Poll shows HOT lanes despised by public

By Lori Geary

ATLANTA — It’s clear new toll lanes on Interstate 85 are not popular with some drivers, but a new InsiderAdvantage/Channel 2 Action News poll puts them in a historic place alongside the Northern Arc and the last Georgia state flag.

The poll asked registered voters in metro Atlanta, "If you are aware of the I-85 HOT lanes what are your opinions?" A staggering low 4 percent said the lanes are effective. Twenty-eight percent said the lanes are not effective, and 45 percent said the lanes are making traffic worse. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent.

"This is the most hated concept probably ever created in the history of government. I’ve never seen anything like it," said InsiderAdvantage CEO Matt Towery.

"It says they need to take those lanes and immediately eliminate them," Towery told Channel 2 political reporter Lori Geary.

Drivers using the interstate daily told Geary the toll lanes have done nothing but make their travels worse.

"If you are aware of the I-85 H.O.T. lanes what are your opinions?"
Effective: 4%
Not Effective: 28%
Make Traffic Worse: 45%
No Opinion: 23%

Margin of Error: +/- 5% -- 212 Metro Atlanta registered voters
Source: InsiderAdvantage

"It's almost double commute times on people living in Gwinnett. Drive over any overpass over I-85 and look. It's a mess down there. It's nuts," driver Bill Eudy said.

"I will never buy one of those Peach Passes," driver Bessie Shavers said. "For people to have to put three people (in a car) to ride, that's ridiculous."

Towery said he doesn't think the toll lanes will hurt Gov. Nathan Deal who took office with the toll lane construction well under way, but he told Geary the new toll lanes will make it extremely difficult to pass a penny sales tax for transportation that voters will be asked to vote on next year.

"They are building nothing but bad will in a year that they're trying to pass a transportation SPLOST. You can't build bad will and also at the same time ask people to vote for an increase in taxes," Towery said.

"It's a total disaster. Without doubt one of the biggest blunders in the history of Georgia politics since I've been covering it," Towery said.

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