

Richmond VA airport gets connector to VA895 Pocahontas pike

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Thursday Feb 13 Transurban is planning to open a neat \$40m spur off their VA895 Pocahontas Parkway providing a direct highspeed connection to Richmond Airport and surrounding industry and hotels. The project involves a new interchange just south of the airport and 1.6 miles (2300m) 2x2 lane expressway with bridges over local streets and a rail line.

The west facing ramps for traffic not using the mainline toll plaza will be tolled - transponder plus credit card payment, no cash.

Tolls at the Connector ramp toll points will be \$1.25 for cars, the same as the existing east facing ramps at the Laburnum Av interchange. Mainline plaza tolls are \$3.00 for cars.



Rich Prezioso, a project manager for Transurban told us the design-build contract for the Airport **transurban** Connector with American Infrastructure has gone extremely well. The project is right on budget, with a perfect safety record and will open in 22 months versus the 24 months allowed by contract.

The project will improve travel times for existing traffic between the Airport area to the east and Chesterfield County in the southwestern parts of the metro area. It will eliminate several miles on local streets and at-grade intersections for traffic that enters and exits a few miles southwest of the airport at the existing Laburnum Av interchange.

The new Airport Connector will attract some new traffic because it will provide more direct and faster trips between the east (I-295) and the Airport area, Prezioso says.

But apparently they aren't expecting any major increases in traffic near-term with the local economy flat.

Rather, it seems, the Parkway with the Connector will improve connections such that, if and when regional growth resumes, the area will be more attractive for development. The Airport area is already partially developed with light industry including a major Nabisco foods factory, Hilex Poly plastic bag manufacturing, a couple of print works, trucking yards, cold storage for foods and such. It also has a collection of automobile servicing and rental car places, and hotels.

I-64 is still the expressway route of preference for trips between Richmond's central business district and the Airport. The Richmond metro area with a population of 1.21m supports heavily trafficked radial routes, but in a metro area of such modest size fringe area routes like VA895 are

liable to generate modest traffic volumes - especially when there is a toll while competing routes are tax supported, hence free to use.