



## SunPass Sales Show Tolls Are Ticket To Travel

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The Florida Turnpike turned 50 last week and officials celebrated by selling transponders, those wallet-sized devices owned by 60 percent of toll road users, at half their \$25 retail price.

It's another sign that electronic tolling is the future of highway travel in Florida. A recent state study recommends using toll roads to pay for future growth because gas taxes can't keep up. At the same time, SunPass and other electronic versions are making deeper inroads.

Thursday, 44,000 transponders were sold at the half-price rate. Four years ago 36 percent of toll road drivers used SunPass. By next year, 75 percent will use it, says Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, which operates the state's 457 miles of toll roads.

In a year or two the devices will come as credit card-sized stickers and go for \$10 or \$15 apiece.

Even that pales in comparison to what's coming in 5 to 10 years. Detroit is considering built-in transponders on some vehicle models. The devices would work with toll systems across state lines.

### Beware The Multitaskers

Sure, cell phones are distracting, especially when you're also trying to check e-mail on your BlackBerry, surf the radio, drink coffee and merge into traffic.

Nationwide Mutual Insurance, which chronicled the worst offenders of "DWD," or driving while distracted, tags young, tech-savvy 20-somethings as the most dangerously distracted drivers behind the wheel.

As a group, young drivers are less likely to use seatbelts and more likely to multitask - eating, using the cell phone, checking e-mail - while driving, the study says. Baby boomers get the highest marks. As for road rage, multitasking young women were rated as most likely to become enraged behind the wheel, the study says.

### Communities Differ On Transit Concerns

Folks in rural areas worry about the environment and sprawl while inner-city folks want better mass transit. Suburbanites and those on the urban fringe sweat about both while having plenty to say about traffic congestion.

A recent survey by Hillsborough's Metropolitan Planning Organization found varying attitudes depending on where residents lived. Pretty much all complained about getting around and wanted better transportation options, including mass transit. No surprise there.

The study, to be used in transportation planning, surveyed folks in Brandon, Lutz, West Tampa, Temple Terrace, South Shore, Town 'N Country, east Tampa and Plant City.

Here's a sampling of priorities: In east Tampa, security; Plant City, the environment; Town 'N Country, congestion; Lutz, congestion; and Temple Terrace, preserving the quality of life.

### Smoothing Out Dale Mabry

Don Leggett Sr. of Tampa asked why the paving on North Dale Mabry Highway stopped at Fletcher Avenue: "It really gets rough as you drive south, particularly at Linebaugh."

Resurfacing of North Dale Mabry happened in 2005 between Van Dyke Road and Fletcher.

The Department of Transportation says the road will be repaved at the end of this year between Fletcher and Waters avenues, then in 2009 from Waters to north of Hillsborough Avenue.

**Got a gripe about your commute? Contact reporter Rich Shopes at (813) 259-7633. Look for more commuter news on TBO.com, Keyword: Shopes.**

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