

# **E-ZPass FAQ's – Monthly Fee Under Consideration**

May 2012

## **How does E-ZPass currently work?**

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) manages the administration and customer service of E-ZPass in Virginia, which supports all toll facilities in the state.

VDOT's annual cost to manage E-ZPass is \$10 million. This pays for the following:

- Transponders
- Electronic toll collection system
- Dues to the E-ZPass Interagency Group (this group allows for interoperability for E-ZPass in other states)
- Account management and processing of toll transactions (managing billing of all transactions)
- Customer service and the operations of three customer service centers

Opening an account requires a minimum toll prepayment of \$35 (cash, check or credit card). A \$25 security deposit is required for each transponder (in case the tag is lost or stolen), which is waived if the customer chooses automatic replenishment from a checking or savings account with a back-up credit card.

## **What is changing about the E-ZPass program?**

The E-ZPass program in Virginia will double over the next several years. New toll facilities will open in Northern Virginia and the Hampton Roads region to ease heavily congested roads and improve transportation. These facilities will have electronic tolling so traffic does not have to slow down for toll booths. There will be no options to pay with cash. The main method for toll collection will be electronically through E-ZPass.

The I-495 Express Lanes in Northern Virginia will open to traffic by the end of the year. Motorists will need an E-ZPass transponder to ride in the express lanes. Carpoolers or vehicles with three or more people can ride the express lanes for free if they have a Flex transponder. This transponder has a switch that identifies carpoolers. Other toll facilities that are planned to open in the next few months to several years include the I-95 Express Lanes in Northern Virginia, and the Downtown/Midtown Tunnel MLK/Extension, Jordan Bridge and Route 460 in the Hampton Roads region.

As the E-ZPass program grows, costs for maintaining and operating the program will increase.

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### **Why will costs of operations go up?**

**Most of the cost increase will occur in the first few years as VDOT makes a significant investment in the program expansion.**

**The cost increases are due to:**

- **Buying nearly one-half million new transponders, including the special Flex transponders, which cost more than the standard tags**
- **Implementing a retail program, in which transponders can be obtained at various stores in Northern Virginia and eventually Hampton Roads**
- **Providing service at select DMV locations**
- **Upgrading information technology to accommodate the expanded program**

### **What is VDOT considering?**

**VDOT is considering a monthly fee of approximately \$1 per transponder beginning July 2012. The fee would generate the funds needed to support the expanded operations, including a more user friendly E-ZPass program.**

**The fee would also help control costs and manage the selection and demand for E-ZPass transponders.**

**The fee would be regularly evaluated to ensure that the charge is generating just enough revenue to maintain and operate the program without generating excess revenues above expenses.**

**The current \$25 deposit would no longer be required once the monthly fee is implemented. Users who have previously paid the deposit will have the deposit converted to prepaid toll amounts on their accounts or refunded if accounts are closed.**

### **Do other states charge E-ZPass customers a monthly fee?**

**This is not unusual – 14 of the 24 E-ZPass participating toll agencies currently charge similar fees.**

### **Will there be public input?**

**VDOT is accepting public comments via email. Citizens can go to**

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[www.virginiadot.org/e-zpass](http://www.virginiadot.org/e-zpass) for information on the proposed monthly fee increase and provide their comments online. They can also submit their comments directly to [vdotinfo@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:vdotinfo@vdot.virginia.gov).

VDOT will review all comments and include them in the agency's public record. Citizens may also go to [www.virginiadot.org/E-ZPass](http://www.virginiadot.org/E-ZPass) for more general information on E-ZPass.

### **Where is E-ZPass accepted?**

#### **Northern Virginia**

- Dulles Toll Road
- Dulles Greenway
- I-495 Express Lanes – open by end of year
- I-95 Express Lanes – scheduled to begin construction this year

#### **Richmond Metropolitan Area**

- RMA – Downtown Expressway, Powhite Parkway and Boulevard Bridge
- Powhite Parkway Extension
- Pocahontas Parkway

#### **Hampton Roads Region**

- Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel
- George P. Coleman Bridge
- Chesapeake Expressway
- Jordan Bridge – open in July 2012
- Downtown/Midtown/MLK Extension – toll collection scheduled to begin in January 2014
- Route 460 – construction scheduled to begin next year

#### **Outside of Virginia**

E-ZPass is accepted at any E-ZPass participating toll facility. The E-ZPass Group is an association of 24 toll agencies in 14 states that operates the extremely successful E-ZPass electronic toll collection program. E-ZPass

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**enjoys tremendous brand recognition and high levels of customer satisfaction, and is the world leader in toll interoperability, with more than 22 million E-ZPass devices in circulation. Additional information about the participating facilities can be found at <http://www.e-zpassag.com/>.**

**How many accounts and transponders are in service?**

**There are 560,000 E-ZPass accounts in Virginia with 900,000 transponders in service. The forecasted need for transponders through March 2013 is 220,000 standard transponders and over 200,000 Flex switchable transponders (for use at the I-495 Express Lanes).**