



EXPRESS LANES MISCONCEPTIONS

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) compiled a list of the most frequently found misconceptions and clarifies them as follows:

Why express lanes on I-75/Palmetto Expressway?

The existing two-way Average Daily Traffic count on the Palmetto Expressway ranges from 209,100 to 223,000 vehicles per day and it is expected to increase to a range from 344,000 to 404,000 vehicles per day by 2040, including the express lanes. The existing two-way Average Daily Traffic count on I-75 in Miami-Dade County ranges from 114,000 to 127,000 vehicles per day and it is expected to increase to a range from 221,000 to 229,000 vehicles per day by 2040, including the express lanes. The success of 95 Express proved that the implementation of express lanes improves the traffic flow and benefits everyone in the highway. Thus, the Palmetto Express project will add tolled express lanes along the SR 826/Palmetto Expressway from West Flagler Street to NW 154 Street and along I-75 from the Palmetto Expressway to NW 170 Street in Miami-Dade County. The Palmetto Express project will provide continuity to the I-75 express lanes currently under construction by FDOT District Four, from NW 170 Street in Miami-Dade County to I-595 in Broward County.

Do express lanes move traffic more efficiently than HOV lanes?

It is proven that express lanes move traffic faster and more efficiently than traditional High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Prior to the implementation of express lane on I-95 performance numbers showed that during peak times the former HOV lanes were operating at an average of 20 m.p.h. southbound and 18 m.p.h. northbound while general purpose lanes were operating at an average of 15 m.p.h. southbound and 18 m.p.h. northbound. These figures indicated that the former HOV lanes were not providing carpoolers or transit riders with a meaningful travel benefit when compared to the general purpose lanes. On I-95 the conversion of the HOV lanes to tolled express lanes improved the average travel peak period speeds by approximately 300%. This improved mobility and transit services reliability significantly and thus bus ridership increased by 286% compared to before the bus rapid transit launch. Significant travel improvement on express lanes comes as a result of several techniques, one of which includes the express lanes' congestion pricing mechanism (dynamic tolling) which is able to manage traffic demand in real-time. It allows the high occupancy vehicles to ride the express lanes, but it actively manages the flow by allowing single occupancy drivers to use the surplus capacity in the express lanes if they choose to pay the toll when their time is more valuable than the toll they might pay.

Do express lanes benefit only those who choose to pay the toll?

Express lanes projects benefit all drivers on the highway. By moving more vehicles at more efficient rates on the express lanes, the condition on the general purpose lanes or “toll-free lanes” also improves, providing greater mobility for everyone on the highway, including commercial vehicles. It should also be noted that on the 95 Express project in Miami-Dade County recent figures show the average speed doubling in the general purpose lanes during peak periods in the peak periods’ direction. The speed improvements on the general purpose lanes results in significantly reduced traffic congestion proving that express lanes benefit all drivers on the highway. Additionally, the express lanes are provided as an option for drivers who choose to pay for using the lanes. However, commuters who do not choose to pay to use the express lanes still receive a significant benefit in the form of increased incidents management resources, as well as improved travel speeds and reduced traffic congestion on the general purpose lanes.

Do higher toll amounts mean better service in the express lanes?

A higher toll amount does not mean that better service is to be expected in the express lanes. On the contrary, it means service levels are on a decline because the express lanes are reaching capacity. High tolls means there are too many drivers entering the express lanes at the same time, and they are getting filled up too quickly. Tolls are increased to discourage more motorists from entering the express lanes to avoid a possible breakdown in speeds and services. Lower toll amounts mean that the express lanes are operating at free-flow conditions and therefore better service should be expected.

Are all express lanes projects basically the same?

All express lanes projects do not work in the same way. Although they all work to reduce congestion, they may each provide a different combination of services that are unique to the highway or community they are serving. All express lanes projects in Florida use dynamic tolling and possibly other cost-efficient transportation management techniques to improve the mobility and safety of a highway system as a common goal. However, each project may provide a unique combination of services or techniques. For example, while all express lanes projects will utilize dynamic tolling they may or may not provide direct transit services, and/or carpool incentives, ramp signaling, road widening, among others.

