

Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) Projects and Plans

John C. Tyler, P.E.
Deputy Director
Harris County Toll Road Authority
Houston, Texas.

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 2.6 million EZ Tag accounts with over 3.6 million tags on vehicles. The tollway system is about 130 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 recently opened, connecting to the future portion of the tollway in Montgomery County later this year. Widening of the Sam Houston Tollway continues from IH 45 to IH 10 on the east side, including the Ship Channel Bridge project. The required grade separations for the Hardy Downtown connector continue with on-going construction of the Lorraine underpass. To assist with cash options, HCTRA has partnered with a third-party vendor (BancPass) to begin selling cash-reloadable electronic tags. HCTRA has also rolled out a new app that provides individual account information more quickly for account holders.

3. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

The current CIP submitted to court in the fall of 2019 accounts for approximately \$1.7 billion of system improvements. 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 Hardy Toll Road connection into downtown continues to move forward with the construction of the Lorraine underpass. The last grade separation at Quitman and the tollway are scheduled to begin construction in 2021. HCTRA has begun design of interchanges at the Sam Houston Tollway and SH 225 and the Hardy Toll Road and Sam Houston Parkway. Construction will begin soon on the interchange of the Tomball Tollway and Grand Parkway. HCTRA is in final development of a 100,000+ SF Customer Service facility to centralize operations of this department as well as relocated EZ TAG stores on the east side of town.