



EXPRESS LANES PROJECT

Criticism	Response
<p>A general-purpose lane project would relieve congestion for less money</p>	<p>Not true. While adding capacity in the form of general-purpose lanes would theoretically reduce congestion temporarily, national data suggest the benefits of adding general-purpose lanes in urban corridors are eroded within 7-10 years. In this growing urban area, express lanes are the best-known solution to provide immediate and long-term travel time reliability. In addition, motorists would have to wait up to two decades for funding to become available under traditional funding methods. With the express lanes project, drivers see badly needed congestion relief in three years.</p>
<p>Tolls will be \$20 each way when the project opens.</p>	<p>Not true. Using publicly available information from the bond rating agencies, tolls at peak hour are projected to vary from 14 cents to 40 cents per mile, on average. Actual toll amounts will be set later and will vary by time of day and traffic conditions, but will only be as high as the market will support. There will be at least six segments in the corridor between Mooresville and Charlotte, and drivers will choose how many segments they will use each day.</p> <p>The Express Lanes were designed with no pre-set toll rates in order to ensure free-flow conditions 24 hours a day. Market economics successfully balance supply, demand and price in countless other industries, from the price of a loaf of bread to the price of a haircut. Tolls will only be what non-HOV users are willing to pay for a predictable commute at no less than 10 miles below the posted speed limit. If drivers decide it's not a good value to pay a toll at a given rate, I-77 Mobility Partners will have to lower the toll to encourage drivers to use the lanes.</p>

Criticism	Response
The project is doomed to fail.	Not true. Rigorous review of projected traffic by ratings agencies, bond issuers and lenders establishes reasonable expectation that the project can be sustained. Among the benefits of a public-private partnership (P3), however, is that the risk of failure will be borne by private equity investors and bond-holders, not by the people of North Carolina.
Tractor-trailers won't benefit, since they can't use the lanes	Not true. The non-tolled lanes will see relief as vehicles choose to move to the express lanes. Other recently completed projects have seen 10 mph improvements in average speed in the non-tolled lanes. Additional relief will come as projects across the state offer multiple corridors for through tractor-trailers that use I-77 to get from South Carolina to Virginia.
The I-77 Express Lanes project won't be finished until 2020.	Not true. The Concession Agreement requires that the project be completed and open by Jan. 7, 2019. Failure to comply would cost the developer \$10,000 a day. The developer has a history of completing projects ahead of schedule.
The State of North Carolina will be on the hook for a large amount of outstanding debt if the I-77 Express Lanes project does not perform as anticipated.	Not true. Claims that the state would be required to cover a large portion of the outstanding debt in case of a project debt default are absolutely false. In any situation involving developer bankruptcy, the state's liability is zero.
The local I-77 economy will lose as much as \$34 million per year, and up to \$13 billion over the lifetime of the contract.	Not true. Express lanes will allow businesses to service more customers and will allow customers to have better access to local business due to the improved traffic conditions in the corridor. Ultimately, users of the express lanes will only be willing to pay a certain toll if they are getting a net benefit from that trip therefore the net economic effect for the region will be positive as the benefits will outweigh the costs. In addition the region will receive an immediate benefit from an initial investment of over \$600 million and over the years a part of the toll proceeds will be used for the maintenance and upkeep of the corridor, therefore reinvested in the local economy. The Lake Norman area of I-77 handles 93,000 vehicles per day on average. A Charlotte-area commuter spends an average of 40 hours per year stuck in congestion. That is 3.72 million hours per year lost idling in traffic.

