

Letters to the Editor

Posted on Sunday, 05.16.10

MDX is making tolls fairer for all drivers

The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) values its customers. To help clarify the confusion, we would like to answer the questions asked in letters to The Miami Herald regarding our agency and Open Road Tolling (ORT).

Who is MDX? We are a public agency responsible for the operation, improvement and expansion of five major expressways in Miami-Dade County: Gratigny Parkway/S.R. 924; Airport Expressway/S.R. 112; Dolphin Expressway/S.R. 836; Don Shula Expressway/S.R. 874 and Snapper Creek Expressway/S.R. 878.

Why was MDX created? To ensure tolls collected on these highways remained local and are reinvested into the same highways. Prior to MDX, tolls collected were sent to Tallahassee and redistributed throughout Florida using a funding formula.

Why charge tolls if I pay taxes? This is, possibly, the main misconception. MDX does not receive federal funding; it gets no funds from property or gas taxes or from the half-penny sales tax.

Improvements on MDX roads are funded by the very drivers who use them.

Why the need to charge all drivers? Approximately one million users travel the MDX system a day. However, only 46 percent pay a toll. This means that fewer than half of the drivers are funding the entire system. With ORT, drivers will pay for *only* the portion of road they use. By redistributing tolls, many drivers will pay the same or less than what they do today because it will be proportionate to the length of road they drive.

Why should I pay to use the Snapper Creek Expressway when I've never paid before? The Snapper Creek Expressway has received \$13 million worth of improvements since 2002. Annually it costs approximately \$1 million to adequately light, provide Road Rangers, remove debris and maintain.

Currently, toll payers on Don Shula and other MDX roadways have been funding these services. Fair and proportionate tolling for all users is critical to maintaining and improving the system.

What happens to non-SunPass customers or tourists? To save time and money, non-SunPass customers, including out-of-town guests, are encouraged to purchase a SunPass Mini for only \$4.99. Upon activation, customers receive \$4.99 back on their account.

The alternative, TOLL-BY-PLATE, will allow users to travel the MDX system and receive a bill shortly after. Administrative charges will apply to cover the additional costs associated with this option.

Learn more about the improvements MDX is making in the community and the benefits of ORT by visiting MDXORT.com.

CINDY POLO-SERANTES, communications manager, MDX, Miami