**SH 161 PEAK HOUR LANES SET TO OPEN**

*Congestion Relief on the Way in Irving*

**IRVING** – In a regional effort to relieve congestion, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has constructed peak-hour lanes on State Highway (SH) 161. The lanes run approximately three miles on SH 161 where the highway drops to two lanes in each direction. This project uses the existing highway shoulder to provide one additional travel lane in each direction during selected travel times.

Drivers will use the inside shoulders as peak-hour lanes during rush hours from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays. The test period for these lanes, which run between two segments of the President George Bush Turnpike (PGBT), begins Sept. 14, 2015.

“This project is the first of its kind in Texas. It uses innovation to solve a transportation challenge in a cost effective manner. We anticipate that this will be a safe and effective solution to the unique SH 161 bottleneck in Irving. TxDOT is steadfastly working with our transportation partners to maintain a safe system, address congestion and connect Texas communities,” said Kelly Selman, TxDOT Dallas District Engineer.

Austin Bridge and Road, LP was awarded the $3.7 million contract to construct the convertible lanes between Beltline Road and SH 183. The project consists of several elements of operation including Intelligent Transportation System solutions and active traffic management strategies including closed circuit cameras for incident detection, dynamic message signs, additional lighting, emergency pull-off locations and a pilot program using tow trucks to speedily remove stalled vehicles.

“This is a very exciting project. It utilizes mainly existing pavement and a small investment to deliver a more reliable transportation option for commuters on SH 161 in the peak periods,” said Michael Morris, P.E., NCTCOG’s Transportation Director. “This represents an opportunity for our region to lead the State in the first project to use freeway shoulders for peak period through lanes.”

TxDOT, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the North Texas Tollway Authority and the City of Irving have worked together to find a solution to the traffic bottleneck in this location in order to improve travel reliability for this western Dallas County roadway.

“The opening of the Peak Hour Lanes on SH 161 between two sections of the PGBT, once again shows that TxDOT, NCTCOG and NTTA remain committed to improving mobility for the citizens of north Texas,” said Elizabeth Mow, NTTA’s Assistant Executive Director. “As motorists get used to the new design, lanes and messaging along this route, we are confident that safety, congestion and travel times will be improved.”