



Triangle Expressway

Roadway Operations Statistics Report

2023 Fourth Quarter
October - December

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Introduction

Purpose

The North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA) presents the operations statistics for the Triangle Expressway during the fourth quarter (October – December) of 2023. The report includes data related to traffic volumes, roadway operations, and maintenance. The statistics will allow for future analysis to identify quarterly and annual trends over time, providing a quantifiable method to track performance.

Project

The Triangle Expressway is an 18.8-mile toll road that extends the partially completed “Outer Loop” around the greater Raleigh, North Carolina area from I-40 to N.C. 55 Bypass. The six-lane, controlled-access toll facility relieves congestion on N.C. 55 while improving access to the Research Triangle Park by reducing travel times for commuters residing to the south and east. The Triangle Expressway is currently comprised of two sections: Toll N.C. 885 and Toll N.C. 540.

Toll N.C. 885 includes 3.4 miles of toll road between I-40 and Toll N.C. 540. This section of the Triangle Expressway includes interchanges at Hopson Road, Davis Drive, and Toll N.C. 540. It opened to toll-free traffic on December 8, 2011; tolling on this section began on January 3, 2012. With the opening of the East End Connector in Durham, this section was renamed from Toll N.C. 147 to Toll N.C. 885 on June 30, 2022.

Toll N.C. 540 includes 15.4 miles of toll road between N.C. 54 in western Cary and the N.C. 55 Bypass near the Town of Holly Springs. The section from N.C. 54 to U.S. 64 opened to general traffic (toll-free) on August 1, 2012, and toll collection started on August 2, 2012. This section includes interchanges at N.C. 54, N.C. 55, Green Level West Road, and U.S. 64. On February 3rd, 2020, a new interchange at Morrisville Parkway between N.C. 55 and Green Level West Road was opened to motorists.

The section from U.S. 64 to N.C. 55 Bypass opened to general traffic (toll-free) on December 20, 2012, and toll collection started on January 2, 2013. This section includes interchanges at S. Salem Street, U.S. 1, and N.C. 55 Bypass. On April 3, 2017, a new interchange at Veridea Parkway was opened in this last section of Toll N.C. 540.

The Triangle Expressway utilizes an all-electronic, non-stop tolling system where there are no toll plazas at which drivers stop and pay cash tolls. Instead, free-flow toll zones are employed where vehicles are detected while traveling at highway speeds. Payments are accepted through an Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) program called NC Quick Pass® or a video billing program called Bill by Mail.

NCTA toll zones are located along the Triangle Expressway at mainline, ramp, and loop locations. An illustration of the Triangle Expressway can be seen in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: Triangle Expressway System Map

Traffic Statistics

Traffic Statistics

Current and historical traffic data is collected and stored using roadside microwave vehicle detectors (MVDs) installed throughout the Triangle Expressway, providing an overview of the roadway's current utilization. The data is analyzed to identify trends that could more accurately predict future utilization.

It should be noted that due to the state of emergency declaration on March 10, 2020, in response to novel coronavirus, travel and gatherings were restricted statewide. This state of emergency was lifted August 15, 2022. Traffic statistics continue to be impacted by the shift to remote work and may not be representative of historical utilization trends.

Average Weekday Traffic (AWT)

Traffic volume data is collected at all ramps and mainline segments between interchanges. The location of interchanges along the Triangle Expressway can be seen in *Figure 2*. Typically, there is a large difference between peak and off-peak volumes, as well as between weekday and weekend volumes. This gap becomes significantly larger on Triangle Expressway because it tends to have a much higher percentage of traffic on weekdays during peak hours. For this reason, Average Weekday Traffic (AWT) is reported instead of Average Daily Traffic (ADT). AWT is a measure of the average daily traffic collected on a typical Monday through Friday over a designated time period.

Data collected by the MVDs is utilized to present AWT along the facility in *Figures 3 to 15*. It should be noted, that if an MVD fails to provide reliable data (meeting the established threshold) for at least five days in a month, then "NO DATA" is reported for that MVD. Reliability of MVD devices is monitored daily by comparing volumes with transaction counts and historical volumes. Maintenance tickets are submitted if MVD devices do not meet established thresholds.

Figure 2: Triangle Expressway Interchange Map

Figure 3: Toll N.C. 885 at I-40 Interchange AWT

Figure 4: Toll N.C. 885 at Hopson Rd.

Figure 5: Toll N.C. 885 at Davis Dr.

