



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

September 18, 2008

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SunPass-only express lanes set to open next week for southbound traffic at the Turnpike's Okeechobee toll plaza in Miami-Dade County

FORT LAUDERDALE — Motorists who travel on Florida's Turnpike in the Doral area in Miami-Dade County should be prepared for a major traffic realignment at the Okeechobee mainline toll plaza as early as Monday morning, Sept. 22, when ***southbound*** SunPass-only express lanes are scheduled to open in time for the morning commute.

The traffic alignment will be similar to the alignments currently in place at the Bird Road and Homestead Turnpike toll plazas, also located in Miami-Dade.

Drivers with SunPass will be routed under the new open-road tolling "signature gantry," and should stay in the left or center lanes to pay the toll while traveling at the posted speed of 40 mph. There will be no gates and no tollbooths for drivers with SunPass.

Cash customers should be in the right lane as they approach the toll plaza, which will have five traditional tollbooths available to collect both SunPass and cash tolls.

The SunPass-only express lanes will be separated from the cash/SunPass tollbooths by a concrete wall, and motorists will not be able to make last-minute lane changes. Cash-paying motorists must pull off the highway, approximately one mile north of the toll plaza, onto a ramp with traditional tollbooths and then merge back onto the travel lanes. (See the attached rendering.)

Electronic signs and permanent signs will be in place to advise drivers that the left lanes are only for vehicles with SunPass and that cash or "change provided" tollbooths are on the right.

Cash customers who end up on the SunPass-only express lanes ***should not stop on the travel lanes***, to avoid potential rear-end collisions. They should continue to their destinations and then call the SunPass customer service center at 1-888-TOLL-FLA to speak with a representative about paying the toll without incurring penalties.

(more)

Accomplishing the traffic realignment will require nighttime lane closures on the southbound Turnpike from south of the Northwest 106th Street interchange (Exit 34) to south of the Okeechobee toll plaza at Milepost 32. One or two southbound lanes may be closed from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 21. The SunPass-only lanes also will be closed during this period and only the five cash/SunPass lanes will remain open at the toll plaza.

Should weather or other unforeseen conditions impact the work, the opening of the SunPass-only express lanes would be rescheduled for the following morning(s).

This will be the first SunPass 'signature gantry' to open on Florida's Turnpike mainline.

Construction to convert the Turnpike's Okeechobee toll plaza into a high-tech, open-road tolling plaza and add a new Turnpike interchange at Northwest 74th Street began in January 2007. It is anticipated the project will be completed in early 2010.

