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MDX offers transit solutions to Miami-Dade commuters



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The Miami Dade Expressway Authority manages, maintains and funds improvements to five local expressways. This is accomplished only with tolls collected on the Dolphin/SR 836, Gratigny/SR 924, Airport Expressway/SR 112, Don Shula/SR 874 and Snapper Creek/SR 878. MDX receives no revenue from property taxes, gas taxes, sales taxes or federal, state or local funds.

The Miami Herald has reported on an increase in revenue since MDX instituted tolling on all sections of the Dolphin Expressway. Instead of just 50 percent of drivers who use the roads paying for the maintenance, operations and improvements, now all users pay for the portion they drive. This was a sensible approach to make the system fair for everyone.

The increase in revenue is because of three reasons: Everyone pays their fair share for the use of the road; the economy has grown, and the population has increased, resulting in higher traffic volumes; improvements that MDX has already made allows for increased capacity on its expressways.

MDX uses bonds to pay for construction projects to relieve congestion and improve driver safety. Similar to a mortgage, bonds are paid with interest over a period of decades. Revenue is also used to fund improvements so that MDX does not overburden customers with more long-term debt obligations. This spreads the cost to current and future expressway users. A right balance of debt and pay-as-you-go translate into less pressure to increase toll rates. The community's transportation needs continue to grow, and balancing funding in a fiscally responsible manner is essential.

Two years ago, MDX launched a program to bring relief to frequent drivers of our five expressways. The Cash Back Program is funded through identifying operational efficiencies at the closing of each fiscal year. Drivers who signed up for the program earlier this year are receiving checks now (54,000 frequent drivers), just in time for the holiday season. This program passes the agency savings back to the commuters and businesses that use our expressways.

When we made changes to our system in 2014, we promised to construct improvements that would save travel time for our customers. We are ahead of schedule in fulfilling this promise. All additional revenues are committed to the construction of improvements to the Dolphin from 57th to 27th avenues, including express bus lanes on the shoulders; the 87th Avenue Interchange and the connection from SR 836 to I-95, serving the hospital and courts districts and the airport and the seaport, Miami-Dade's most vital economic engines.

Also under construction, is a ramp from Don Shula to 128th Street. These improvements will let drivers get to work and home faster to spend more time with family.

MDX is constantly looking for ways to improve efficiencies, enhance value and upgrade service to our users. As a not-for-profit agency with oversight by local business and community leaders and officials, our priority is to earn and maintain users' trust by managing wisely the public investment in the five roads that MDX operates. Again, 100 percent of those dollars are spent locally to improve the system.

MDX is subject to an annual independent audit and subject to an audit by the state of Florida's auditor general. All this information is posted on our website, www.mdxway.com. We welcome any additional audit and agree that all transportation resources and investments need to be transparent and accessible to the public to provide a clear perspective of all the facts.

MDX is committed to being part of the solution to Miami-Dade's transportation needs. In fact, our Strategic Master Transportation Plan considers additional public transit projects without diverting funds that our customers expect will be used to update the roads they use. We have always participated with the county, FDOT and other municipalities in joint projects, including transit. We hope to continue expanding these partnerships in the future. As a donor county we have to work together to increase Miami-Dade's fair share of the transportation funding pie.

As the chair of the MDX board of directors, I know first-hand the significant contributions MDX provides to our community, local economy and quality of life. We're always working hard to do our job better, more efficiently and more effectively.

LOUIS V. MARTINEZ IS CHAIR OF THE MDX BOARD OF DIRECTORS.



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