Figure 6: Toll N.C. 540 at N.C. 54 Interchange AWT

Figure 7: Toll N.C. 540 at Toll N.C. 885 Interchange AWT

Figure 8: Toll N.C. 540 at N.C. 55 Interchange AWT

Figure 9: Toll N.C. 540 at Morrisville Pkwy. Interchange AWT

Figure 10: Toll N.C. 540 at Green Level West Rd. Interchange AWT

Figure 11: Toll N.C. 540 at U.S. 64 Interchange AWT

Figure 12: Toll N.C. 540 at South Salem St. Interchange AWT

Figure 13: Toll N.C. 540 at U.S. 1 Interchange AWT

Figure 14: Toll N.C. 540 at Veridea Pkwy. Interchange AWT

Figure 15: Toll N.C. 540 at N.C. 55 Bypass Interchange AWT

Roadway Safety Statistics

Roadway Safety Statistics

Vehicle crashes are sometimes related to deficiencies in the safety and capacity characteristics of a transportation facility. To identify these deficiencies early, and therefore reduce the likelihood of crashes on the Triangle Expressway, NCTA monitors safety conditions on the facility through quarterly crash analyses. These analyses involve the use of the Traffic Engineering Accident Analysis System (TEAAS) to collect monthly crash data along the facility, separated into four (4) segments:

- Toll N.C. 885, from I-40 to Toll N.C. 540
- Toll N.C. 540, from I-40 to N.C. 55
- Toll N.C. 540, from N.C. 55 to U.S. 64
- Toll N.C. 540, from U.S. 64 to N.C. 55 Bypass

The data collected includes total crashes and the number of fatal and injury crashes reported along each segment. This data is analyzed over a rolling three-year period to determine the Total Crash Rate of each of the four segments selected, as well as for the entire facility. These crash rates can then be compared to the Critical Crash Rates.

Total Crash Rates are a function of the length of roadway, average daily traffic, and number of reported crashes along a route during a specific time frame. These rates are expressed in crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (MVMT). In the crash analysis conducted during the fourth quarter, the Total Crash Rates of the four segments selected and the entire facility were calculated based on the roadway segment length, the average annual daily traffic (AADT) and the number of crashes recorded from December 1, 2020, through November 30, 2023, for each segment. The AADT used for this quarter analysis was calculated from Microwave Vehicle Detection (MVD) data collected in 2022. The Statewide Crash Rate (128.63 crashes per 100 MVMT) used for comparison purposes in this analysis was collected from the 2017-2021 NCDOT Statewide Total Crash Rates for urban interstate facilities, as the Triangle Expressway operates more like an interstate than a state route.

Critical Crash Rates are crash rates that have been statistically adjusted with a 95% level of confidence to remove the elements of chance and randomness. They are used as a reference to determine if the Total Crash Rate at a given location is significantly higher than a predetermined average rate for locations with similar characteristics. Triangle Expressway continues to report a Total Crash Rate significantly lower than both the Statewide Crash Rate and Critical Crash Rate.

Table 1 provides a summary of the crash data collected and the results of the fourth quarter analysis.

Table 1: Safety Statistics December 1, 2020 – November 30, 2023

Segment	Length	AADT ¹	Total Crashes	Vehicle Exposure (MVMT)	Total Crash Rate	Statewide Crash Rate ²	Critical Crash Rate
Toll N.C. 885 I-40 to Toll N.C. 540	3.1	16,000	41	54.42	75.34	128.63	154.84
Toll N.C. 540 I-40 to N.C. 55	2.8	36,000	68	110.18	61.72	128.63	146.86
Toll N.C. 540 N.C. 55 to U.S. 64	6.7	33,000	90	241.35	37.29	128.63	140.85
Toll N.C. 540 U.S. 64 to N.C. 55 Bypass	5.9	25,000	74	160.44	46.12	128.63	143.67
Triangle Expressway	18.4	28,500	273	567.43	48.11	128.63	136.55

¹ AADT calculated from 2022 microwave vehicle detection data.

² Statewide Crash Rate for Urban Interstate Facilities Applied.

Roadway Operations Statistics

Roadway Operations Statistics

Highly trained NCTA operators monitor and manage traffic operations and coordinate incident response and maintenance/construction work along the Triangle Expressway. These operators work at the Traffic Management Center (TMC) located in the North Carolina National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh. They are responsible for monitoring the facility 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year using closed-circuit TV (CCTV) cameras, microwave vehicle detectors (MVD), and toll zone security cameras. Additionally, they monitor roadside toll technology and toll facilities.

