a peak of \$6.50 for the most congested peak time, at the height of morning rush hour. A recent third party survey showed a customer satisfaction rate of 88 percent among Peach Pass account holders who use the I-85 Express Lanes.

Key Success Factors

“Every time SRTA staff spoke, we were upbeat and transparent and made it clear that we wanted to hear from people,” said SRTA’s Director of Marketing and Communications, Malika Reed Wilkins. “Regardless of who was speaking, we all had a positive energy, we all spoke the truth and we welcomed the feedback.”

The SmartMove series highlights innovative and proven solutions to funding and maintaining transportation infrastructure. Visit www.IBTTA.org/MAF for more IBTTA member SmartMoves.

Join the Conversation

www.IBTTA.org | [@IBTTA](https://twitter.com/IBTTA) | [#TollRoads](https://twitter.com/IBTTA)



1146 19th Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 659-4620

The International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association (IBTTA) is the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the businesses that serve them. Founded in 1932, IBTTA has members in more than 20 countries and on six continents. Through advocacy, thought leadership and education, members are implementing state-of-the-art, innovative user-based transportation financing solutions to address the critical infrastructure challenges of the 21st century.