



# I-77 Express Lanes Factsheet February 2016

## The Optional Toll Lanes Project on I-77 North:

- To help with traffic relief on one of North Carolina's most congested roads, NCDOT is currently investing a little more than \$90 million to build additional lanes and improve 26 miles of I-77 North between Uptown Charlotte and the Lake Norman area.
- A public private-partnership allows new, optional toll lanes to be opened to traffic within 3 years, instead of keeping I-77 North under construction for decades while attempting to build lanes in smaller sections.
- Through the public-private partnership, I-77 Mobility Partners (Cintra US), will be responsible for the remainder of the \$655 million to design, construct, operate and maintain the new optional toll lanes (express lanes).
- **All existing general-purpose lanes will remain free for drivers.**
- Vehicles with three or more people can choose to use new optional toll lanes for free, with a transponder, at any time. A mom or dad driving their two kids to daycare, school or soccer can use them for free. Three or more co-workers carpooling can also use the optional toll lanes for free.
- Transit vehicles can use the optional toll lanes for free, helping strengthen the regional transit system, and taking those larger vehicles out of the general-purpose lanes. Emergency vehicles and motorcycles can also use the optional toll lanes without a charge.
- Drivers with fewer than 3 people in their vehicle can choose to pay to use optional toll lanes for a more reliable travel time for a part, or the entire 26 miles. While some people may choose to use the lanes as part of their daily commute, others may turn to the option if they are running late for a meeting, need to get to a doctors appointment or they are trying to get to the airport quickly to catch a flight.
- When transit vehicles and other drivers use the optional toll lanes, fewer cars will be in the general purpose lanes.

## The Contract:

- The contract **fully protects taxpayers of North Carolina** by putting financial liability on private bondholders and lenders. It is a standard industry contract that was awarded through the required bidding process under state and federal law.
- This contract went through a thorough due diligence process that included state, federal and independent financial review prior to approval of bonds and other project debt.
- Certain financial aspects of the contract were reviewed and approved by the USDOT and the Local Government Commission (which includes the State Treasurer, State Auditor, Secretary of State and Secretary of Revenue.)
- NCDOT is currently working with local governments to identify potential contract enhancements.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### **Is it true that a private company will own the road for 50 years and the state can't add new lanes?**

- No. The State of North Carolina owns—and will continue to own—the entire road and the area along side of the road. Provisions under the contract allow NCDOT to build additional lanes if needed, but may require payments to the vendor. The state can also make any safety improvements, transit improvements or light rail improvements, and make improvements to parallel routes with no compensation to the developer.
- All toll collection and customer accounts will be managed through the North Carolina Turnpike Authority, which currently manages toll operations on the Triangle Expressway in Wake and Durham Counties.

### **Is it true I would have to pay \$20 a day to use the optional toll lanes?**

- No. Drivers on I-77 North will have several choices: Continue to use general-purpose lanes for free, use new optional toll lanes for free when carpooling with 3 or more people, or pay to use the optional toll lanes for a more predictable travel time with fewer than 3 people.
- Toll rates will vary depending on peak travel times and volume of traffic in the Express Lanes, but most people using those lanes during peak commute times can expect to pay between 14 and 40 cents per mile. I-77 Mobility Partners will seek public comment before setting and posting fixed toll rates for the first six months.
- Those who choose to pay to use the optional toll lanes will have numerous entry and exit points and can use the lanes for whatever portion of their trip they choose.

### **Why did the region choose to go with optional toll lanes instead of general-purpose lanes?**

- The local transportation planning organization approved and requested this project based on a detailed study that started in 2007 and identified an optional toll lanes strategy as the best immediate and long-term congestion management solution for the region. Previous, general-purpose widening projects proved to fill quickly, causing longer chokepoints instead of helping relieve congestion.

### **Is it true the private developer has a track record of similar projects failing?**

- No. The company has a history of producing successful project delivery in the United States and in Europe.
- In the unlikely event that the I-77 project fails there are numerous protections in place to shield North Carolina taxpayers from any financial liability.