



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

# NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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CONTACTS:  
Lucio Guerrero 312/814.3158  
Katie Ridgway 312/814.3158  
Joelle McGinnis (Tollway) 630/241.6800  
ext. 2380

## Governor Blagojevich Launches *Tomorrow's Transportation Today* – a Progressive Improvement Plan

### *Green Lanes and New Interchanges on the Illinois Tollway Will Reduce Congestion, Connect Communities and Drive Economy*

CHICAGO – In an effort to reduce congestion, cut down on emissions and invest in Illinois jobs, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today unveiled a new Illinois Tollway Improvement Plan which will include the introduction of Green Lanes and interchange construction. Building on the successes of the Tollway's current Congestion-Relief Program, the second phase – *Tomorrow's Transportation Today* – is a \$1.8 billion project designed to continue congestion-relief efforts, improve the environment and enhance mobility across Northern Illinois.

“At a time when Illinoisans are more environmentally conscious and want to save money on their commute, I am proud to announce that we will be constructing green lanes on the Illinois Tollway. Not only will these Green Lanes and new interchanges help commuters, but will also pay real dividends to Illinois' communities and businesses through massive new business development,” said Governor Blagojevich.

Projects in the Governor's new Illinois Tollway Congestion Relief Program include:

- 80 miles of dedicated Green Lanes offering access to buses and ride-sharing commuters at regular I-PASS rates and providing single-occupant and environmentally friendly vehicles access at premium prices - \$400 million.
- Critical Interstate-to-Interstate interchanges - Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90)/I-290/IL Route 53 Interchange, Tri-State Tollway (I-294)/I-57 Interchange, and systemwide local interchange projects – \$1.4 billion.

“Through projects like Open Road Tolling, our Illinois Tollway has consistently delivered on our promise of real congestion relief. Now is the time for us to again focus on infrastructure that expands our economy and supports families,” Governor Blagojevich said.

Tollway Chairman John Mitola agreed.

“The Illinois Tollway has the solid financial foundation and the engineering capabilities to immediately begin the process of building these long awaited interchange improvement projects,” said Chairman Mitola. “In addition, the introduction of Green Lanes reduces our impact on the environment, while



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saving drivers time and money. Investing in car pool programs now will help commuters cost their costs at the gas pump and on the road for years to come.”

The launch of *Tomorrow's Transportation Today* begins the planning stages of the new \$1.8 billion capital effort. Phase two will run concurrently with the Tollway's current Capital Program, which has already delivered Open Road Tolling, a 12.5 mile extension of the Veterans Memorial Tollway (I-355), and will complete the rebuild and widening of 16 miles of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90), 20 miles of the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88) and 62 miles of the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80) by 2010. The Tollway intends begin planning, land acquisition and construction on the interchanges and development of a Car Pool/Express Lane Program at the conclusion of a successful public and stakeholder comment period.

#### **Green Lanes**

The Tollway will develop a program to introduce Green Lanes into the heaviest used segments of its existing roadways, a \$400 million project which promotes carpooling and public transit and provides a free flow of traffic to reduce excessive acceleration and braking which cuts emissions. Tolls will be deducted electronically from vehicles, car pool drivers and buses will pay the current I-PASS rate, while single-occupancy vehicles will pay a premium rate to use the free-flow lanes. To encourage environmentally responsible vehicles and congestion reduction, drivers of hybrids, electric or fuel cell vehicles, as well as those with high m.p.g. ratings will have access to the Green Lanes for a variable fee.

#### **New Tollway Interchanges**

The Illinois Tollway will build two crucial interchanges on the Tri-State Tollway at (I-294)/I-57 and on the James Addams Tollway at (I-90)/I-290, and the Tollway will invest in new or expanded arterial interchanges. On the Tri-State Tollway, the improvement plan will build a new \$500 million interchange at one of the few points in the nation where Interstates cross, but do not connect. The Tollway will also redesign and construct a new \$500 million interchange at the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and I-290/IL Route 53 to reduce area congestion due to decades of explosive regional growth. Finally decisions on which new arterial interchanges will be built hinge on negotiations with individual communities and the Tollway Cost Share Policy which requires a 50 percent cost share between the Tollway and the involved community.

#### **Financing**

The \$1.8 billion plan would be financed by bonds backed by a modest toll increase for commercial vehicles, and variable tolls rates to be established for single-occupant passenger vehicles using the Green Lanes. The Illinois Tollway has not increased tolls for passenger vehicles using I-PASS in more than 25 years and has one of the lowest toll rate per mile in the nation. The Tollway is a user-fee system and does not receive any state or federal gas taxes, only those who use the Tollway pay for it.

As part of the funding plan for phase two, commercial vehicles will see a rate increase in 2015. Beginning in 2016 commercial rates will be tied to the CPI. The Illinois Tollway will work with regional transportation and transit experts as well as review best practices from managed lanes nationwide and develop a program that will allow transit vehicles and car pool drivers to pay current I-PASS rates and will create a variable rate fee structure for the new Green Lanes.

#### **Next Steps**

The Illinois Tollway will host a public hearing regarding this plan in November 2008. The Tollway will also host a series of public hearings in all 12 counties in the coming months regarding the proposed toll rate changes. The Illinois Tollway Board of Directors will vote at the November Board Meeting on the proposed Congestion-Relief Program Phase Two – *Tomorrow's Transportation Today* – and accompanying funding plan.