

IBTTA

TOLLING. MOVING SMARTER.



NTTA
NORTH TEXAS TOLLWAY AUTHORITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Michael Rey

214-224-2237

mrey@ntta.org

The International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association Announces the North Texas Tollway Authority as a 2022 Toll Excellence Award Winner



WASHINGTON, D.C. – The North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) is among six toll facility operators and one private sector company that have won the industry’s premier 2022 *Toll Excellence Award* from the [International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association](https://www.ibtta.org/) (IBTTA) – the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the businesses that serve them.

All the winners are global industry leaders and role models, performing outstanding work by finding less costly solutions for drivers, creating stronger customer support services, improving safety, enhancing sustainable clean water practices, and embracing new technologies.

NTTA was recognized for its Customer Service and Marketing Outreach.

The advertising and promotional campaign featured a diverse cast of 23 funny, friendly and relatable puppet TollTag ambassadors. See examples of [videos](#), [social posts](#), [billboards](#) and [digital ads](#) used in the campaign that helps North Texas drivers experience the value of the TollTag and the savings it provides.

“Our values at NTTA include creating an environment of ideas that not only benefits North Texas and our customers, but also pushes the boundaries on what successful tolling can be,” said James Hofmann, CEO/Executive Director of the North Texas Tollway Authority. “It is humbling and rewarding to have our peers see the value in those efforts, specifically the creativity in our marketing campaign and its ability to track measurable results. This recognition helps fortify our determination to continue finding new and innovative ways to show drivers the value of tolling and the TollTag as part of transportation solutions worldwide.”

The awards will be presented during IBTTA’s [90th Annual Meeting & Exhibition](#) in Austin, Texas on Sept. 19, 2022. During the award ceremony, one recipient will be honored with the President’s Award for Excellence, the association’s highest achievement.

“The quest for the highest quality never ends in the toll and transportation industry, and these awardees represent excellence in meeting customer and community needs,” said Patrick Jones, Executive Director and CEO of IBTTA. “By sharing their innovative solutions for evolving transportation challenges, they are making the industry stronger and more resilient.”

Each year IBTTA presents the [Toll Excellence Awards](#) to highlight the very best projects, innovations, and solutions from the international tolling industry. The awards encourage the industry to share and celebrate new ideas and emerging practices.

This year’s recipients of IBTTA’s 2022 Toll Excellence Awards are:

Administration and Finance: E-470 Public Highway Authority (Colorado)

Customer Service and Marketing Outreach: North Texas Tollway Authority

Safety: Indiana Toll Road

Social Responsibility: Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission

Technology: Transportation Corridor Agencies (operators of The Toll Roads of Orange County, Calif.)

Toll Operations, Engineering and Maintenance: Harris County Toll Road Authority (Texas)

Private Sector Innovation: Electronic Transaction Consultants

“For more than 20 years, the *Toll Excellence Awards* recognize creative, innovative, and positive programs that set new standards for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the

businesses that serve them,” said David Machamer, Chair of IBTTA’s *Toll Excellence Awards* Committee and Assistant Deputy Director for Toll and PIKEPASS Operations with the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. “We applaud their achievements that are already helping drivers and keeping our roads safe.”

Descriptions of 2022 Toll Excellence Award Winners

Administration and Finance: E-470 Public Highway Authority

Starting in January 2022, the E-470 Public Highway Authority lowered toll rates for all its customers despite the pandemic. The Authority’s debt and financial management strategy during the pandemic focused on achieving a long-standing goal of reducing and leveling the debt service profile. Throughout the pandemic, the Authority didn’t request or seek state and federal funds. Instead, it relied only on strategic planning and financial strategies to ensure its capital plan, debt plan, and overall credit rating remained strong. Even with the economic downturn, E-470’s Board of Directors extended 2020 toll rates through 2021 without any toll rate increases. The Board also approved the 2020 bond refunding plan and updates to the Authority’s debt management policy, which included for the first time, financial goals for the future. These goals included debt service coverage levels, bond ratings, fund balance levels, toll rate management, and self-funding its capital program and paying off debt early, if possible. This enabled the Authority to move forward with its long-standing goals to restructure and level its future debt service profile, achieve \$80 million in savings in the 2020 bond transaction, additional savings with the 2021 bond transaction of \$2 million, as well as lower toll rates for all customers.

Customer Service and Marketing Outreach: North Texas Tollway Authority

The North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) and its advertising agency, The Integer Group, developed an unusual and creative marketing campaign focused on humanizing its transponder, the TollTag, and tolling. The campaign featured a diverse cast of puppet ambassadors that emphasized a message about the value of both and presented a call to action for drivers in North Texas to open a TollTag account. To measure its success, NTTA used digital enhancements to directly track new TollTag accounts opened from digital ads. During the year-long campaign, the puppets became friendly, trusted advocates for NTTA and its customers. The campaign transformed the TollTag brand and led to a 300 percent increase in positive social engagement.

Safety: Indiana Toll Road (ITR Concession Company, LLC)

Between 2015 and 2018, more than 2,000 people were killed nationwide by wrong-way drivers. In Indiana, the ITR Concession Company (ITR) finds that unacceptable. In 2019, ITR reached out to trusted partners and began designing a wrong-way detection system that focused on the two overwhelming root causes of a driver entering the road in the wrong direction—intoxication and confusion. The system has safely identified 65 separate incidents of a patron traveling the wrong way on a mainline ramp through active and concentrated alerts to wrong-way drivers, advanced warning to patrons on the road, immediate alarming into ITR’s Traffic Management

Center and Indiana State Police, and alerts to all management staff. All 65 wrong-way drivers safely corrected their travel and continued in the proper direction without a single accident.

