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Ready for the toll roads to pay you back? Refund program hits a record



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A record number of commuters has signed up for rebates as frequent drivers on the toll roads operated by the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, according to the agency.

This year, more than 84,000 drivers registered for the rebates under the Frequent Driver Rewards Program. The registration period, which began in January, ended Friday.

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The 3-year-old program allows drivers with a SunPass account in good standing to register between January and March, and qualify for a refund by December if they spend a minimum of \$100 annually on any of the five MDX expressways.

In 2015, the first year of the program, 37,700 registered drivers got rebates. In 2016, more than 54,000 received them.

The refund program was approved by the MDX board in the aftermath of widespread commuter anger over the installation of electronic toll equipment on MDX's expressways that increased collection revenue. Before that, long stretches of State Road 836 (Dolphin Expressway) and the entire length of State Road 878 (Snapper Creek Expressway) were not tolled.

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This year, according to MDX, registration started strong and stayed that way through the sign-up period.

MDX enrolled 36,000 customers by the end of the first week, 65,000 in the first month, then over 84,000 customers by the close of the registration period on March 31, according to a statement from the agency on Sunday. Those commuters represent more than 145,000 transponders, as customer accounts may include businesses and family members with several of them.

“The 2017 program was so popular that within the first 24 hours alone, more than 12,000 customers signed up,” MDX chairman Louis Martínez said in a statement. “And it continued to grow from there, more than 145,000 transponders, which is indicative that it has been received as a highly popular and successful program.”

Not all of the 84,000 drivers who registered for refunds will get one. Some of the registrants may not meet the parameters set by the expressway authority.

In the first two years, nearly one-third of tolls paid by commuters in the program were refunded, according to the agency.

Refund checks are expected to be mailed in December.

The program only applies to toll roads of the MDX system: State Road 112 (Airport Expressway); State Road 836 (Dolphin Expressway); State Road 874 (Don Shula Expressway); State Road 878 (Snapper Creek Expressway); and State Road 924 (Gratigny Parkway).



Change and a smile from one of the last toll collectors in the Florida Keys

The Florida Keys has one of the last manned toll booths in the state. The toll collectors describe the work of greeting vacationers and the "old Florida" spirit of a slower life, where you simply enjoy the water. Video by Charlie Trainor Jr. / Miami Her

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