

## **HARRIS COUNTY TOLL ROAD AUTHORITY (HCTRA) PROJECTS AND PLANS**

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### **1. Introduction**

HCTRA opened the first tollway in 1988 and has been expanding the system ever since. Users began paying tolls with cash, tokens were introduced, then electronic tags. HCTRA currently has 1.4 million EZ Tag accounts with over 2.9 million tags on vehicles. The tollway system is about 127 centerline miles, and provides mobility options throughout the Houston-Harris County region.

### **2. Recent Improvements**

In January, the mainlane plaza of the Sam Houston Tollway Ship Channel Bridge crossing was converted to an all-electronic facility. Preparing for this significant change, HCTRA partnered with a third-party vendor (BancPass) to begin selling cash-reloadable electronic tags. This would allow the cash users at the plaza to manage an account using cash instead of a credit card backed account. HCTRA also has made changes to the EZ TAG agreement which allow for fast and straightforward resolution of toll road violations due to common mistakes. This grants a reasonable reprieve for both account-holders and first time violators, and also creates efficiencies in customer service for the agency. Finally, the website is becoming more user-friendly. The site is being improved in phases to allow for easier account management and navigation on smartphones and across all devices.

### **3. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)**

The June of 2015 CIP submitted to court accounts for approximately \$2.35 billion of system improvements. Expansion in the number of lanes of the toll system is responsible for the bulk of the CIP. HCTRA's plan includes widening the Sam Houston Tollway to eight lanes from SH 288 to IH 10. Also included in these projects is a new crossing of the Houston Ship Channel. In addition, Phase II of the Tomball Tollway will connect the northern end of Phase I to the section of the tollway being constructed by Montgomery County. The Hardy Toll Road is being improved and will open as an all-electronic facility this summer. The Hardy Toll Road connection into downtown will be moving into the next phase with the construction of three grade separations between City streets and the railroad.