

INSIDE INFORMATION



# TOLL ROADS

Compiled by Wendy Cawthon

In Harris County, much of the toll road system is run by the Harris County Toll Road Authority. The HCTRA was founded in 1983 after voters approved a \$900 million bond referendum to create the Hardy Toll Road and the Harris County Tollway. Since then, HCTRA has spent over \$3 billion on the toll system, creating the Tomball Tollway and the Sam Houston Tollway in Northwest Houston, as well as the Katy managed lanes on I-10 and the Westpark Tollway in Fort Bend County.

“The Harris County toll road system is just that—a system. The decision to pool the component parts of the Harris County toll road network and make them one system has enabled financing that costs the county less—and therefore its residents less—when debt is issued to expand or improve the system.”

—Patti Evans, assistant communications director, Harris County Toll Road Authority

HCTRA contributes roughly

**\$120 MILLION**

annually to the Harris County Mobility Fund

## ON THE ROAD

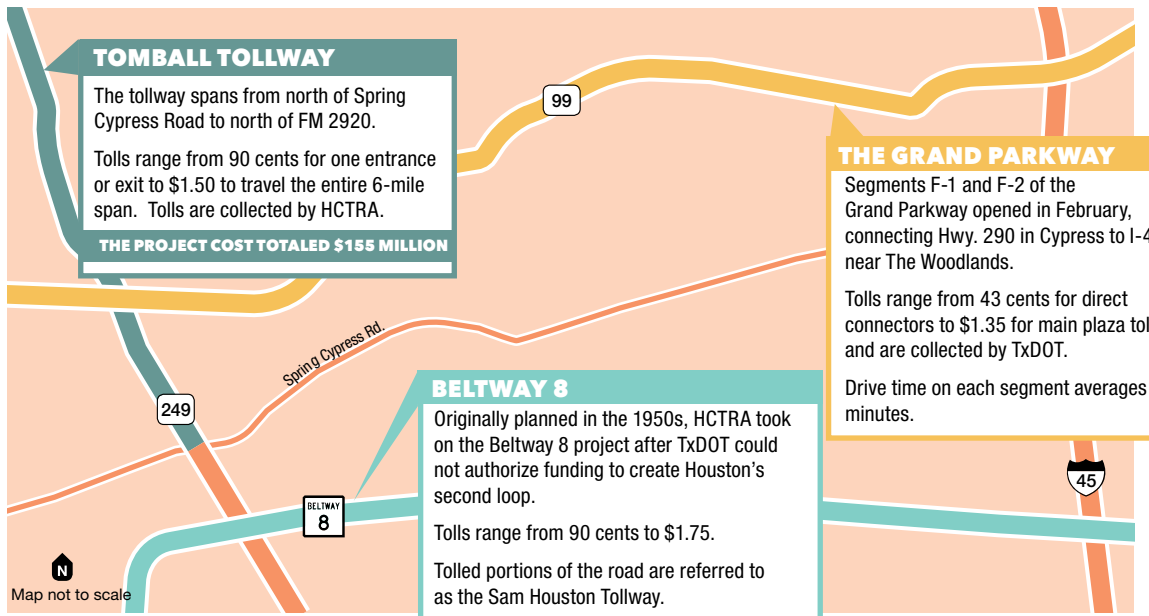
Through a statewide interoperability agreement, HCTRA EZ Tags work on toll roads throughout Texas and vice versa—the Texas Department of Transportation TxTag and the North Texas Tollway Authority TollTag work on Harris County toll roads.



## GROWING OUTWARD

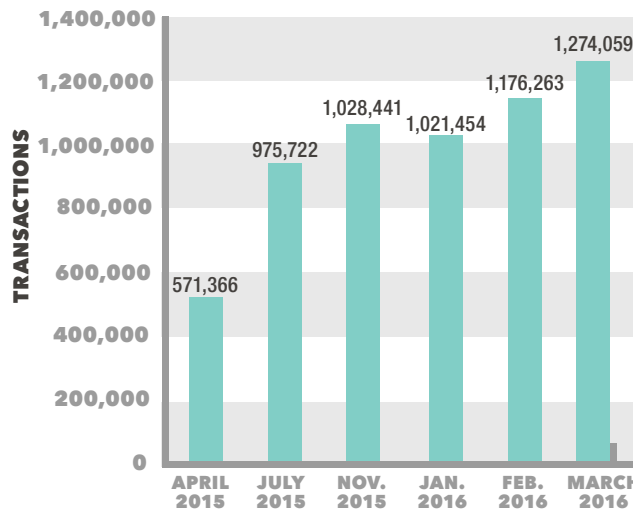
KEY: █ Tomball Tollway █ Beltway 8 █ The Grand Parkway █ Highway

As the population in Northwest Houston grows, major roadways have been built and expanded to redistribute traffic and meet the needs of drivers in the area.



## LOCAL USAGE

Since opening in April 2015, the Tomball Tollway has exceeded expectations for monthly usage as drivers look for a quicker way to travel on Hwy. 249.



“THE INITIAL TRAFFIC PROJECTIONS ANTICIPATED ABOUT 810,000 MONTHLY TRANSACTIONS FOR THE RAMP-UP PERIOD. TOLL REVENUE HAS AVERAGED CLOSE TO \$1.5 MILLION PER MONTH FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS.”

—PATTI EVANS, HCTRA ASSISTANT COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Evans said work has begun on the final design for Phase 2 of the Tomball Tollway, which will extend the existing toll lanes north of the bypass to the Harris County line at Spring Creek and connect to the Montgomery County portion of the tollway.

**TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF PHASE 2: \$175 MILLION**

## TOLL ROAD DEBT

As of March, HCTRA has \$2.13 billion in debt. To compare, tolling authorities from around the state have a collective debt of \$21 billion, TxDOT Executive Director James Bass said during a March 30 Texas House of Representatives Transportation Committee hearing.

Even if all debt was repaid, tolls would likely still stay in place. If tolls are removed, maintenance of the road would be turned over to the state, which does not have enough revenue to manage the additional upkeep.

“UNLIKE THE STATE HIGHWAY FUNDING MECHANISM—WHERE GAS TAXES PAID LOCALLY CAN BE ALLOCATED [FOR ROADS] ANYWHERE IN TEXAS—TOLL REVENUE FROM HARRIS COUNTY TOLL ROADS STAY IN THIS REGION,” EVANS SAID.

While toll revenue in Harris County is used for debt repayment, funds are also transferred to the county's mobility fund for countywide road improvements and acts as a built-in source for future repairs and maintenance for existing toll roads.

