

Providing New Transportation Opportunities in Florida

Express lanes, dynamic tolling critical to Florida's managed-lane strategy

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As part of the Florida Department of Transportation's interconnected network of express lanes, the 95 Express project in Miami-Dade County has created momentum to continue planned extensions. All photos and diagrams: Florida Department of Transportation.

In 2011, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), under the leadership of Governor Rick Scott and the Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, created the Florida Transportation Vision for the 21st Century. This vision establishes a bold roadmap for advancing the most innovative transportation system in the country. Many strategies and innovative tools are part of this vision, expanding choices for users and making our transportation system more efficient. The availability of express lanes on our most congested corridors is one of these important tools.

In an effort to get the most capacity out of our existing highways, states throughout the nation have employed a wide variety of "managed-lane" strategies. As part of these strategies, designated special lanes within a highway facility, or sometimes all lanes of an entire facility, are managed in response to changing conditions. These strategies may include controlling accessibility to these lanes, vehicle eligibility, pricing, or a combination of these tools. Examples of managed lanes include high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes,

truck-only lanes, bus rapid-transit lanes, reversible lanes, and express lanes.

"Express lanes" is the term used in Florida to describe the state's approach to implementing managed lanes strategies. These barrier-separated tolled lanes within an existing highway allow congestion to be managed by limiting the number of access points to the special lanes, and by charging variable toll rates throughout the day, depending on congestion levels. Tolled express lanes have proven to be successful on highly congested facilities, providing individuals a choice of paying a toll to bypass congestion and experience more reliable travel times. Express lanes will be a necessary solution for many Florida urban areas, with plans for express lanes in southeast Florida, Tampa, Jacksonville, and Orlando.

Implementation of express lanes in Florida is made possible by recent federal and state laws that allow tolling of new capacity on existing facilities. This new capability is critically important to addressing Florida's long-term transportation needs. In traditional freeway capacity expansion projects, non-tolled, general-purpose

lanes are built, and may provide only 20 years of acceptable level of service. A dynamically tolled express lane, however, can adapt to future conditions using technology that adjusts toll rates, and provides individuals with the ability to make travel choices based on real-time traffic information. The driver can compare the estimated tolled and non-tolled travel times, and decide whether the current toll rate is worth the travel time savings and reliability of the express lanes.

At the heart of the system is dynamic tolling. When sensors detect the express lanes are beginning to reach capacity, the price increases incrementally, thereby reducing the number of drivers that choose the express lane option, and maintaining reliable travel speeds on the tolled lanes. As the express lanes begin to stabilize, the price is adjusted downward accordingly, enticing more drivers to choose the express lanes. This constant balancing process is repeated continually throughout the day. Dynamic pricing on the express lanes even benefits those who choose never to use the lanes, because when drivers divert to the express lanes, they free up more capacity in the general-purpose lanes.

As Florida advances its new transportation vision, FDOT is beginning to form an interconnected network of express lanes. The success of the 95 Express project in Miami-Dade County has created momentum to continue planned extensions along I-95 in Broward and Palm Beach counties. Expansion of the express-lane concept encompasses other facilities in the southeast Florida region, including I-595, I-75, and the Palmetto Expressway, creating a need to develop a Regional Concept of Operations for the Southeast Florida Express Lane Network (ELN). Successful implementation of a regional network requires a high degree of coordination among all regional stakeholders and agreement on a framework for policy



Future network of express lanes in Southeast Florida.

decisions on how the network will function and operate. The framework must define roles and responsibilities for all involved.

The Florida Department of Transportation, in partnership with expressway authorities, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, and others, is building on its successes in southeast Florida by developing statewide policy guidance for all types of managed lanes. This guidance will provide a structure to coordinate plans and encourage consistent business rules, including these guiding principles:

- Express lanes have the purpose of managing congestion and creating

additional transportation options for drivers.

- Additional capacity on limited-access facilities on the state highway system will be dynamically tolled while maintaining the same number of non-tolled lanes.
- Toll revenue may be used for the operations and maintenance of express bus service routes operating within the express lanes.
- Multi-axle vehicles (vehicles with three or more axles) will not be permitted to use express lanes.
- Except where toll exemptions are granted by law, exemptions will not be provided on express lane facilities.

- Express lanes will use only electronic toll collection via Florida's SUNPASS.

The Florida Transportation Vision for the 21st Century lays the foundation for a future that maximizes existing infrastructure including our many concrete bridges. It is a future that uses evolving technologies to create a more advanced and efficient transportation system for Florida residents and visitors. Express lanes and other advanced strategies are important tools helping to fuel this transformation, and providing a new set of flexible choices to enhance the quality of life for transportation users in the Sunshine State. 

Funding Expansion

Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature recognize that good transportation infrastructure is a key ingredient for a thriving economy. Governor Scott recently signed the FY 2013-14 General Appropriations Act into law which provides \$9.4 billion for transportation in Florida.

Florida Transportation Budget

- **FY 2013-14: \$9.4 billion**
- **FY 2012-13: \$8.2 billion**
- **FY 2011-12: \$7.9 billion**
- **FY 2010-11: \$6.9 billion**
- **FY 2009-10: \$6.5 billion**

More information can be found in Governor Scott's May 20, 2013, press release on the transportation budget located at <http://www.flgov.com/governor-scott-florida-families-first-budget-makes-strategic-transportation-improvements/>

NORTHEAST REGION

Interstates 95 & 295: Jacksonville Area

CENTRAL REGION

Interstate 4: Orlando Area

Interstates 4, 27, & 275: Tampa Bay Area

SOUTHEAST REGION

Interstate 95: Broward & Palm Beach Counties

Interstate 595: Broward County

Interstate 75: Broward & Miami-Dade County

826: Palmetto Expressway in Miami-Dade County

Future location of express lanes in Florida.