



## **SH 161 Mainlanes Between SH 183 and IH 30 Now Open to Traffic**

It is now smooth sailing between State Highway (SH) 183 to just north of Interstate Highway (IH) 30 just in time to use the roadway to get to a Texas Rangers game or the Dallas Cowboys' first home game.

On Aug. 2, 2009, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) opened Phase 2 of the SH 161 – the main lanes between SH 183 and north of IH 30 project – and the NTTA began collecting tolls. This will allow vehicles to travel continuously between the President George Bush Turnpike and north of IH 30. Traffic can, then, continue on to IH 20 on the frontage road with only one side-street detour for the Union Pacific Railroad track crossing.

“This project has been rapidly advanced thanks to a partnership between the Regional Transportation Council, the Texas Department of Transportation and the NTTA,” said NTTA Executive Director Allen Clemson. “While we haven’t formally accepted the roadway, we believe it will add tremendous mobility between North Dallas, Plano, Frisco, McKinney and the cities of Arlington and Grand Prairie.”

SH 161 is currently being constructed by TxDOT. TxDOT will continue Phase 3 construction and then the NTTA will develop the roadway’s fourth and final phase. In the meantime, per the SH 161 project agreement, the NTTA will collect tolls at the sections now open to traffic.

"Once again, partnering with other transportation agencies enables us to deliver these much needed transportation facilities and serve the citizen's by increasing the mobility in our region," said Bill Hale, Dallas District Engineer for TxDOT.

“This project was contained in the initial transportation plan for the region in 1967. With the support from Grand Prairie and our transportation partners, users will be surprised

by the improvements that will also be seen to both State Highway 360 and Loop 12,” Michael Morris, Director of Transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

The newly opened phase features two southbound and two northbound lanes between SH 183 and Egyptian Way, a distance of approximately 5 miles. This is a temporary condition while Phase 3 construction is completed. In addition, all the ramps connecting SH 183 and SH 161, as well as four permanent and temporary ramps, are now open. Those entrance- and exit-points will be just north of Egyptian Way and at Conflans Road.

Toll collection by the NTTA is all-electronic (all-ETC), so there is no stopping at booths to pay cash. Toll gantries, or steel framework spanning the lanes, support the electronic tolling equipment, including high-speed cameras, lights and transponder readers. This equipment collects vehicle information as drivers pass beneath.

Drivers who do not have TollTag accounts will be sent ZipCash invoices for charges, which are billed at the ZipCash rate. The north- and southbound TollTag rates for Conflans Road will be 22 cents compared to the ZipCash rate of 42 cents. The rate for the temporary exit at Egyptian Way will be 78 cents with a TollTag and \$1.17 ZipCash.

Phase 2’s all-ETC gantry construction was NTTA’s first construction contract on the SH 161 project. The contract was fast-tracked to meet the commitments of the project agreement for the eventual transfer of the roadway to the NTTA. The corridor project is being constructed in four phases:

- Phase 1, the service roads between IH-30 and IH-20, constructed by TxDOT, is substantially complete and open to traffic.
- Phase 2, also constructed by TxDOT, consists of the two main lanes in each direction between SH 183 and north of IH 30 on the northbound side of the road, and several entrance and exit ramps.

- Phase 3, to be constructed by TxDOT, will add a third lane in each direction between SH 183 and north of IH 30, additional entrance and exit ramps, and the remaining frontage roads between SH 183 and north of IH 30. It is anticipated to be complete in December 2010.
- Phase 4, the construction of the main lanes between IH 30 and IH 20, is a design-build project that is currently in the procurement stage. Phase 4 also includes construction of the Union Pacific railroad crossing. An apparent best-value proposer is expected to be announced this month, with NTTA Board of Directors' action anticipated in August.

When complete, the SH 161 corridor project will result in a new, approximately 11.5-mile link in the growing loop around Dallas. The project was initiated in May 1969 by TxDOT, which conducted the initial corridor studies, processed the Environmental Impact Statement and obtained the right of way for the project.

*Posted: 4Aug09*