

– THEN AND NOW

Smart Tag later became known as E-ZPass, joining a multi-state electronic toll network.

And the technology is still evolving.

The future of tolling in Virginia will take full advantage of

electronic tolling, using this technology's ease and flexibility along with variable toll rates, based on congestion, to actually manage congestion and improve traffic flow.

This technique is called Congestion Pricing, and it's being used successfully in states like Texas, Florida and Minnesota to collect revenue and manage traffic demand.



WHAT IS E-ZPASS?

In Virginia and several other states, the electronic toll collection system used is called E-ZPass.



To use E-ZPass, you must first open a prepaid account, and then attach an E-ZPass electronic transponder to your car windshield. Each E-ZPass transponder contains a battery-powered electronic chip with a unique identification code, so when you pass through a toll lane, the toll will be electronically deducted from your account.



E-ZPass is accepted on all toll roads in Virginia, except the Jordan Bridge in Hampton Roads. It is also accepted in Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

If you are a Virginia resident and would like to begin using E-ZPass, apply at ezpassva.com, call (877) 762-7824 or visit an E-ZPass Customer Service Center.

For more info on E-ZPass, check out ezpassva.com.

Visit virginiadot.org/congestionpricing to learn more about the future of tolling in Virginia.

CONGESTION PRICING: REVOLUTIONIZING THE WAY WE TRAVEL



VIRGINIA TOLLING



While toll collection in Virginia has been around since the late 18th century, the process was revolutionized in the 1990s with the emergence of electronic toll collection.

Virginia's first system to use this technology was Fastoll, introduced in 1996 and later renamed Smart Tag. Motorists using Smart Tag didn't have to worry about carrying cash, because electronic readers automatically deducted tolls from their accounts when passing through the toll lanes.



THE FUTURE— CONGESTION PRICING

WHAT IS CONGESTION PRICING?

Today, many drivers get on the road at the same time, which can cause major traffic delays, stress and even crashes.

Congestion Pricing aims to reduce this “rush-hour” traffic by giving drivers a financial incentive to travel during off-peak periods (like 10am instead of 8am), or to use alternative transportation modes (like carpools, vanpools and transit).



This is typically accomplished by varying toll prices based on the time of day or the amount of traffic on the road. If traffic is heavy, the toll is higher—if traffic is light, the toll is lower. Toll rates for different time periods may be set in advance, or they may be set “dynamically,” meaning tolls could increase or decrease every few minutes to ensure that the lanes are fully used without a breakdown in traffic flow. Either way, the current toll price is always clearly identified and does not change after you enter the tolled section of road.

By using variable pricing to remove even a small percentage of the vehicles from a congested roadway, Congestion Pricing enables traffic to flow much more smoothly.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN VIRGINIA

Congestion Pricing is just one of several Congestion Management Strategies used across the U.S. today. This table shows Congestion Management Strategies, which are used to reduce traffic congestion in Virginia.

Congestion Management Strategy	Description	Form of Payment	Location
Conventional Toll Roads	 All vehicles using a toll road must stop at a location along the highway to pay the toll, unless there are E-ZPass lanes.	Cash, exact change or E-ZPass	Downtown Expressway and Powhite Parkway in Richmond. Coleman Bridge, Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and Jordan Bridge in Hampton Roads.
Express Lanes with Cash Lane Option	 These lanes are physically separated from the adjacent conventional plaza toll lanes, so that E-ZPass drivers can continue traveling without stopping. However, they must slow down to pass through the Express Lane toll facility.	E-ZPass or cash	Dulles Greenway and Dulles Toll Road in Northern Virginia. Chesapeake Expressway in Hampton Roads.
Open Road Tolling with Cash Lane Option	 This strategy offers drivers the choice of stopping to pay with cash at toll booths on the side of the road, or if they have E-ZPass, to continue traveling at highway speeds under an overhead receiver that reads their E-ZPass transponder.	E-ZPass or cash	Pocahontas 895, south of Richmond.
High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes	 These traffic lanes are within regular highways, but are limited to carrying High Occupancy Vehicles (HOVs), like carpools, vanpools, public transit buses, motorcycles and emergency vehicles. An HOV is defined as a passenger vehicle carrying more than a specified minimum number of passengers.	None	I-66, I-95, I-395 and Dulles Toll Road in Northern Virginia. I-264 Virginia Beach & Norfolk, I-64 Norfolk & Chesapeake and I-64 Hampton & Newport News in Hampton Roads.
High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes	 In HOT lanes, low or Single Occupancy Vehicles are charged a toll, while High Occupancy Vehicles are allowed to use the lanes free of charge or at reduced rates. To use HOT lanes, motorists must either meet the minimum vehicle passenger requirements to ride free, or choose to pay a toll. Drivers who choose not to use HOT lanes can always remain in the regular lanes for free.	E-ZPass	Construction has begun on the I-495 corridor.
Variable Priced Lanes	 Some toll roads use variable pricing on all lanes. The toll price varies based on the time of day or the amount of traffic on the road. If traffic is heavy, the toll is higher—if traffic is light, the toll is lower. The current toll price is always clearly identified and does not change after you enter the tolled section of road.	E-ZPass	To be introduced

HOW CONGESTION PRICING WILL BENEFIT YOU

There is a consensus among economists that Congestion Pricing represents the single most viable and sustainable approach to managing traffic congestion—most likely because Congestion Pricing benefits everyone:

Benefits to Drivers:

- Guarantees toll-paying drivers a reliable speed and travel time
- Accommodates faster speeds on roadways
- Reduces money spent on gas and vehicle wear and tear, since there's less stop and go



Average Delay and Fuel Costs per Traveler*

Northern Virginia \$1,094 a year	Hampton Roads \$550 a year	Richmond \$362 a year
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Benefits to Transit Riders, Carpoolers and Vanpoolers:

- Provides bus riders with travel-time savings equivalent to drivers who pay a toll
- Reduces waiting time for express bus riders due to more frequent service
- Encourages carpooling, vanpooling, teleworking and other transportation options

Benefits to Community

- Generates funding for transit and ridesharing options
- Improves quality of transportation services without tax increases or large capital expenditures
- Retains businesses and expands the tax base—because heavy traffic commutes cause employees to be late and increase delivery costs, reducing traffic congestion can help businesses be more productive and profitable

Benefits to Society as a Whole

- Reduces fuel consumption and harmful emissions since there's less idling
- Allows more efficient land use decisions—reduced traffic enhances the quality of life
- Reduces cost of products and services—traffic delays can drive up the cost of shipping goods, a cost usually passed on to the consumer

*Source: Texas Transportation Institute 2007 Annual Urban Mobility Report