

Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) Projects and Plans

John C. Tyler, P.E.
Deputy Director
Harris County Toll Road Authority,
7701 Wilshire Place Drive,
Houston, Texas, 77040

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, and more recently electronic tags. HCTRA currently has approximately 1.4 million EZ Tag accounts with over 3 million tags on vehicles. The tollway system is about 129 centerline miles, and provides mobility options throughout the Houston-Harris County region.

2. Recent Improvements

HCTRA continues construction of several projects to improve mobility in our region. Phase II of the Tomball Tollway continues moving towards completion. This summer the new frontage road lanes will be completed allowing the tollway to be constructed. Widening of the Sam Houston Tollway continues from SH 288 to SH 225 on the southeast side. The Ship Channel Bridge project will begin in March. The required grade separations, for the Hardy Toll Road Downtown Connector, continue with Collingsworth expected to open this summer, and Lorraine beginning in April. To assist with cash options, HCTRA has partnered with a third-party vendor (BancPass) to begin selling cash-reloadable electronic tags. More recently, HCTRA rolled out a new app that provides more flexibility to an infrequent user.

3. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

The 2018 CIP, submitted to court in June of 2017, accounts for approximately \$2.3 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 the continuation of the widening the Sam Houston Tollway to eight lanes from IH 45 to IH 10, including a new crossing of the Houston Ship Channel. The widening of the Hardy Toll Road, complete with the lighting and fiber improvements, is almost finished. The Hardy Toll Road connection into downtown has moved into the next phase with Collingsworth overpass construction completing this summer, and Lorraine underpass construction starting in April. The last grade separation at Quitman will begin early next year. HCTRA is in discussion with TxDOT to provide interchanges at the Tomball Tollway and Grand Parkway, Sam Houston Tollway and SH 225, as well as the Hardy Toll Road and Sam Houston Parkway. Also coming is the development of a Customer Service facility to centralize operations of this department.