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News Clip

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Subject: **More I-95 changes to come after toll lanes open**

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More I-95 changes to come after toll lanes open

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

Tolls will officially start in the northbound express lanes between downtown Miami and the Golden Glades interchange at 6 a.m. Friday.

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

For more information, check out our series of frequently asked questions on www.MiamiHerald.com, call 877-959-3368 or go to www.95express.com.

- **Q:** Why are the express lanes only on northbound I-95 in Miami-Dade? Traffic's awful on the southbound side, especially in the morning rush hour.
- **A:** This is just the first phase. Crews are already working on the southbound side. It will require a lot more construction and extensive road closings and delays next spring to raise two bridges at the State Road 112/Interstate 195 interchange. The southbound tolls are likely to start around this time next year.

The last phase, in both directions between Golden Glades and Interstate 595 in Broward County, won't be finished until late 2010 or 2011, depending on funding.

- **Q:** What about those traffic signals that have been sitting at the end of the on-ramps, unused since 2004?
- **A:** They are going to start working soon and will surely be as wildly unpopular as the express lanes were in July when the roadway was reconfigured.

Originally, the DOT was saying that the ramp meters would start at the same time as the tolls. But agency leaders retreated. After all the accidents and chaos that followed the roadway reconfiguration in early July, DOT decided it might not want to try to introduce two revolutionary changes at the same time.



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DOT is not committing to a date, but anticipate that the lights will start flashing -- only on the northbound entry ramps between Northwest 62nd Street and the Golden Glades -- in early to mid-January.

The idea is to create a steady flow of vehicles entering I-95 that will improve not only the merging onto but the exiting from the interstate. The signal will pretty much remain green when the interstate is flowing freely and pulse red every few seconds when it's heavier. The DOT insists that traffic will not be backing up on the ramps and into the arterial feeder roads.

- **Q:** That's crazy. Don't they realize too many South *Florida drivers treat red lights as optional nuisances?*
- **A:** A lot of people think the ramp meters won't work -- largely because there won't be enough police officers and traffic court judges to enforce all the tickets. After an initial shakeout period, ramp metering programs have proven effective in a lot of North American cities with even worse traffic congestion than South Florida.
- **Q:** Does the road seem narrower?
- **A:** Yes. The state restriped and reconfigured the existing roadway to create a consistent sixth travel lane in the seven-mile corridor -- four free local lanes, two express. Most of the old lanes were narrowed from 12 feet to 11 and the remainder was carved from the center median and right shoulder.
- **Q:** So what happens if there's an accident or a breakdown in express area?
- **A:** If your vehicle will move, pull it to the left shoulder, close to the center wall and dial *FHP (*347) on your cellphone.

An operator will dispatch a Road Ranger for help. Wait in your vehicle with the doors locked. Do not stand behind your car or next to the lane of moving traffic. The tolls are supposed to help pay for extra Road Rangers and troopers assigned specifically to the corridor.