



95 EXPRESS



News Clip

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I-95 northbound express lanes in Miami-Dade County to open Friday

Beginning Friday, drivers who zip up the northbound I-95 express lanes in Miami-Dade County will have to pay a toll

By Michael Turnbull | South Florida Sun-Sentinel

- How much are you willing to pay to get out of congestion?

We'll find out at 6 a.m. Friday when the state starts charging tolls in the new northbound Interstate 95 express lanes in Miami-Dade County.

Transportation officials can't widen I-95 without tearing down noise walls, homes and businesses or building a deck over the existing lanes. So they had to get creative to keep traffic moving.

South Florida is among five traffic-choked metro areas to share \$848 million in federal grants for innovative

Officials say the solution is charging drivers a higher price to drive during times when demand on the road is highest.

Here's what you need to know about the express lanes and how they work:

Who can use the express lanes?

Buses, registered carpools and vanpools with three or more people, registered hybrids, motorcycles and emergency vehicles can use them for free. Everybody else must pay a toll. No trucks allowed.

How much will it cost?

It depends on the time of day. If traffic is light, you might pay 25 cents. At rush hour, you could pay \$2.65. If traffic becomes gridlocked in the regular "free" lanes, tolls could spike as high as \$6.20.



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How will tolls be collected?

Tolls will be collected with SunPass via overhead sensors. No cash.

How can I get a SunPass transponder?

Buy them at any Publix, CVS pharmacy, Navarro and Sedano's stores. It's \$25 for the older box transponder plus another \$25 to open a prepaid toll account. Or pay \$5 for the new SunPass Mini, a windshield sticker. For information, go sunpass.com or call 888-865-5352.

How will drivers know how much it costs?

Overhead message signs ahead of the entrance will display the toll. How much notice you get depends on where you enter I-95.

What if the toll rate changes after I enter the express lanes?

You're locked into the toll rate you see on the overhead sign as you enter.

Once I enter the express lanes, where can I exit?

You must stay in until the end, just south of the Golden Glades interchange.

If I enter the express lanes by mistake without SunPass, what do I do?

Don't try to dart out between the poles back into the free lanes. Don't stop or back up. Drive until the end. Call SunPass at 888-865-5352.

What is the speed limit?

It's 55 mph, the same as for the regular lanes.



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What if my car stalls or is in an accident?

If you can move your vehicle, pull as close as possible to the center median. Stay inside with the doors locked. Call *FHP (*347) and an operator will send a Road Ranger to help.

Will the state clear wrecks and breakdowns quickly?

Six Road Ranger courtesy patrol trucks will be deployed in the express lane area weekdays. The Road Rangers also will have a flatbed truck to remove vehicles. The Florida Highway Patrol is adding three troopers for the express lanes.

Do carpools need register to use the express lanes?

Yes, go to www.1800234ride.com or call 800-234-RIDE. It's free. Everyone in the carpool must sign up. You'll get a special decal to display on your car. Updates are required every six months, so the state can verify the carpool is active. Each carpool participant will get two reminders. If you ignore the reminders, your license plate will be removed from the system and you will become a toll violator.

Do hybrids need to register?

You first must register with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles for \$5 a year.

If you've already done that, go to www.1800234ride.com or call 800-234-RIDE to register for the express lanes. It's free.

If I'm driving a carpool vehicle or a hybrid and have a SunPass transponder, will I pay a toll?

The state will send you a shield to disable your transponder when you register, so you won't be charged.

How will the state enforce the tolls or catch cheaters?

Cameras will snap license plates of every vehicle without a SunPass transponder or those with no money in their account. The registered owner of the vehicle will be fined \$100 plus the toll.

Are express lanes planned for southbound I-95 or I-95 in Broward?

The southbound express lanes from the Golden Glades to I-395 and northbound between I-395 and I-195 are under construction and will open in the fall of 2009. In 2010, the express lanes will extend to I-595.



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What will the toll money be used for?

A new I-95 rapid bus service, providing a direct bus route from downtown Miami to Fort Lauderdale.

Has this been tried elsewhere?

Tolls have been used on State Road 91 in Orange County, Calif., for 10 years. Other express toll lanes can be found in San Diego, Minneapolis and Denver. In each city unpopular carpool lanes were converted to toll lanes.

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