Criticism	Response
<p>Tolls will be prohibitively expensive for the majority of drivers.</p>	<p>Not true. Every driver will be able to choose the length of his or her trip in the express lanes,. Tolls will vary per segment, depending on travel conditions and the time of day. During periods when fewer people choose to use the express lanes, rates will be lower. By providing motorists with a choice, the express lanes project can serve a variety of users on the I-77 corridor.</p>
<p>Toll lanes are not designed to reduce congestion, but instead guarantee it.</p>	<p>Not true. Express lanes are required by federal law to operate at a minimum free-flow speed. Every motorist who chooses to use the express lanes frees up space in the general-purpose lanes. In this growing urban area, express lanes are the best-known solution to provide immediate and long-term travel time reliability.</p> <p>To recuperate its investment, the operator has a very strong incentive to encourage the use of the express lanes by setting reasonable rates which, at the same time, will have the greatest impact in reducing congestion on the general-purpose lanes.</p>
<p>Toll lanes will create separate and unequal public roads.</p>	<p>Not true. Data from other states with similar express lanes projects show that people of all income levels use the lanes to provide a reliable travel time. In addition, transit users and carpoolers can use the express lanes free of charge and receive the benefit of travel time reliability. Everyone values their time, and the express lanes project creates an option for how people travel along the I-77 corridor.</p>
<p>Foreign profiteers, corporations and state politics are influencing local transportation policies.</p>	<p>Not true. Local transportation planners began evaluating express lanes in 2007 through the Fast Lanes study. Four strong teams responded to the requalification process to build this locally developed project. Only Cintra, a global infrastructure company, and its partners submitted a bid that met NCDOT's requirements. Throughout the process of finalizing the I-77 Express Lanes project, NCDOT conducted more than 40 meetings with mayors, town and city leaders, officials and staff from the regional metropolitan planning organization, legislators, business forums and the general public to discuss all matters of importance. NCDOT will continue to meet with stakeholders on a frequent basis until the project is completed. Further, every public document including bid proposals, contracts and all amendments have been posted promptly on NCDOT's website.</p>

Criticism	Response
<p>Ninety-four percent of citizens and businesses oppose the toll lanes and want free lanes.</p>	<p>Not true. The last statistically valid poll of motorists in planned future express lanes corridors showed 61 percent of users were in favor of implementing tolls as a means of funding new lane construction rather than increasing the sales tax or gas tax. It is understandable that no one wants to pay tolls, but also, no one likes to sit in traffic. Express lanes provide long-term travel time reliability for those who choose to pay a toll.</p>
<p>I-77 is singled out for tolls, while NCDOT builds free lanes and roads elsewhere.</p>	<p>Not true. North Carolina’s first modern toll road is the Triangle Expressway in Raleigh, operational since 2011. The Fast Lanes study in 2007 studied a number of corridors, and additional express lanes projects are scheduled for construction in North Carolina on I-40, I-485 and U.S. 74. This section of I-77 from Charlotte to Mooresville has unique physical and geographical limitations that also make it an ideal candidate for express lanes.</p>
<p>Toll lanes impede traffic during emergencies.</p>	<p>Not true. In the event of an emergency, NCDOT can suspend tolling immediately, independent of the timing of a formal emergency declaration. Additionally, the completion of the additional lanes through this project will help tremendously in the case of a formal emergency or evacuation declaration because it doubles the available number of lanes on certain sections of the corridor. Emergency vehicles have unimpeded access to the express lanes at all times.</p>
<p>I-77 needs to be 10 lanes wide from Statesville to Rock Hill, S.C.</p>	<p>Not likely. The issues we face with constantly expanding our roadways are not only related to funding. Specifically, for the I-77 corridor, its limited and invaluable right-of-way and geography, including lakes, present even greater challenges requiring a new solution. The express lanes project provides a long-term sustainable congestion solution for the entire corridor. The stated widening from Statesville to Rock Hill would require extensive environmental reviews and traffic studies not yet conducted.</p>
<p>I-77 Mobility Partners will have access to private information collected from express lanes users.</p>	<p>Not true. Any customer information will be collected, stored and kept secure by the North Carolina Turnpike Authority (Under NCDOT), NOT Cintra or I-77 Mobility Partners. Drivers who choose to use the express lanes and choose to set up a NC Quick Pass account will do so using the same application currently used by NC Quick Pass customers. No social security numbers, medical information or birth dates will be collected by the Turnpike Authority, NCDOT, Cintra or I-77 Mobility Partners.</p>

Criticism	Response
An economic impact study for I-95 in North Carolina showed that tolls are bad for the economy.	Not true. According to that study, “implementing the proposed improvements regardless of how it is funded results in a net positive economic impact for the I-95 corridor region and the state as a whole.”