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## How To Save Money On Tolls

February 6, 2017 11:40 PM By David Sutta

Filed Under: [David Sutta](#), [MDX](#), [Tolls](#)

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MIAMI (CBSMiami) — This year more than a billion dollars will be collected in tolls on Florida’s highways. It’s no secret toll prices have been going up and you are paying more to get around town but did you know you can save some of your hard-earned money or even ride in express lanes [for free](#).

In South Florida, the average driver spends 20 plus hours a month commuting to and from [work](#), all the while paying for it in tolls.

“Sometimes traffic is over an hour to get from point “a” to point “b” at 11 o’clock in the morning, said Greys Chinique. Chinique’s job puts her on the road 5 days a week. All those tolls add up for her.

“I spent over \$300 last year in tolls, in tolls,” she exclaimed.

This past December though she got a pretty nice surprise, a refund of \$94. What did she do with the money? “Deposited it!” she said with a smile.

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She did it by signing up for Miami-Dade Expressway's frequent driver rewards program.

Louis Martinez is chairman of MDX, a non-profit [transportation](#) agency that manages 5 major highways in Miami-Dade, including the Dolphin Expressway.

In 2015, when MDX's board passed a controversial plan to put tolls at all ramps on the Dolphin, they decided to counter it with something never done before – give toll money back.

"We were the first authority to do that nationally," Martinez said proudly.

The program works like this:

- You sign up online before March 31st.
- If you rack up more than \$100 over a year in tolls on MDX managed roadways, you will be eligible for a rebate.
- Thus far the rebates have been about 30% back.

Martinez explained, "So if you spent \$300, just before Christmas, you got \$90. That is something that someone is going to feel, you use for your family."

In 2015, 30,000 drivers received checks. This past December, 54,000 got money back.

The agency believes they are on track to cut checks to more than 100,000 drivers in 2017.

"The fact is we are all members of the same Miami-Dade community. We all [pay](#) tolls. We all ride the same roadways. We know how important it is to give something back and this has worked really well for us," Martinez said.

MDX does not oversee 95 Express but Florida does have a major cost saving program for people who use that stretch of [highway](#). Tolls on 95 Express can reach over \$10 each way. But you can ride in the fast lane for free.

Barbara Kelleher with the Florida Department of Transportation explained the program.

"Yes. There is a way for people who are in registered carpools, van pools and then hybrid owners."

It has to do with history. Before we had express lanes, 95 had high-occupancy vehicle, or HOV lanes. You had to have two or more people in the car or drive a hybrid to use them. Since the HOV lanes were replaced with express lanes, carpools and hybrid owners get to now use the Express lanes for free.



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“We will give you a sticker. You will put it on the back window of that vehicle and then you can use the I-95 express lanes without having to pay a toll,” explained Kelleher.

To purchase a Hybrid vehicle you will shell out \$2500 to \$10,000 more. But you'll save in gas over time and if you use 95 Express you'll be flying past traffic for [free](#). It may be 95's best-kept secret. Roughly 3,800 hybrid owners have signed up for the program, which is fairly easy to do.

- It requires a trip to the DMV to register your Hybrid with the state.
- You'll get a decal that allows you use HOV lanes whenever you want.
- Once you have your decal, you will have to register it online to use 95 Express for free.

What's the catch? Does it sound too good to be true? Kelleher didn't seem to think so. “Well it's there. It is available.”

There is one thing you should know. The 95 Express hybrid program is set to expire in 2019. But it may be extended. Such was the case this year. Also, both of the programs require you to register every year. For MDX there is actually a cut off to register. This year it's March 31st.

[Click here to \[sign up for\]\(#\)](#) the 95 Express Hybrid exemption.


[Click here to \[sign up for\]\(#\)](#) the MDX Frequent Driver Rewards Program.

### David Sutta

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David Sutta joined the CBS4 news team in April of 2007. As South Florida native, David adds local perspective to his Emmy award winning storytelling. David covers a gamut of issues for the station including housing, politics, and the environme...

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