

Chile's Santiago sees the ACS Group open its new construction work to road goers

The Vespucio Norte Express urban motorway will be used by around 50,000 vehicles a day and has involved an outlay of 400 million dollars

Yesterday marked the grand opening of the ACS Group's third toll motorway concession in Chile's capital city. The Américo Vespucio Norte Express, which spans 29 kilometres, will be operated over the next 30 years under the "free-flow" toll system, meaning vehicles won't have to stop. The opening ceremonies for the new urban infrastructure, which has been finished five months ahead of schedule, boasted the presence of the President of the Republic of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, as well as the Minister of Public Works, Jaime Estévez.

In order to successfully complete the project, which marks the ACS Group's third toll motorway concession in Santiago and is expected to see around 50,000 vehicles a day, construction work and improvements were carried out on 4 bridges and 20 different structures, including junctions and flyovers, as well as on 25 covered and lighted footbridges. The project also led to the dismantling of all the traffic lights along the route and to the construction of free service roads aimed at local traffic.

The concession boasts one the world's most cutting-edge electronic toll collection systems, which takes the form of transmitter-receiver antennas positioned on fixed gateways and repeaters fitted to the vehicles themselves, thereby allowing road users to be charged without them even needing to slow down.

The infrastructure as a whole, which will link Chile's capital city to 9 northern districts and the airport, involved a net outlay of around 400 million dollars and will benefit over 2 million people by more than halving the time spent travelling and by improving the city's urban infrastructure.

Construction of the Vespucio Norte Express urban motorway got underway in April 2003. The consortium responsible for the work is made up of the ACS Group (with a 54% stake), Hochtief (45%) and the Chilean construction companies Belfi and Brotec (each with a 0.5% holding). In order to finance the construction and operation of the new motorway, June 2004 witnessed the largest bond issue ever seen in Chile as ACS Group and its partners from the consortium made 425 million dollars in bonds available to investors. The bonds were snapped up in 50 seconds as demand outstripped offer by two to one.

With this latest opening to road goers, the ACS Group has become a leading figure in Santiago's urban electronic toll motorway network due to its presence in three of its existing five motorways: the Nor-Poniente, which has just been opened and which completes Santiago's Américo Vespucio ring road; the Norte-Sur, which was opened to traffic in December 2004, and the El-Salto Kennedy, which was awarded to Dragados Concesiones de Infraestructuras and Hochtief in September 2004 and which will link up with the stretch that was opened yesterday towards the end of 2007. The ACS Group also has a holding in the intercity Santiago-Valparaíso-Viña del Mar road, which has been up and running for the last few years.

Madrid, January 5, 2006