

## **Illinois Tollway Update – July 2021**

### **I-PASS Assist Program Expanded**

The Illinois Tollway is expanding the I-PASS Assist program to help individuals and families realize the benefits of I-PASS. Customers who have previously been unable to use I-PASS for financial reasons can go to [www.illinoistollway.com](http://www.illinoistollway.com) to apply.

Updates to the program approved by the Tollway Board in June allow qualified participants to open an account with as little as \$4 in prepaid tolls, waive the \$10 transponder deposit, set automatic account replenishments as low as \$4 on low balances and qualify for dismissal of any future invoice fees through customer service for accounts in good standing.

### **Tollway Violation Relief Offer**

Also in June, the violation relief program, launched last year as part of the Tollway's comprehensive TOLLING 2020 reforms, has been extended through the end of August. The violation relief program reduces all existing \$20 and \$50 fines on unpaid tolls to a \$3 fee per toll. Drivers already have taken advantage of the relief program to clear nearly 23 percent of outstanding violation notices for the reduced \$3 fee, an 85 percent reduction over the \$20 violation fine assessed for unpaid tolls.

The reductions offered by the violation relief program bring the cost of outstanding violation notices in line with the new fee structure in TOLLING 2020, which will continue to invoice drivers with a \$3 fee for each unpaid toll on a passenger vehicle and provide 60 days to pay invoices before those fees increase. If invoices are left unpaid, a violation notice with a \$20 fine per unpaid toll will be issued to drivers.

### **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.

Illinois Tollway drivers continue to have the option to pay tolls with I-PASS, E-ZPass or pay online with the Tollway's Pay By Plate service.

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 now leveraged by over 1.2 million customers to date demonstrating the quick and seamless transition for many cash customers to the new 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.

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.

## **Tollway Operations Update**

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.

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.

In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, toll transactions were down approximately 55 percent below our projections for passenger vehicles and 15-20 percent below annual projections for commercial vehicles. Note, our projections at that time were slightly above 2019 transaction volumes. By the end of summer 2020, transaction volumes began a slow and steady recovery that is still continuing.

In 2021, commercial vehicle volume has recovered and is actually up about 8 percent from pre-pandemic levels as consumers and the transportation industry adjust to new economic patterns. Passenger car toll transactions also rebounded, albeit slower, and are still lower than pre-COVID-19 levels overall by approximately 10 percent. The Tollway is also seeing smaller increases in traffic on weekends, where transaction volumes are up between 2 to 5 percent, which we believe reflects more leisure and recreational travel.

## **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 including work to complete the Tri-State Tollway (I-294)/I-55 Interchange, the Central Tri-State Tollway Project and the new I-490 Tollway including direct access in and out of O'Hare International Airport.

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