



95 EXPRESS



News Clip

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Subject: **U.S. transportation boss on I-95 project: I like it**

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BY ERIKA BERAS

The new express toll lanes on Interstate 95 have come under intense criticism from South Florida drivers, but Washington's top transportation official said Friday she likes them just fine.

"We certainly are aware that there were some traffic crashes when the lanes first opened and people were not used to how they were being laid out and how they were being operated," said Mary Peters, U.S. transportation secretary. "While we are very sad that that happened, we are very satisfied that Florida DOT as well as local agencies and Florida Highway Administration have taken steps to prevent that kind of motorist confusion in the future."

Peters said the northbound toll lanes could be a model for other cities with traffic congestion. Drivers will pay a premium to access the lanes, separated from the rest of I-95 by candlestick-style dividers.

Peters didn't actually drive the lanes, but held a press conference underneath the highway at Northwest 54th Street to tout their benefits.

The 95 Express Project, which received \$63 million in federal funding, was launched to reduce traffic tie-ups in South Florida, which consistently ranks at the top of worst-driver and most-congested roadways lists.

Slated to officially launch this month, it features High Occupancy Traffic lanes that will ultimately run through Miami-Dade and Broward counties. A surge of accidents has already occurred as motorists on one of the region's most heavily trafficked roads switched lanes at the last moment or didn't understand the signage.

Peters spoke on the one-year anniversary of the Minneapolis bridge collapse that killed 13 people. She said the nation's infrastructure is slowly improving as fewer bridges are classified as "functionally obsolete." She also said bridges of the same design as the one in Minneapolis are being inspected.

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"I can tell you that the state of the infrastructure in the nation today is improving," she said. "I'm comfortable telling you today that we should not have another incident like that."

The secretary briefly outlined a new plan to revamp the federal transportation program to make it easier for cities to fight congestion.

She also addressed Miami-Dade's stalled North Corridor, one of three interlinked Metrorail projects collectively known as the Orange Line, saying that the project has to "maintain a cost-effectiveness of at least medium to be approved."