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# How to ride I-77 Express in North Carolina for free



An NC Quick Pass transponder allows drivers with two or more passengers to declare HOV3+ and use the I-77 Express lanes for free.

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By I-77 Mobility Partners

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If you're one of the many parents who will drive their children to school this fall, you might want to obtain an NC Quick Pass transponder. An NC Quick Pass transponder allows drivers with two or more passengers to declare HOV3+ and use the I-77 Express lanes for free. It doesn't matter how many trips you take. So long as you declare HOV3+, your ride will never cost a dime.

According to the Federal Highway Administration's National Household Travel Survey, more than half (54.2%) of U.S. students ages five to 17 are driven to school in private vehicles. Let's face it, if you're the dedicated chauffeur in your family, mornings can be hectic. You don't just need to get your children to school. Perhaps you have an important business meeting, or a doctor's appointment, or dozens of chores to complete. That's where I-77 Express can come to the rescue. After declaring HOV3+, you can ease into the express lanes and make sure you stay on schedule.

### **Why the NC Quick Pass transponder program is unique**

HOV3+ is a unique program between I-77 Mobility Partners and the NCDOT. In addition to parents, the program is also proving popular with carpoolers, businesspeople and family and friends who are heading to football games and other social events. In January of 2023, more than 15,000 vehicles used I-77 Express for free. By June, the number grew to more than 20,000.

### **Choosing the right transponder pass for you**

NC Quick Pass transponders come in three types.

1. The NC Quick Pass sticker (free),
2. The NC Quick Pass (\$6.69),
3. The NC Quick Pass Flex (\$16.49).

Declaring HOV3+ with the first two types requires drivers to set the status with the new NC Quick Pass app or on their computer 15 minutes before they travel in the express lanes. With the NC Quick Pass Flex, the declaration is instantaneous with the flip of a switch.

Virginia and Maryland E-Z Pass Flex accounts can also be used to declare HOV3+ on I-77 Express. But that's it. Although other E-Z Passes, Peach Pass and SunPass transponders can be used to pay for trips on I-77 Express, they can't be used to declare HOV3+. The Charlotte, North Carolina, area is full of people who've migrated from other states. If you're one of them, you may want to swap your old transponder for a new NC Quick Pass.

### **An innovative transportation solution**

A first of its kind for North Carolina, I-77 Express is a public-private partnership between the North Carolina Department of Transportation and I-77 Mobility Partners that developed an innovative solution to a critical transportation corridor that was often plagued by congestion. After responding to a competitive state-led procurement process, I-77 Mobility Partners secured more than \$500 million in private financing – money that did not come from taxpayers' pockets – allowing the NCDOT to make major improvements to 26.2 miles of I-77 roughly 20 years of ahead of schedule.

Those improvements have decreased travel times for all drivers – not just those who choose to use the express lanes. For example, prior to the start of construction in 2015, drivers needed about 45 minutes during the morning or evening rush hour to travel from Charlotte to Mooresville, North Carolina. In the free general-purpose lanes, the same trip now takes about 30 minutes.

In addition, I-77 Express' HOV3+ program – as well as the facts that motorcyclists and riders of public transit can also use the express lanes for free – encourages mobility practices that align with the region's environmental and sustainability goals. Keeping traffic moving, promoting carpooling or transit ridership reduces idling in traffic, decreases emissions and increases economic productivity.

Don't miss out. As summer comes to a close, and your family start getting back into your normal routines, be sure to put an NC Quick Pass transponder on your to-do list. Visit [www.ncquickpass.com](http://www.ncquickpass.com) or an NC Quick Pass office to get yours.

*I-77 Mobility Partners LLC financed, developed, designed, constructed, operates and maintains the 26-mile I-77 Express corridor as part of the first public-private partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. NCDOT retains ownership of the roadway and helps ensure I-77 Mobility Partners adheres to the standards of their*

*contractual partnership.*

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