Operators can communicate travel conditions and emergencies to customers via 10 full-color Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), NCDOT's 511 system, and NCDOT's Traveler Information Management System (TIMS) website. They can also quickly dispatch toll technology technicians to address equipment failures via a maintenance ticketing system. Additionally, in the event of incidents on the facility, they can use interoperable 800MHz radio frequency dispatch from local 911 and statewide Highway Patrol communications to dispatch Incident Management Assistance Patrol (IMAP).

The NCTA Toll Safety Patrol program consists of dedicated SHP and IMAP services provided on the Triangle Expressway. This program provides one SHP officer and one IMAP responder to the facility during working hours, Monday through Friday. During this time, the assigned SHP officer and IMAP driver are responsible for patrolling the facility and responding to reported incidents.

This section presents operations statistics reported by SHP and IMAP during the fourth quarter of 2023. It includes driver violations and warnings issued by SHP and total IMAP assistance recorded, as well as average monthly IMAP response and clearance time.

Table 2 and *Table 3* present SHP operation statistics during 2023. "Chargeable Activities" are SHP activities involving fines. It should be noted that the "Other Violations" category includes chargeable activities such as load and equipment violations, driver's license violations, vehicle registration violations, and littering.

Table 2: 2023 SHP Chargeable Activities, YTD

Chargeable Activities	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Speed Violations	33	37	25	26	25	43	46	36	24	37	26	24	382
Alcohol Violations	1	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	8
Seat Belt Violations	6	8	7	3	11	5	2	3	1	6	3	3	58
Child Restraint Violations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4
Reckless Driving	5	1	5	4	7	10	7	9	4	8	7	5	72
Drug Violations	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Obstructed Plates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Violations	35	17	53	19	43	41	11	59	29	56	35	26	424
Total Charges	80	63	90	52	89	101	69	107	58	110	73	58	950

Table 3: 2023 SHP Non-Chargeable Activities, YTD

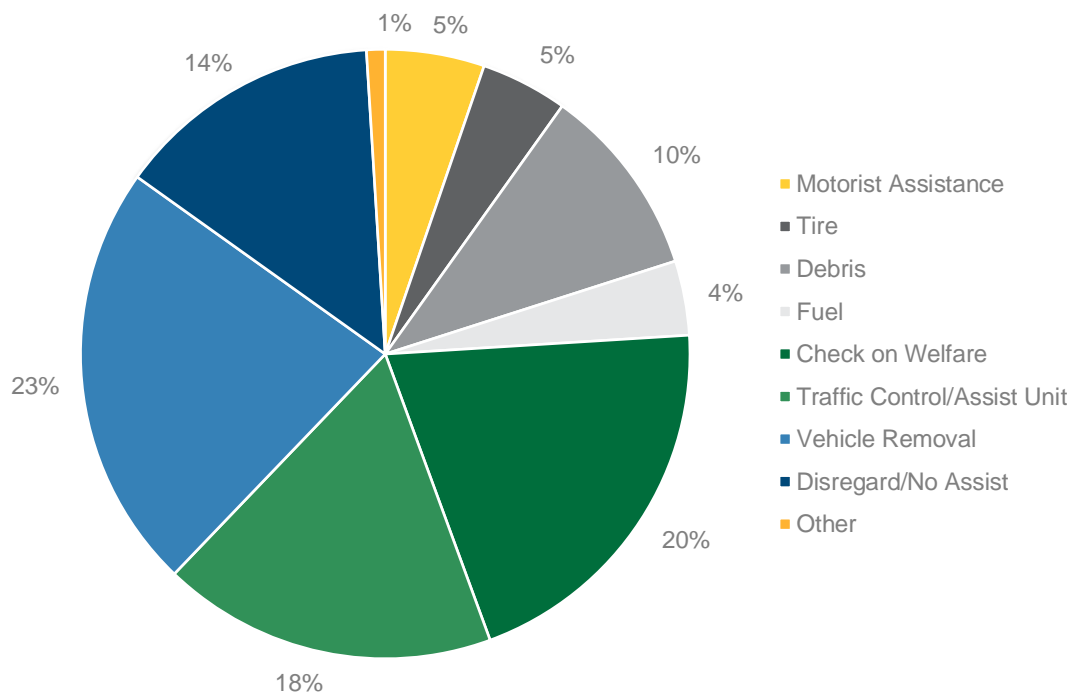
Non-Chargeable Activities	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Warnings	60	47	59	45	20	52	26	52	44	41	19	17	482
Crashes Investigated	6	6	9	2	1	12	6	14	7	16	5	2	86
Calls for Service	15	18	25	17	13	6	21	12	27	17	19	11	201
Total	81	71	93	64	34	70	53	78	78	74	43	30	769

The IMAP assists with stranded motorists and incident clearance, thereby maintaining the flow of traffic along the roadway. *Table 4* and *Figure 16* present the monthly breakdown of IMAP services, by type, for the Triangle Expressway during 2023. The “other” category includes extinguish fire service, first aid service, and other rare miscellaneous services.

