



# 95 EXPRESS



## News Clip

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From: *Sun Post*, Tuesday, July 3, 2007  
Subject: **FDOT Presents \$210 Million 95 Express Project to Public**

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### **FDOT Presents \$210 Million 95 Express Project to Public**

*By Evan Berkowitz*



**FDOT held a presentation last week about plans to add new lanes to the local expressway system. To use them, though, you'll have to pay a toll.**

About 50 people came to the Miami Shores Country Club at 10000 Biscayne Blvd. on June 27 to hear representatives of the Florida Department of Transportation give a formal presentation of its 95 Express project.

The 95 Express project calls for the creation of two new lanes on Interstate-95, both to be used by high-occupancy vehicles or drivers willing to pay a fee. The lanes, spanning 24 miles, will connect the Miami central business district from I-395 to I-595. FDOT literature calls it “the first critical link to the regions up and coming network of managed lanes.”

According to census data, South Florida ranks as one of the top 10 metro areas for population growth in the nation over the last six years. The population is estimated to grow more than 50 percent by 2025, and this will be accompanied by severe congestion along the critical I-95 north-south corridor. The 95 Express project is an effort to better manage congestion and provide travel options for drivers. FDOT statistics say this stretch of highway is used by an average of 250,000 to 300,000 vehicles per day.

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To create one new lane in each direction, already existing lanes will be narrowed from 12 feet wide to 11 feet, and shoulder widths will be slightly reduced. This way, the I-95 corridor can be expanded without having major construction work done, explains FDOT literature. The two already existing high-occupancy vehicle lanes, along with the two newly created ones, will be converted to the for pay lanes. Plastic poles, called tubular delineators, are to provide a separation between the pay lanes and the regular general-purpose lanes. Once the project is complete, there will be six lanes in each direction, said Alice N. Bravo, FDOT's district director of transportation systems development.

The toll rate will be calculated by using "congestion pricing," meaning fees will rise or fall based upon the amount of traffic on the road at certain times of day. FDOT said rates for managed lanes across the United States vary from 15 cents per mile low peak to 95 cents per mile during high peak times. Vanpools, registered carpools with at least three people and 95 Express buses can use the lanes for free.

FDOT will endeavor to maintain an operating speed of 50 mph to keep traffic on the managed roads "free flowing," Bravo said. Overall, FDOT estimates that the project would provide potential time savings of up to 25 minutes from I-595 to I-395 during peak travel periods.

Five spots in between Fort Lauderdale and Miami are now being considered for entry/exit points. "State of the art" tolling technology compatible with SunPass will be used to apply the pricing. There will be no tollbooth stopping; fees will be paid by SunPass transponders and real-time communicating will be possible through the use of electronic billboards, Bravo said.

The projected cost of 95 Express is \$210 million. FDOT is applying for federal funding from the United States Department of Transportation's Urban Partnership Agreement program. Bravo said that by early 2008 part of the project can be completed; the quick implementation can be achieved because only "minor changes" will have to be made to the highway, such as the above mentioned lane narrowing, re-striping and some limited construction on the road's shoulders.

After a power point presentation people were allowed to ask questions and give their opinions. "We just got too many cars in Dade County," said Ken Whiting, a South Florida resident who considers himself "neutral" on the 95 Express project. He believes the new lanes ought to be available to drivers for free when there is an accident holding up traffic.

"The freeway is not supposed to charge us one penny to travel down the road," said Jesus Rodriguez, who attended the meeting. Rodriguez suspects that the new fee lanes will set a bad precedent and, in five years time, tolls will likely be charged for using the other lanes, which, he said, would not be fair to middle-class people like himself. Mary Johnson, another resident, agreed with Rodriguez. "Who is it actually serving?" she asked.



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According to FDOT, the “managed lane” concept has been very successful in other metropolitan areas throughout the nation, including SR 91 in Orange County, Calif; I-15 in San Diego, Calif.; I-10 in Houston, Texas; I-394 in Minneapolis, Minn.; and SR 618 in Tampa.