FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ILLINOIS TOLLWAY TO LAUNCH FIRST-IN-NATION TECHNOLOGY TEST SITE
“Living laboratory” will allow testing of new tolling products and technology on toll roads

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – The Illinois Tollway today announced it will build a unique test site to improve existing tolling products and study future technologies, including smartphone tolling applications and I-PASS transponders that instantly confirm toll payments.

The site will be a “living laboratory” built on an existing segment of the Tollway system to test tolling options in real-world conditions involving a complex mix of vehicles and traffic patterns. The test site will be the first of its kind in the nation and is scheduled to open in 2015.

“This project will help us fine tune current technologies to improve their performance and control our costs,” Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur said. “The test site also will keep the Tollway a leader in the development and implementation of exciting new tolling technologies that will make traveling on our system easier for our customers.”

The test site will be located on the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294) near the Touhy Avenue Toll Plaza. The $2.7 million required to design, equip and build the test site can be accommodated within the Tollway’s current 2014 budget.

The site, which will consist of two overhead gantries near the toll plaza, will allow the Tollway to experiment with new technologies in live traffic to obtain a typical mix of passenger cars, large commercial trucks and other types of vehicles.

Among the technologies that could be studied there are universal I-PASS transponders designed to be read by different tolling systems in other states, as well as feedback transponders that would confirm when tolls are paid and remind drivers when their account balances are low.

The site also could be used to determine whether improved camera technology could more accurately capture license plate images of passing vehicles, as well as study the possible use of new smartphone applications that would allow customers to pay tolls automatically while driving.

Those studies could help the Tollway maximize revenues while also hold down operating costs. The roadway test site potentially could generate new revenues by allowing the Tollway to charge other agencies and private manufacturers to test new equipment and technologies there.

About the Illinois Tollway
The Illinois Tollway is a user-fee system that receives no state or federal funds for maintenance and operations. The agency maintains and operates 286 miles of interstate tollways in 12 counties in Northern Illinois, including the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88), the Veterans Memorial Tollway (I-355), the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80).

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