

## **IL Tollway Updates – May 2021**

### **Work Zone Awareness**

Each year, the Illinois Tollway along with the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois State Police commit to getting the word out that work zone safety affects drivers as well as construction workers.

In 2021, National Work Zone Awareness Week was April 26-30 and we are reminding the public to "Drive Safe. Work Safe. Save Lives."

There have been too many incidents where people have been killed or injured while doing their jobs building or maintaining roads. And it's not just construction workers. Of the 159 work zone fatalities in Illinois between 2015 and 2019, 6 were workers and the rest were vehicle drivers or passengers.

### **Cashless Tolling – What Customers Need to Know**

In March 2020, the Illinois Tollway halted cash toll collection in an effort to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, protecting its customers and employees from exposure points to the rapidly-spreading virus. Since then, the Illinois Tollway has taken extensive measures to better serve customers who previously relied on cash payments, including measures to provide relief during the pandemic.

Moving forward, Illinois Tollway drivers will continue to have the option to pay tolls with I-PASS, E-ZPass or pay online with the Tollway's Pay By Plate service. The Tollway continues to maintain a 14-day grace period – one of the longest in the nation – allowing customers to pay unpaid tolls without additional fees or fines prior to being mailed an invoice.

Using Pay By Plate, customers simply enter their license plate, payment method and dates of travel, and the Pay By Plate system takes care of the rest. This service has been leveraged by over 650,000 customers to date demonstrating the quick and seamless transition for many cash customers to the new service.

With regard to the future of our toll plazas, over the last year changes were made to ensure the safety of our customers, and throughout 2021 more changes will be made to improve the customer experience. These changes include additional signage, striping and other changes to reduce our maintenance costs and further improve the service to our customers.

This work is common across all toll plazas on the Illinois Tollway system. A long-term plan for each site will be developed to assess the potential to better serve our customers, and as those changes are announced we'll be sure to share them with you.

### **Operations during COVID-19**

Since March 2020, extensive protocols have been in place to protect employees, keep our essential and front-line workers safe and the entire agency working. The Illinois Tollway Board of Directors has continued to meet virtually each month to keep all business, roadway services and construction activity moving.

In 2020, at the height of the stay at home order passenger transactions fell as far as 55 percent below forecast, and commercial fell by over 15 percent below forecast. At this time, Tollway transactions are recovering and trending towards pre-pandemic levels, with commercial traffic recovering at a much stronger pace. And while passenger traffic is still down, our system

continues to see the region's slow and strong recovery as our transaction volumes continue to climb.

The Tollway Customer Service Call Center is operational and assisting customers. In addition, Customer Service Centers at the Belvidere Oasis on the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway and the Chicago Southland Lincoln Oasis and Lake Forest Oasis on the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80) are open during the week to assist customers.

### **Reform and Relief**

In June 2020, the Illinois Tollway launched Tolling 2020 which reduced the initial cost of missed tolls from \$20 per toll to \$3 per toll, while offering an amnesty program to reduce all outstanding \$20 and \$50 fines to that same \$3 dollars for customers who pay their outstanding violations. The initial amnesty program ran through the end of 2020 but was extended for an additional six months. That program is set to expire on June 30, 2021. Customer can take advantage of the program by simply paying their existing violation online, where reduced balances have already been calculated.

More information and assistance for customers is available on the Tollway's website [www.illinoistollway.com](http://www.illinoistollway.com).

### **Construction**

The Illinois Tollway has kicked off the 2021 construction season as the 10th year of the Move Illinois capital program begins with some of the biggest and most challenging projects lying ahead.

The Tollway's 2021 capital program calls for investing \$1.53 billion in the region's infrastructure. This includes more than \$451 million to continue planning and advance construction for the new I-490 Tollway and new interchanges connecting to the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90), Tri-State Tollway (I-294), the Illinois Route 390 Tollway, as well as providing direct access in and out of O'Hare International Airport as part of the Elgin O'Hare Western Access Project.

Work to reconstruct and widen the Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) will continue in 2021 with more than \$690 million budgeted to continue design and construction of the roadway, as well as the new BNSF Railway Bridge, the new Mile Long Bridge and to begin work to reconfigure the I-290/I-88 Interchange at I-294. In addition, \$78 million is allocated in 2021 for ongoing work to complete the final ramps for the I-294/I-57 Interchange.

The 2021 capital program also provides \$312.2 million for systemwide roadway and bridge repairs to keep the existing Tollway system in good repair. Several local projects include replacing the Deerpath Road Bridge over the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88) in Aurora, rebuilding the Stearns School Road Bridge over the Tri-State Tollway (I-94) in Gurnee, and building a new Windsor Road Bridge at I-88 and I-294 in coordination with roadway improvements by the Village of Oak Brook.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Kelsey Passi at [kpassi@getipass.com](mailto:kpassi@getipass.com)

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