Social Responsibility: Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission

“Responsibility Matters” is one of five core values in the PA Turnpike’s strategic plan, which emphasizes that the organization embodies “diversity, integrity, and sustainability in all our practices.” Responsibility Matters inspires and guides the Engineering Department’s decision making concerning the PA Turnpike’s Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit and its commitment to preventing and reducing stormwater pollution in a sustainable manner. As part of this commitment, the Turnpike employs numerous strategies to reduce pollutants across the 552-mile system, meeting and exceeding regulatory mandates. The MS4 program’s vision and organizational structure has enabled the PA Turnpike to boost awareness about the importance of preventing stormwater pollution runoff, nurture interdepartmental communication, develop innovative solutions for stormwater management and compliance, and improve efficiency of its stormwater-management operations.

Technology: Transportation Corridor Agencies (operators of The Toll Roads of Orange County)

In 2012, the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA)—operators of State Routes 73, 133, 241 and 261 in Orange County, Calif.—became the nation’s first tolling agency to offer a free app for account management. Since then, the app has become a core component of TCA’s customer service offering. The app—available for download via the App Store or Google Play—is regularly updated to make The Toll Roads experience even more convenient and user-friendly for drivers. Today, the app allows users to open a new account, manage an existing account, pay tolls without an account, resolve violations and more. Each year the app is used to make approximately 350,000 payments, and each month it has approximately 37,000 new downloads. Of all new accounts, 13 percent are established via the app, and 13 percent of all tolls paid without an account are paid using the app.

Toll Operations, Engineering and Maintenance: Harris County Toll Road Authority

The Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) created a ground-breaking image review and verification system that leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI) while implementing an innovative program for its staff to reach an unprecedented level of accuracy and efficiency in transaction processing. The system went live in 2019, but at that time, it needed constant feedback from human beings to validate and inform the AI system. When COVID-19 struck, HCTRA eliminated the physical collection of cash to protect its staff and pulled toll booth operators from the toll plazas. HCTRA’s commitment to its valued workforce led it to identify opportunities to retain these workers within the agency in roles such as customer service and back-office positions and establish new roles. HCTRA created strategic community partnerships to develop a first-in-the-nation professional certification for image review and form the HCTRA Opportunity Academy. In the past two years, the integration of AI with human capital has delivered a system reaching 99.996% accuracy. By connecting staff to innovative technology and incorporating a one-of-a-kind opportunity program that offers professional growth, HCTRA built on its reputation as an industry innovator with high accuracy of license plate-based transactions per day and preserved the customer experience.

Private Sector Innovation: Electronic Transaction Consultants (ETC)

ETC was chartered to develop and implement an integrated Accounts Receivable Management (ARM) application initially for use by Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA). The ARM application was specifically designed and developed to collect on past due receivables along with the functionality to perform hearings, adjudication, and/or litigation. The ARM application was to be integrated with the ETC riteHorizon Back Office System implemented at HCTRA, along with electronic delivery of data and documents to the Harris County Attorney Office and County Clerk's Office. The ARM application is a consolidated solution with the integration of advanced technologies, including a modern low-code user interface (UI) and cloud infrastructure, and can be integrated easily with any back-office system, tolling or otherwise. The system provides seamless integration across the various processes, with a clear timeline for each collection and legal action escalation points. This enables users to quickly evaluate each case and decide on the next steps.

For more information or to speak with Pat Jones, Executive Director and CEO of IBTTA or one of the Toll Excellence Award Winners, please contact Jennifer Walsh, Director of Communications, at jwalsh@ibtta.org or 202.599.5474 or visit www.ibtta.org.

***[The International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association \(IBTTA\)](http://www.ibtta.org)** is the worldwide association for the owners and operators of toll facilities and the businesses that serve them. Founded in 1932, IBTTA has members in more than 20 countries on six continents. Through advocacy, thought leadership and education, members are implementing state-of-the-art, innovative user-based transportation financing solutions to address the critical infrastructure challenges of the 21st century. For more information, visit www.ibtta.org or follow us on Twitter [@IBTTA](https://twitter.com/IBTTA).*

About NTTA

[The North Texas Tollway Authority](http://www.ntta.org), a political subdivision of the state of Texas, is authorized to acquire, construct, maintain, repair and operate turnpike projects across the North Texas region. The [nine-member board](#) is comprised of Chairman John Mahalik; Vice Chairwoman Jane Willard; and Directors Tim Carter, Lynn Gravley, Mojoy Haddad, Pete Kamp, Marcus Knight, Scott Levine and George "Tex" Quesada.

NTTA is composed of member counties Dallas, Denton, Collin and Tarrant. It also serves Ellis and Johnson counties. NTTA owns and operates the Dallas North Tollway, President George Bush Turnpike, Sam Rayburn Tollway, Addison Airport Toll Tunnel, Lewisville Lake Toll Bridge, Mountain Creek Lake Bridge, Chisholm Trail Parkway, and 360 Tollway. It raises capital for construction projects through the issuance of turnpike revenue bonds. NTTA toll projects are not a part of the state highway system and receive no direct tax funding. Tolls are collected to repay debt and to operate and maintain the roadways.

###