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Are the 95 Express Lanes improving traffic in NoVa?



By [Ari Ashe](http://wtop.com/author/ari-ashe/) | [@ariasheWTOP](https://twitter.com/ariasheWTOP)
March 15, 2015 3:45 am

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A survey out this week from 95 Express Lanes operator Transurban shows the lanes are popular and help reduce traffic in the corridor, but not everyone agrees with those conclusions.

The Transurban study finds that two out of three drivers rate the 95 Express Lanes positively. The toll operator also reports that two out of five drivers carpool or slug more than they did before the 95 Express Lanes opened in late December.

“Not only are we seeing really widespread support among folks that are out there using the 95 Express Lanes and paying a toll for those trips. But also the non-users are reporting a strong benefit for the region. So even the folks that aren’t out there paying a toll, we’re seeing very positive remarks from those non-users,” says Transurban spokesman Mike McGurk.

But some commuters disagree with McGurk’s conclusion.

“I travel I-95 from Exit 152 in Dumfries to the exit for Mt. Vernon-Ft. Belvoir at the Occoquan. I leave home at 5:30 a.m. heading north and return at 2:30 p.m. heading south. Prior to the 95 Express Lanes, I had a relatively smooth commute with an occasional backup at the merge from the PW Parkway going north. Since the opening of the Express Lanes the backup has begun south of Exit 156, sometimes as far as Exit 152/Dumfries and extends to north of the PW Parkway each morning,” says Phil Freeman of Dumfries, Va.

His commute back is not much better.

“Coming home, I used to encounter a slowdown around the truck scales heading south. Now a new back up begins north of the Occoquan bridge and extends to the PW Parkway. The backup at the truck scales still exist even though the large Express Lane merge south of Dumfries has moved further south. Compounding the problem is the location of the access points for the Express lane. They are north of the exits for Route 1 and Route 123 making them useless for north and south bound commuters to Ft Belvoir and Fairfax/Tysons,” says Freeman.

On WTOP.com, a user named “Farva” agrees with Freeman’s opinion.

“You’re not alone in that assessment. I-95 has become horrible now and Transurban wants to pull the same stunt with I-66,” he writes.

Other key findings are that the top reason drivers tell Transurban that they use the 95 Express Lanes is to visit friends and family.

“I think that speaks a lot about the 95 Express Lanes as an option for weekend travel. Whether you’re visiting someone, getting out of town, we’re seeing those toll paying customers like having that option of the 95 Express Lanes to help save some time on those trips,” says McGurk.

Seventy percent of those who use the 95 Express Lanes also use the 495 Express Lanes. More than one out of three use the lanes to commute to and from work.

Transurban surveyed 1,266 drivers online during February 2015.

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