

## Ah, that new bus smell. GoDurham unveils fleet additions

The Herald-Sun By Joe Johnson August 24, 2017

Ah, that new bus smell.

City bus riders in Durham will soon be able to enjoy the freshness of a new ride as GoDurham sends 12 new buses into service.

Workers put the finishing touches on the 40-foot-long buses earlier this week. They were manufactured by Gillig at a plant in California. Six will replace old buses, some in use since 2003, and six were purchased with proceeds from the local transit-designated half-cent sales tax.

"These new vehicles will help us better serve our customers and make our service even more reliable," GoDurham transit administrator Brian Fahey said in a news release. "Our oldest vehicles are 14 years old, and as we retire them, our maintenance team can spend less time on major repairs meant to extend the life of older vehicles and focus on other initiatives to improve the safety and comfort of the fleet."

More new vehicles are coming. GoDurham ACCESS has ordered five light-transit vehicles to provide paratransit trips to those unable to use fixed-route services for medical reasons.

GoDurham provided nearly 7 million rides over 24 routes last year.

## New turnpike tech dropping prices of NC Quick Pass transponders

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge August 22, 2017

The North Carolina Turnpike Authority is lowering the prices of the NC Quick Pass transponders used on toll roads after switching to a new system that aims to work with all units from across the country.

Currently, the transponders are only compatible with certain networks. The North Carolina Quick Pass transponders, for example, work in Florida and Georgia; the E-ZPass transponders work in 18 states. But the feds are considering ways to have every toll road in the U.S. on the same system. And North Carolina's new technology aims to be the first to do that – while passing along cost savings.

"This is something that's never been done before," says Beau Memory, executive director of the NCTA. "We'll be the first state in the nation to read all of the transponder protocol that are being considered for national interoperability."

Memory says, starting Aug. 30, the NC Quick Pass transponder will be free – formerly \$5. And the NC Quick Pass E-ZPass transponders will drop from \$20 to \$7.40.

**Read:** [Why a new 540 interchange is a big deal in the Triangle](#)

That's because the Turnpike is implementing new interoperable technology that comes at a lower cost. "We're simply passing the savings on," Memory explains.

More interesting than the price, however, is what the new transponders will be able to do in the coming years.

"For us, what that means is, no matter what technology emerges from that process ... we're already ready for it and we can do it," he says.

The new system cost the state about \$1.4 million to retrofit and implement.

As with transponders currently on the highways, the passes save customers 35 percent on their tolls over the pay-by-mail method.

And it's not the only new program for local toll road Triangle Expressway. Earlier this year, [the U.S. Department of Transportation named it one of 10 locations that will soon pilot research for autonomous vehicles](#).

Memory says he hopes to have more clarity on what that will mean for the state this fall.

## The Diverging Diamond Interchange Is Coming to a Road Near You

CityLab.com By Laura Bliss August 21, 2017 <http://bit.ly/2iMKpXg>

The brainchild of an [engineering graduate student in the early 2000s](#), diverging diamond interchanges, or DDIs, work rather ingeniously. Rather make drivers turn at a right angle to merge onto a highway, the two directions of traffic diverge and ribbon over one another. One lane peels off to funnel cars onto the highway, and they never have to turn against traffic.

In the past two weeks alone, Florida opened all 12 lanes of the [nation's largest DDI near Sarasota](#). Near Pittsburgh, a brand new DNA-shaped interchange is [confusing some Pennsylvania drivers and delighting others](#). Southeast Calgary opened another one this week, Saskatchewan [awaits](#) its own, there's news that Arizona and Virginia are considering proposals to build out more. Here's a [full list of nearly 90 U.S. locations](#) where they're planned or operational.

DDIs are proliferating because they're safer than a traditional four-way intersection. Where two, two-lane roadways intersect, drivers have 32 separate opportunities to collide into each other. In a DDI, there are only 14. The DDI in Springfield, Missouri—the first in the U.S.—[showed a 60 percent reduction in crashes](#) since it was installed in 2009, compared to the old design. They can also [be more cost-efficient](#) than traditional diamond interchanges.

Urbanists might grump that there's no such thing as a "good" highway onramp, but some DDIs come with [walking and biking paths alongside the twisting lanes](#) (separated, of course), with engineers applauding themselves for the freer flow of feet and bikes created. ('Cause if cars don't need to stop for traffic, neither do people.) And with traffic fatalities rising at alarming rates and funding to rebuild decaying roads getting tighter, the DDI seems like a positive trend for both drivers and DOTs. "Human beings, I know, hate change," Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf [said](#) on the occasion of his state's first. "But this really works."

## RDU commences Vision2040 revamp

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge August 17, 2017

Armed with a new \$16.6 million federal grant, Raleigh-Durham International Airport is executing on its Vision2040 project – at least on the airfield, where officials are about to start rehabilitating the General Aviation taxiway.

It's the first project from the Vision2040 plan to actually begin construction.

**Read:** [RDU airport CEO talks growth, growth, growth](#)

The plan, [passed in October](#), is intended to accommodate continued growth for the next two decades. It includes [ground transportation improvements](#) as well as a full replacement of the airport's sole international runway.

While the design priority continues to be finalizing plans to [replace the runway](#), the airport has expanded its scope to planning ahead for other aspects of the [RDU](#) revamp, including major parking additions to accommodate passenger growth.

According to [RDU](#) Airport Authority CEO Michael Landguth, 532,289 passengers departed RDU in the month of July, a 4.7 percent increase over the same time period last year. It was the 41 st consecutive month of year-over-year passenger increases. Landguth says that over the past five years, passenger traffic for July has increased 25 percent.

“We have approximately 100,000 more people per month compared to 2012,” he explains. “That is a staggering percent.”

And that means more traffic to and from the airport, which is why the Economy 3 lot, currently at 3,820 spaces, will increase to 9,653. Plans call for adding 1,600 spaces and relocating both Economy 4 and employee parking to the acreage.

In all, it's a 64-acre expansion – and the first project off the airfield to hit the preliminary design phase. Space vacated by Economy 4 and employee parking will accommodate future growth with General Aviation. Preliminary design work for the Economy 4 plan eclipses \$370,000 – with full plans to be presented to the board in June of next year. Once plans are outlined, environmental assessments can begin.

RS&H is the consultant for the designs.

[RDU's](#) larger plans also call for the possible lease of airport-owned land for development. The funds would help pay for the massive plan.

**Read:** [How much RDU's revamp will cost](#)

Currently, much of that acreage is used for bike trails – which is why many have spoken out against developing the land. Airport spokesman Andrew Sawyer says no timeline has been released for its decision on what, exactly, to do with the tract.

RDU also approved the purchase of four new electric buses to replace the oldest of its 14 diesel bus fleet for \$3.4 million; \$1.6 million of that sum is covered by a federal grant.

The buses will arrive in 21 months.