



# 95 EXPRESS



## News Clip

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Subject: **What You Need to Know Before Tolls Open on Interstate 95**

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### **What you need to know before tolls open on Interstate 95**

*BY LARRY LEBOWITZ*

The state's grand experiment converting the under enforced High Occupancy Vehicle or HOV lanes into High Occupancy Toll or HOT lanes on Interstate 95 is finally ready to begin.

Tolls will officially begin in the northbound express lanes between downtown Miami and the Golden Glades interchange at 6 a.m. Dec. 5. On a typical weekday, 250,000 to 300,000 vehicles ride through this stretch of I-95.

The idea is that the tolls will rise, especially during the weekday afternoon rush hours, when traffic is heaviest and fall when vehicles are freely flowing.

For more information, check out our daily Q&A or call 1-877-959 -3368 or click on [www.95express.com](http://www.95express.com).

**Q.** Why is the state doing this?

**A.** Because it can't widen I-95 without taking a lot of homes or building a wildly expensive elevated tier of new lanes above the current roadway. Because growth outstripped road capacity decades ago. Because the HOV lanes didn't work well. Because the U.S. Department of Transportation is ponying up \$63 million in "seed money" for new approaches to a nationwide urban congestion problem and to enhance more public transportation options.

**Q.** So, how will it work?

**A.** It's an electronic tollway. Solo drivers must have a SunPass to use the express lanes on the left-hand side. It is a straight seven-mile shot, with no exits, from downtown to Golden Glades. Car poolers and others don't need the SunPass (more on this later).

**Q.** What if I want to exit before the Golden Glades interchange?

**A.** No can do. You must stay to the right in the four "free" local lanes.

**Q.** Aw, c'mon. Really?



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**A.** Really. Dodging between the candlestick lane markers is incredibly dangerous to all of the vehicles behind you in the express lanes and especially for the drivers you're about to cut off in the "ree" lanes. Besides the obvious safety issues, drivers could face reckless driving violations starting at \$100.

**Q.** Can't they make another entry/exit point -- say, somewhere between the 95th and 103rd street exits?

**A.** Good question.

Original plans called for an entry/exit merging point between the 95th and 103rd Street exits in Miami Shores. But all of the computer models and engineering studies found that it would have only made congestion worse. The area was too tight to support all of the weaving, so it was eliminated.

**Q.** OK. So when do I need to get over to the right to avoid getting stuck in the toll lanes?

**A.** If you're approaching from the south, stay to the right near the exit for State Road 112, also known as the Airport Expressway, and Interstate 195, aka the Julia Tuttle Causeway.

If you're coming from the west on State Road 112, watch the signs right after the tollbooth. Local traffic that needs to exit before the Golden Glades must stay to the right. The express lane begins on the old HOV ramp to northbound I-95 on the left.

**Q.** Can I get in the express lanes from the Julia Tuttle Causeway?

**A.** Not legally. If you live in Miami Beach and want to use the express lanes to get to the turnpike or the Palmetto Expressway (State Road 826) or points north, you maneuver south from the beach side and enter I-95 north via Interstate 395, aka the MacArthur Causeway. Translation: The Express won't be worth it to most people whose journey starts north of 23rd Street.

**Q.** How much are these toll lanes going to cost?

**A.** Once they're in effect, the tolls will vary.