

Elevated Expressway witnessing 50% higher traffic than expected; almost 1 million use it in first month

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Online Desk: Traffic flow on the Dhaka Elevated Expressway has exceeded all expectations and targets, with over 30,000 vehicles on average using it daily till October 2, marking a month since it was opened to the public on September 3. A total of 900,627 vehicles used the expressway till October 2 since it was formally opened by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on, and a total of Tk 7.29 crore was collected as toll during the period, said Dhaka Elevated Expressway Project Director AHMS Akhtar.

Private cars, taxis, sports utility vehicles, minibuses (less than 16 seats), and light trucks (less than 3 tonnes) are among the Category-1 vehicles that have to pay a Tk 80 toll to use the Expressway. During the first month, 892,250 of the vehicles that used the expressway were in the category, accounting for over 99 percent of all vehicles. Medium vehicles (up to 6 wheels) are included in Category-2, with a Tk 320 toll. The motorway was used by 1,468 vehicles in this category. Trucks with more than six wheels are classified as Category-3, with a toll of Tk 400. There were 49 of these vehicles on the expressway during the first month. And category 4 or all sorts of buses (16 seats or more) pay a toll of 160 taka, with a total of 6,860 vehicles in this category. It accounts for 0.76 percent of all vehicles that used the expressway during the time period. “We are happy as more vehicles are using the Dhaka Elevated Expressway exceeding our expected target,” said Akhtar.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally opened the Airport-Farmgate section of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway by paying a Tk 2,000 toll for her motorcade’s 25 vehicles on September 2. The following day, the route from the Airport to Farmgate was opened for vehicular movements. It takes 10–12 minutes to travel from the Airport to Farmgate using the expressway. “Though we expected that on average around 20,000 vehicles would use the expressway daily, now the number has increased to more than 30,000 vehicles,” Akhtar also said, which means the traffic witnessed is a significant 50% higher than expected. Replying to a question, the project director said the city’s residents from the Airport to Tejgaon area have been witnessing slightly smoother movement of vehicles on the streets. “We will get the visible benefits when the expressway is fully completed and opened to the public.”

The Dhaka Elevated Expressway will run from the capital’s Kawla to Kutubkhali area of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway via Kuril-Banani-Mohakhali-Tejgaon-Moghbar-Kamalapur-Sayedabad-Jatrabari after completion of the full project, the project director added. However, public-private transports are not using the expressway for fear of a passenger scarcity. Even the inter-district buses of Mohakhali do not use the expressway since the ramps close to the bus stations are not in operation yet. As a result, the city’s excess vehicle pressure is not decreasing. When the project director’s attention was drawn to this, he said construction of the Mohakhali ramp as well as other ramps of the expressway would be completed soon.

Once those are completed, the present traffic flow will further increase on the expressway, reducing the pressure of transport on the streets under the expressway, he added. Communication Expert Prof Shamsul Hoque of BUET said the problem of excessive pressure of vehicles on the streets is yet to improve visibly after opening of the expressway partially. There is no scope for improvement, he said. Streets near the landing points of the expressway experience severe traffic congestion during peak hours. Unless there is a marked increase in public transport options available to commuters, the overall situation will not improve, he added.

In response to a question, the communication expert also stated that the project's actual impact, positive or otherwise, can be determined once the elevated expressway is fully operational. Contacted, Joint Commissioner (Traffic-North) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Abu Saleh Md Raihan told UNB that traffic movement has eased, even if slightly, from the Airport to Banani as most of the private cars are using the expressway. Though bottlenecks exist at some of the exit points of ramps like Indira Road of Farmgate and Love Road of Tejgaon Industrial Area, that situation will improve after some necessary modifications are brought to the related streets, the J=joint commissioner added.