



## HOV Lanes Coming to I-75 South in Clayton County

Have you ever wondered what your commute costs each month? The average commute from Jonesboro to downtown Atlanta costs approximately \$700 per month (including gas, insurance, parking, etc.). This figure grows even higher during congested conditions due to wasted time and fuel. Transportation improvements such as the proposed I-75 HOV lanes in Clayton County can minimize these commute costs by lowering fuel usage through carpooling and reducing time wasted in congested conditions.

To calculate the cost of **your** commute, check out Central Atlanta Progress's "Commute Calculator" at:

[www.atlantadowntown.com/  
TransParking\\_Calculator.asp](http://www.atlantadowntown.com/TransParking_Calculator.asp)



In August of 2005, the Georgia Department of Transportation contracted with PBS&J, an Atlanta consulting firm, to design High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes along I-75 from SR-54 to Aviation Boulevard in Clayton County. Since then, the project has steadily moved forward, and this newsletter is intended to keep you up-to-date with the design of the project. (See page 4 for a map of the project area.)

Clayton County is one of the most densely populated counties in the state of Georgia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Clayton County's population rose by more than 30 percent between 1990 and 2000. The Atlanta Regional Commission indicates that strong population growth in Clayton County continues, with an 11.6 percent increase between 2000 and 2005.

With this swell in population and growth comes an increasing burden on our roadways. Average annual daily traffic on I-75 between SR 54 and Aviation Boulevard has steadily risen each year as more and more commuters make the trip from Clayton County and points south to employment centers in downtown and midtown Atlanta.

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### Why HOV Lanes?

High-Occupancy Vehicle lanes are restricted to those vehicles that have two or more passengers. This encourages drivers to make trips together, thereby reducing the number of total vehicles on the freeway. During times of high congestion, HOV lanes can flow freely while general purpose lanes may be congested.

HOV lanes are widely used in the United States as a strategy to reduce congestion. Currently in the United States, there are more than 1,200 miles of HOV lanes across 23 states. (Federal Highway Administration HOV Facility Inventory). In an effort to provide options to commuters, the Georgia DOT introduced HOV lanes to Atlanta in the mid 1990s. Today, HOV lanes are a key component of Atlanta's transportation system for reducing air pollution, improving congestion and saving time for ride-sharing commuters. New HOV lane projects are being designed for I-20, I-85, GA 400, SR 316, I-575, I-75 on the north side of Atlanta, and now, on I-75 south of Atlanta.

While current HOV systems in Atlanta have concurrent flow (i.e. separated from the general purpose lanes only by lane striping), planned HOV facilities in Metro Atlanta include a design that separates HOV lanes from the general purpose lanes with a concrete barrier (similar to the photo above). Barrier-separated lanes generally have a higher degree of reliability and safety than concurrent lanes, and enforcement of HOV rules is easier as access to the facility is only available at designated locations.

## Clayton County Commuting Patterns

According to American Community Survey (ACS) results released in March of 2005, Americans spend more than 100 hours commuting to work each year. The national average for the daily commute is slightly more than 24 minutes. This means that some working Americans spend more time in their cars each year than the two weeks of vacation typically enjoyed by American workers.

Additionally, the Texas Transportation Institute's 2005 Urban Mobility Report suggests that congestion delayed travelers 79 million more hours and wasted 69 million more gallons of fuel in 2003 than in 2002, and that trend is continuing. As commute times creep up across the country, no where is it more evident than in Atlanta and Clayton County. Clayton County ranked 38th in the nation in 2003 for the longest one-way commute with an average of 28.7 minutes, and more than 47% of Clayton County workers have commute times of 30 minutes or more.

2000 Census data suggest that 18% of Clayton County commuters are carpoolers. An HOV system along I-75 in Clayton County would be beneficial to these carpool commuters and future carpool commuters by offering a time-saving alternative to single occupancy vehicle travel.

### HOV BENEFITS

Faster Commute Times  
Lower Commute-Related Expenses  
Improved Air Quality  
Reduced Stress  
More Personal Time

## Operational Improvements to be Considered

In addition to adding HOV lanes along this well-traveled stretch of I-75, the Department of Transportation is also looking at ways to improve the operational efficiency of the existing interstate and interchanges. The project proposes a variety of improvements to reduce congestion and alleviate operational inefficiencies.

Improvements anticipated with this project include adding a barrier-separated HOV lane in each direction of I-75 from State Route 54/Jonesboro Road to just north of US 41/Tara Boulevard. From US 41/Tara Boulevard north to Aviation Boulevard, the proposed HOV lane would be concurrent flow to tie in to the existing system. New HOV-only interchanges would be added at the existing Bob White Trail overpass and near Corporate Center Drive at Mt. Zion Road, while direct HOV lane access would be added to easily access Forest Parkway and I-285.

Operation improvements proposed include two additional southbound general purpose lanes from Forest Parkway to Tara Boulevard and a collector/distributor system to connect Forest Parkway and Aviation Boulevard. The bridges over I-75 at Tara Boulevard and Forest Parkway would be reconstructed to accommodate the interstate improvements. Additionally, traffic operation improvements are proposed for the following intersections:

- Forest Parkway intersection with SR 85
- Forest Parkway at the State Farmer's Market
- Tara Boulevard intersection with Upper Riverdale Road & Old Dixie Highway at I-75
- Aviation Boulevard interchange with I-75 ramps
- I-75 northbound access to west bound I-285

## Upcoming Public Involvement Opportunities

In any transportation plan or project, success in building consensus between the public, competing interest groups, and the transportation decision-makers is often dependent upon the strength of the public involvement effort.

An effective public involvement program opens lines of communication for a free exchange of ideas, and the process often serves to identify circumstances, opportunities and impacts that may not have been recognized. With substantial involvement from the groups and individuals actually affected by a plan or project, there is a greater likelihood that the product will meet the transportation goals and be more widely supported by the public.

In order to reach out to the project stakeholders and the general public, the Department is hosting two Public Information Open Houses. These events will serve to share with the public the project's progress thus far. While there is no formal presentation, citizens will have ample opportunity to learn more about the project, speak one-on-one with members of the project team, and comment on developments.

These Public Information Open Houses provide great opportunities to share your thoughts about the process and the project. We truly value your input, and we hope you will take some time to join us at one or both of the open houses.

### **Tuesday, March 13,**

5-7 p.m.

Tara Elementary School  
937 Mt. Zion Road  
Morrow, GA

### **Thursday, March 15**

5-7 p.m.

Best Western  
Atlanta Airport East  
301 N. Central Ave.  
Hapeville, GA

If you are unable to attend an Open House, please visit the website at [www.i75howsouth.com](http://www.i75howsouth.com) or call the project hotline at 404-377-4012 to learn more. We encourage you to stay involved as this project moves forward, and we look forward to your participation.



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**We're on the web:  
www.i75hovsouth.com**

**Where to find ongoing information about this project:**

- ◇ Website: <http://www.i75hovsouth.com>
- ◇ Hotline: 404-377-4012
- ◇ Email: [comments@i75hovsouth.com](mailto:comments@i75hovsouth.com)

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**I-75 South  
HOV Project**  
SR 54 to Aviation Blvd.