



# 95 EXPRESS



## News Clip

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From: *Miami Herald*, Friday, December 5, 2008  
Subject: **As traffic increases on I-95, tolls begin to rise**

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### **As traffic increases on I-95, tolls begin to rise**

**After months of preparation by state troopers and traffic engineers, a new toll system is up and running for special northbound lanes on Interstate 95.**

*BY LARRY LEBOWITZ, HANNAH SAMPSON AND JENNIFER MOONEY PIEDRA*

Midday traffic was light on the specially designated two-lane seven-mile stretch from downtown Miami to the Golden Glades Interchange, with no major delays after a smooth morning rush hour.

At about 2:30 p.m. Friday, the toll in the express lanes was 75 cents, up from a quarter earlier in the day. The average speed on the express lanes was 60 miles per hour and about 1,200 vehicles were traveling on it per hour, according to the state's department of transportation.

Traffic on I-95 is expected to pick up Friday afternoon as commuters leave work and head north. If there is heavy congestion, tolls on the express lanes will hike up.

Earlier Friday, drivers adjusted to the tolls without a hitch, according to Florida Highway Patrol spokesman Lt. Pat Santangelo.

"It was a seamless transition," Santangelo said of the switch.

The SunPass-only system started at 6 a.m. Friday in Miami-Dade County, where the privilege of driving in the new fast lane could cost as little as 25 cents or as much as \$6.20, depending on the amount of traffic.

Officials at the Florida Department of Transportation reported that 430 vehicles used the toll lanes during the first hour of collections, from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m., all at the 25 cent rate.

The heavier the traffic, the more costly the trip.

And commuters beware: SunPass-only means SunPass-only, and a row of plastic candlesticks separates the special lanes from the regular ones.

Santangelo urged all drivers who get caught by surprise in the new SunPass-only lane to stay on that road -- it's safer than making a sharp right over plastic candlesticks at 60 miles per hour.

"By no means do we want people to pull out of the lanes," Santangelo said.



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Troopers hope to avoid another debacle like the one in early July when crews finished restriping and reconfiguring the northbound lanes between downtown Miami and the Golden Glades Interchange.

The act confused many of those taking the highway.

The trooper said people who do find themselves in the wrong lane should call 1-888-TOLL-FLA and speak to an operator.

"They're very customer friendly. If you made an honest mistake, I'm sure they'll work with you," Santangelo said.

Drivers who need to exit south of the Golden Glades must use the four free local lanes.

Registered hybrid vehicles, three-plus carpools, plus all buses and motorcycles can use the lanes for free.

The new dedicated lanes will service some of the 226,000 to 280,000 vehicles that travel the stretch of highway on a typical weekday. And the road has been reconfigured and restriped to create four general-purpose local lanes and two express lanes.

FHP will be added two troopers and a supervisor between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Monday through Friday just to deal with the express-lane traffic, their salaries subsidized by tolls. The state will underwrite more troopers in January or February -- when the northbound on-ramp signals are finally illuminated between Northwest 62nd Street and the Golden Glades.

A private contractor will be monitoring closed-circuit cameras on the I-95 corridor in Miami-Dade to better coordinate response to breakdowns and accidents by troopers and Road Rangers, said Javier Rodriguez, who manages the SunGuide traffic management center in Doral.

A new flatbed tow truck that has been added to the Road Ranger fleet will be stationed near the State Road 112 toll plaza so it can zip directly into the express lanes.

Santangelo said express-lane drivers who need assistance should move their vehicles as close to the center wall as possible, call FHP -- \*3-4-7 -- and wait inside their vehicles.

The flatbed will haul most disabled vehicles to a designated area at the Golden Glades park-and-ride lot where drivers can arrange for a private tow or contact their roadside assistance provider for further assistance.

The state is also adding another heavy-duty truck equipped with basic tools, high-intensity lighting, cones, replacement candlesticks and "kitty litter" used to mop up small spills. Modeled on a similar program that has had some success in Broward since 2004, this new Incident Response Vehicle -- or IRV -- will be available between noon and 8 p.m. weekdays.

In the event of a major accident, the IRV operator will cut out enough candlesticks and set up cones to get all trapped vehicles out of the area while firefighters and paramedics respond, said Rory Santana, a DOT traffic operations supervisor.

For more information, check out the extensive Q&A at [www.miamiherald.com](http://www.miamiherald.com) or visit the official website at [www.95express.com](http://www.95express.com).



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