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EXPRESS TOLL LANES: MANAGING CONGESTION SUCCESS STORIES

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National / International Trend

Express Toll Lanes and related traffic management tools are being used throughout the country and internationally as a way to deal with traffic congestion.

- Express Toll Lanes and related traffic management concepts are being used in:
  - California
  - Florida
  - Texas
  - Ontario, Canada
  - London, England
  - Oslo and Trondheim, Norway
- Also being actively considered by growing number of states, including by:
  - Colorado
  - Georgia
  - Illinois
  - Minnesota
  - New Jersey
  - New York
  - North Carolina
  - Oregon
  - **Virginia – for portions of Capital Beltway and I-95**

SR 91 Express Lanes in California

A 10-mile segment of SR 91, providing two tolled median lanes in each direction between SR 55 in Anaheim and the Orange/Riverside County Line.

The corridor is one of the most heavily traveled routes in Southern California, carrying over 250,000 vehicles per day.

Background:

- Opened in 1995.
- Funded and built entirely through private investments, being the first project born from California's Assembly Bill (AB) 680 legislation passed in 1989.
- A 35-year franchise agreement was signed so that a private entity would operate the facility on leased median right-of-way. However, Orange County Transportation Authority recently purchased the facility outright, allowing more flexibility to maximize throughput instead of profits.
- The tolling structures have evolved in response to changing traffic conditions in the corridor and public input.

Public Outreach and User Profiles:

- During both the Planning Phase and Design Phase, comprehensive surveys of travelers and businesses were conducted. Information is continually updated through the use of surveys.
- Focus groups were initiated and continue to meet, involving community, political, government and industry interests.
- Press releases, newsletters, radio advertisements, and signage along the route continue to be used to communicate the news of the lanes.
- Based on survey feedback, females between the ages of 30 and 50 are more likely than any other group to use the express lanes.

Quotes from the Commuting Public:

- *"My 22-mile commute was reduced from 1 hour to 25 minutes each way."*
- *"As a small business owner, utilizing 'Express Lanes' has really helped me economically."*
- *"Saving 30 to 40 minutes on the freeway gets me home to my kids that much faster."*

Pertinent Facts and Observations:

- The Express Lanes are separated from the general purpose lanes by a striped buffer and plastic pylons.
- Customer satisfaction is over 90%, based on surveys.
- Time Savings is cited as the primary benefit, with an average of more than 30-minutes saved per trip.
- Safety was also noted as a key benefit.
- Passholders can manage their accounts on-line.

Tolling Strategy:

- Electronic Tolling, using 'FasTrak' Transponders (compatible with other 'FasTrak' facilities in southern California).
- The fee charged changes by the time of day, depending on the congestion level, to maintain free-flow.
- Toll rates range from $1 to $6.25, and are deducted from accounts via overhead gantries while traveling full speed.

Maryland Department of Transportation

Take a virtual 'drive' on the facility, and get more information: http://www.91expresslanes.com

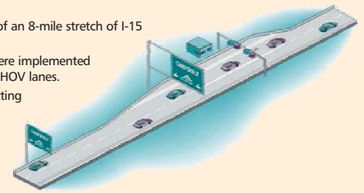
I-15 FasTrak in California

Two reversible lanes separated by concrete barriers, located in the median of an 8-mile stretch of I-15 between SR 56 and SR 163, in the northern suburbs of San Diego.

Faced with increasing congestion and limited funding, the FasTrak Lanes were implemented to allow Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs) to pay for access to the existing HOV lanes.

The fee is collected through an electronic transponder, automatically deducting charges from the user's account.

A Dynamic Tolling System, meaning the charge varies based on available capacity in the FasTrak lanes, with signs showing the current charge before drivers choose to enter the lanes.



Background:

- The I-15 HOV Facility first opened in 1988. Due to observed underutilization, the lanes were converted to ExpressPass toll lanes in 1996.
- The toll collection technologies have evolved over time since the opening, beginning with the issuance of $50 monthly permits. In 1998, variably priced per-trip tolls replaced the flat fee and the lanes were converted to a 'FasTrak' facility to allow users from other toll facilities within California.
- This Dynamic Tolling System was the first of its kind in the world.

Strong Evidence of Overall Public Support:

91% of users and 66% of non-users approve of the program, both agreeing that the FasTrak lanes reduce overall congestion within the corridor.

Pertinent Facts and Observations:

- On normal commute days, the toll ranges between $.50 and $4, but can be raised to $8 in severe congestion.
- FasTrak lanes are operational during weekdays only.
- Total vehicles using the FasTrak lanes have increased by roughly 50% since the tolls were implemented in 1996.
- The I-15 FasTrak lanes generate approximately $2 million annually that is used to pay for transportation improvements in the corridor, like the Inland Breeze Bus Service (right).

Quotes from the Commuting Public:

- *"All the stress of commuting is gone. That's so important to me… the safety benefit. Not having to be in that bumper-to bumper traffic makes all the difference to me."*
- *"I thought that to use FasTrak you had to pay a fee each month. When I found out that it is pay as you go, I hopped right on it. It's very convenient to be able to choose when to use the lanes."*
- *"I need to meet clients and visit branches and FasTrak helps bring structure to my schedule."*

Information Website: http://argo.sandag.org/fastrak/index.html

Queue Jump in Florida

A Traffic Management Facility used to bypass areas where congestion is severe and occurs in a predictable pattern. Tolls will vary by time of day and be tied in with the County's existing toll collection system (LEEWAY). Once implemented, it will be the first of its kind in the U.S.

The study, funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and Lee County, involves highly congested locations within Lee County where Queue Jump facilities could realistically be implemented. The map at right shows three highly congested intersections where Queue Jump facilities would provide new capacity and convenience available to everyone, but users would have to pay a toll.

What is Queue Jump?

Queue Jump is defined as a new road facility, such as elevated ramps or at-grade lanes that can be used by motorists stopped in traffic (or queued at an intersection) to bypass the congestion. Queue Jumps provide the motorist a choice – sit in traffic or bypass by paying a toll.

How Will It Work?

Tolls will vary by time of day or degree of congestion. They may also vary depending on the vehicle occupancy.

Toll collection will occur electronically without any manual collection booths. The Queue Jump's tolling system will be tied into the County's existing LeeWay system (see below), allowing the new concept to be brought on-line quickly and for a reasonable cost.

Lee County's LEEWAY System:

In August 1998, Lee County implemented variable toll pricing on the Midpoint Memorial and Cape Coral bridges.

The program provides motorists with a 50 percent discount off the $1 toll during selected off-peak hours as an incentive to change the timing of trips from peak to off-peak times.

The transponder is automatically read as the motorist passes through the toll plaza and the discounted toll is deducted from the customer's prepaid account.

Project Website: http://leewayinfo.com

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