Table 4: 2023 IMAP Services, YTD

Assist Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Motorist Assistance	2	1	1	2	0	0	3	4	0	3	0	0	16
Tire	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	4	2	3	0	0	14
Debris	4	4	3	1	1	2	2	3	6	4	1	0	31
Fuel	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	12
Check on Welfare	7	3	8	2	1	1	4	12	12	6	4	2	62
Traffic Control / Assist Unit	2	3	3	2	5	3	4	9	3	9	3	8	54
Vehicle Removal	1	0	6	2	2	4	6	14	11	11	7	5	69
Disregard / No Assist	2	3	5	1	0	2	3	1	3	5	10	8	43
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
Total Assists	18	15	29	10	10	14	24	51	40	42	26	25	304

Figure 16: 2023 IMAP Services by Type, YTD



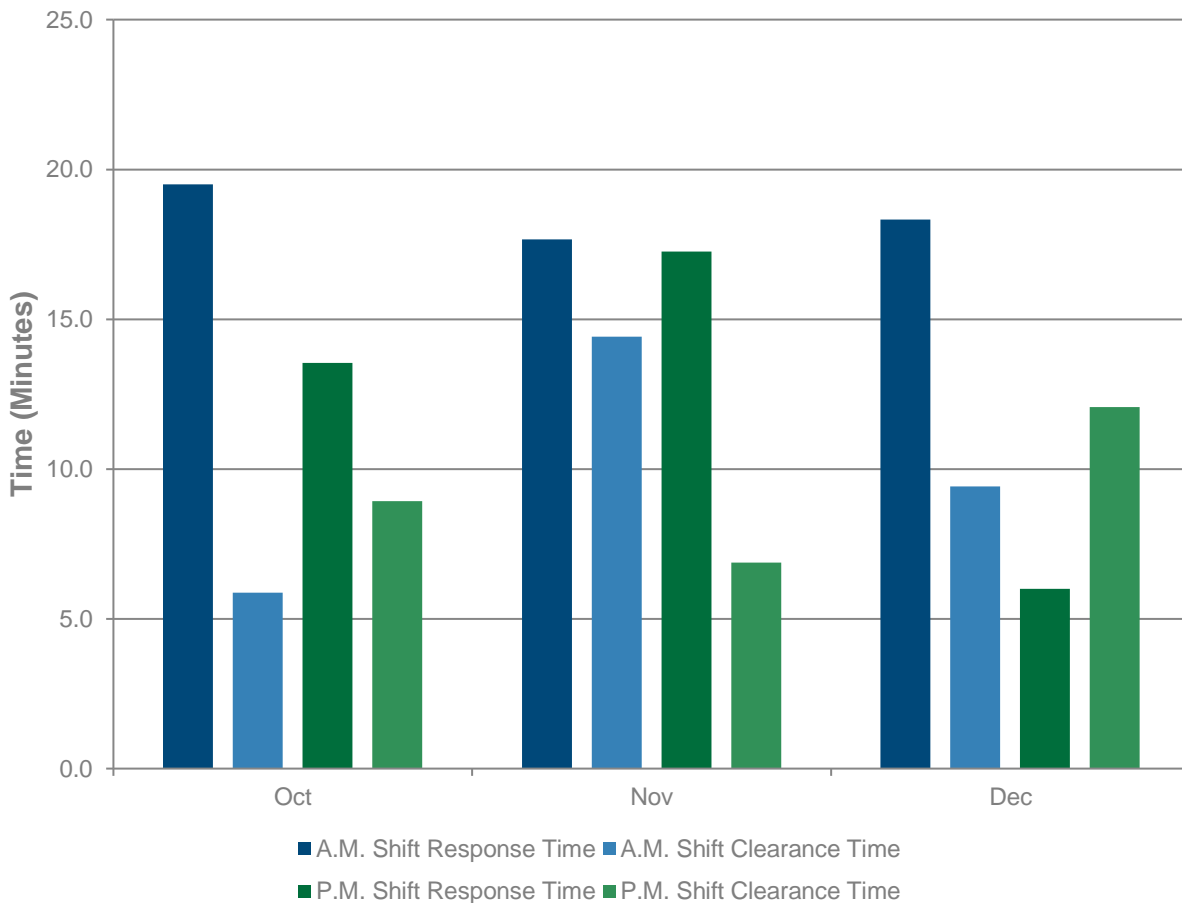
The response and clearance times for all IMAP assists are logged by IMAP and provided to the NCTA. Response time is the time from which a responder receives a call to the time they arrive on the scene. Clearance time is the time it takes the responder to clear the incident and return the roadway to normal operation. The IMAP staff's 1st shift occurs from 6AM to 2PM, while 2nd shift occurs from 2PM to 10PM. Shift response times may differ due to the number of drivers on duty and their coverage areas.

