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Frequently Asked Questions

Have a question about Florida's Turnpike? Be sure to check out the following answers to some of the most frequently asked questions handled by our customer service representatives recently.

- 1. Why do I have to pay tolls when I already pay taxes?**
- 2. When was the original Turnpike paid off and why are tolls still being collected?**
- 3. What do you do with the tolls collected? How much money do you collect?**
- 4. Why should I pay tolls so that you can build toll roads in other areas of the State?**
- 5. What is the SunPass® prepaid toll program?**
- 6. The New York State Thruway toll rate is 3 cents per mile. Why is it double in Florida?**
- 7. How do you decide where to put an interchange or build a new highway?**

1. Why do I have to pay tolls when I already pay taxes?

If the state had enough gas tax funding to pay for all of its transportation needs, there would be no need for toll roads. However, Florida is facing a \$31 billion shortfall in funding identified transportation improvements through 2010, and a \$47 billion shortfall through 2020. All Florida motorists pay in some way, whether by toll, gas tax, developer fees, etc. In many cases, tolls are the most cost-effective way to directly link user fees to specific roads. Your tolls support the maintenance and improvement of Florida's toll roads. These roads are self-supporting; freeing highway tax money for other needed road projects.

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2. When was the original Turnpike paid off and why are tolls still being collected?

All revenue bonds sold prior to 1989, including the bonds borrowed to build the original Turnpike, have been paid. Revenue bond issues since 1989 make up Florida's Turnpike's existing \$1.8 billion 30-year bond debt obligation. In 1988, when the original bonds were nearly paid, the Florida Transportation Commission (FTC), a civilian oversight group of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) appointed by the Governor, supported a visionary financing plan for Florida's Turnpike system to use the bonding capacity of the Turnpike to finance new Florida Intrastate Highway System projects. In time, the tolls collected would help finance future statewide transportation projects.

In an effort to alleviate intrastate traffic problems, the 1990 Florida Legislature passed legislation enacting the Commission's plan, and directed Florida's Turnpike to begin the implementation and funding of an ambitious expansion program. As of May 2007, the Florida Department of Transportation, using toll revenue and Florida's Turnpike bonding capability, has added 150 miles of new roads to Florida's Intrastate Highway System. The collected toll revenue has also funded the construction of 15 new interchanges and additional lanes on the Turnpike's mainline, improving access and traffic flow. Currently, the Turnpike's bonding capacity is \$10 billion.

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3. What do you do with the tolls collected? How much money do you collect?

Florida's Turnpike revenue comes from tolls collected on the 460-mile statewide system and from concession sales. In fiscal year 2007, \$713 million was collected in revenue. All revenue is reinvested into Florida's Turnpike's statewide work program to pay operations and maintenance costs, and bond debt. Existing bond issues pay for renovation and improvement projects on Florida's Turnpike and the Beachline West Expressway in Orlando. Such improvements include resurfacing, widening, new interchanges, and safety upgrades. Existing bond issues also cover improvements to the Sawgrass Expressway in Broward County, and for Florida Intrastate Highway System expansion projects including the Seminole Expressway, the Southern Connector Extension of Toll Road 417 and the Western Beltway Part C project in the greater Orlando area, the Veterans Expressway in Tampa, the Suncoast Parkway in Pasco and Hernando counties and the Polk Parkway in Lakeland.

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4. Why should I pay tolls so that you can build toll roads in other areas of the State?

All revenue from Florida's Turnpike is reinvested into projects building new highways or making improvements to existing highways on a statewide basis. When the Florida Legislature passed its Transportation Bill in April 1997, several initiatives were passed regarding the future of Florida's Turnpike through 2020. A main initiative of the bill establishes a funding equity formula based on toll revenue collected that will ensure South Florida (Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties) receives its fair share of funding.

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5. What is the SunPass® prepaid toll program?

SunPass is an innovative statewide prepaid toll system implemented by the FDOT on most of Florida's toll roads. SunPass saves commuters time and money, creating more efficient, less congested roadways. A small electronic device (transponder) is attached just below the rearview mirror inside your windshield and communicates with special toll plaza antennas. As your car passes through the toll plaza (in SunPass-only or mixed-use lanes), the plaza equipment electronically deducts the toll charge from your prepaid toll account. Find out how you can save time and money on www.SunPass.com and become a SunPass customer today!

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6. The New York State Thruway toll rate is three cents per mile. Why is it double in Florida? Nationally, the toll rate on Florida's Turnpike falls slightly below the median when compared with other state toll road facilities, which range from two cents per mile to 18 cents per mile. In March 2004, the Florida Legislature authorized a plan to raise the Turnpike and Beachline West toll rates to 7.5 cents per mile in an effort to keep up with inflation and fund the state's growing transportation needs. This increase of approximately 25 percent affects cash customers only. SunPass tolls remain at previous rates.

Metropolitan areas such as Orlando and Tampa have several toll facilities, such as the Central Florida GreeneWay, Beachline Expressway, Holland East-West Expressway, Seminole Expressway, Osceola Parkway and Polk Parkway in Central Florida, as well as the Veterans Expressway/Suncoast Parkway, Sunshine Skyway Bridge and the Leroy Selmon Crosstown Expressway in the greater Tampa Bay area. The toll rates at these facilities range between eight and 12 cents per mile.

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7. How do you decide where to put an interchange or build a new highway?

The decision on where to build new interchanges or highways is governed by Florida statute and bond covenants. The rules vary slightly by project type but, in general, new projects must meet a transportation need and be locally supported, environmentally suitable and economically feasible. Transportation need is evaluated by determining how much traffic a future project would serve and what type of relief it may provide for other transportation facilities. Local support is essential before construction can begin. Florida's Turnpike has never built an interchange or roadway that was not approved by local officials and Metropolitan Planning Organizations governing a specific area. Also, Florida's Turnpike prides itself on minimizing and mitigating any environmental impact from the construction throughout the process. Economic feasibility tests are conducted for new roadway projects as well. To pass these tests, a new roadway must pay 50 percent of its own bond indebtedness by the 12th year of opening to traffic and all of its own bond indebtedness by the 22nd year of operation. Projects that pass these four tests are considered viable and must compete statewide with other possible projects.

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