Do express lanes projects work just like regular toll roads?

Express lanes projects do not work in the same way as regular toll road projects do. Express lanes projects use a traffic management technique called dynamic tolling that increase mobility on the express lanes to help reduce overall congestion on the highway. Unlike regular toll roads, dynamic tolling is applied to one or two lanes on the highway (express lanes) to provide an option to drivers who choose to use these lanes. Toll amounts increase based on the level of demand on the express lanes and decrease as demand goes down. Regular toll roads typically employ static tolls on all the lanes without providing a choice or improved reliability for use. Additionally, express lanes projects usually offer ramp signaling benefits.

Is the cost of operating and maintaining express lanes the same as a regular toll road?

The cost associated with express lanes projects are different from those of regular toll road jobs because they require enhanced traffic management services and software to operate. The technologies used to manage these projects impose unique costs. Additionally, these projects have specific performance measures that require enhanced incident management resources, enforcement measures, traffic monitoring services and others.

Does the toll you pay on the express lanes guarantees a minimum speed of 45 m.p.h.?

The toll paid when using the express lanes does not guarantee that a specific speed benefit will be received in return. Express lanes projects offer more reliable trip times for those who choose to use the express lanes, especially during weekday rush hour periods. This improved reliability also benefits operations on the general purpose lanes and therefore allow all drivers to enjoy improved speeds along all lanes on the highway.

Should express lanes be dedicated bus lanes only?

Dedicated bus lanes would not be a better option than express lanes to improve travel performance on the highway for all drivers. As in the case of HOV lanes, dedicated bus lanes would not make good use of the surplus capacity within that lane. Express lanes allow long distance drivers the option of using these lanes if they choose to pay the toll for more reliable travel time. Dedicated bus lanes would not give all drivers this option. Thus, vehicles that could be using the surplus capacity in the dedicated bus lanes would be forced to use the general purpose lanes slowing down traffic in those lanes.

Transit was a key component to the development of I-95 Express Phase 1 pilot program and we can see the value of that component through transit ridership on 95 Express, both in Miami-Dade Transit and for Broward County Transit. But transit is only a component of express lanes systems and is not entirely responsible for its success. An overriding factor contributing to the success of express lanes is the option of individual long distance drivers to pay a variable toll for more reliable travel time. Palmetto Express and 75 Express will provide transit options from the BBT Center in Broward County to the NW 74 Street Metro Rail Station in Miami-Dade County. This option will promote multi-modal uses, which lessens the number of cars on the road and has a positive impact on the environment.

Are express lanes projects used to generate revenue?

Express lanes projects are not implemented with the sole purpose of generating revenue. The primary goal of most express lanes projects is to reduce congestion for all drivers on the highway by implementing a combination of real-time traffic management techniques as a cost-efficient alternative to traditional highway-widening type projects. The revenue generated through these projects is typically used to offset related operational costs such as traffic monitoring, incident management, enforcement, and maintenance.

Value of Express Lanes:

- Benefits all drivers on the highway by moving traffic faster and more efficiently
- Paying the toll is optional. Drivers may choose to pay the toll to use the express lanes or drive toll-free on the general purpose lanes and still receive benefits from the improved travel speed
- Offer reliable bus rapid transit service
- Separates long distance travel from short distance travel, thus reducing lane changes and opportunity for accidents
- No restrictions based on the number of passengers in the vehicle as in the case of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes
- Offer enhanced incident management resources, traffic monitoring services

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PALMETTO EXPRESS, PLEASE VISIT:

www.palmettoexpresslanes.com

CONTACT: Maria Camacho, Community Outreach Specialist

PHONE: 305-731-7699

E-MAIL: maria.camacho@qcausa.com