Table 5 and Figure 17 present the average IMAP assistance response and clearance times, in minutes, for the Triangle Expressway.

Table 5: 2023 Average IMAP Response & Clearance Times (Minutes), YTD

Response Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2023 Average
AM Shift Response	10.7	8.0	23.3	13.5	20.0	13.7	10.8	13.3	10.2	36.0	17.7	18.3	15.5
AM Shift Clearance	20.8	9.6	6.3	7.0	5.5	4.2	3.3	15.5	6.0	5.9	14.4	9.4	9.3
PM Shift Response	13.0	14.0	12.2	11.0	26.5	20.3	19.8	14.1	11.1	13.5	17.3	6.0	13.7
PM Shift Clearance	7.2	10.2	3.7	35.0	9.0	3.8	3.6	7.9	5.9	8.9	6.9	12.1	8.1

Figure 17: Average IMAP Response & Clearance Times (Minutes), Fourth Quarter by Month



Roadway Maintenance Statistics

Roadway Maintenance Statistics

This section outlines the NCTA Maintenance Rating Program (MRP), which is a maintenance evaluation program for roadway features and toll facilities. MRP is a comprehensive planning, measuring, and managing process that provides a means for communicating to managers, stakeholders, and customers the impacts of policy and budget decisions on program service delivery.

Using outcome-based performance measures and the service level scale (0 through 100), the inspection results are rated against established threshold criteria. The program analysis is accomplished using sampling procedures that capture the level of service being provided for individual asset features. Over time, these ratings will then be charted to identify work needs and subsequent necessary actions. The evaluations are based on the establishment of threshold conditions that quantify the maximum defect allowed to exist for a characteristic before it is considered unacceptable. The NCTA performance standards, threshold criteria, and Maintenance Rating Program were developed through a collaborative effort by NCTA managers, NCDOT maintenance staff, and consultants.

Using field survey information, a maintenance matrix can be developed to show the ties between maintenance activities and the characteristics of various roadway features. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide information that will be used to schedule and prioritize routine maintenance activities and provide uniform maintenance conditions that meet established objectives.

Assessment Schedule

As part of the NCTA MRP, a “baseline” assessment is scheduled for each newly opened roadway section soon after opening to toll collection. The baseline assessments include a complete inventory data collection and assessment on 100% of the roadway assets. A baseline assessment for the Veridea Parkway interchange was completed in March of 2018. A baseline assessment for Morrisville Parkway interchange was similarly performed in 2020.

After the baseline assessment is completed, future assessments for that segment switch over to a statistical sampling assessment. Inspections are performed during the months of February, May, August, and November to account for dynamic seasonal changes to assets. These inspections are accomplished using statistically valid, random sampling procedures that capture the level of service for individual assets with a 95% confidence level in sampling.

Assessment Results

Table 6 presents the 2022/2023 quarterly and rolling MRP Assessment rating for the Triangle Expressway. It is important to note that the Quarterly Ratings are only representative of the samples inspected during each quarter. Therefore, a single quarter is not a statistically valid representation of the assets' conditions; only the rolling rating provides a 95% confidence level in statistical sampling.

Table 6: MRP Assessment Results

Element	Q1 2023 Rating	Q2 2023 Rating	Q3 2023 Rating	Q4 2023 Rating	Rolling Rating
Road Surface	96.9	98.0	98.9	98.0	97.9
Unpaved Shoulders and Ditches	99.1	97.4	96.5	97.4	97.6
Drainage	93.3	95.7	96.9	94.9	95.2
Roadside	94.2	95.6	92.0	91.3	93.4
Traffic Control Devices	94.2	92.6	96.2	93.5	94.8
Overall MRP Performance Rating	95.3	95.6	96.3	95.0	95.8