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MDX tolls should be used to improve transit

By Grant Miller

The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) recently completed a massive toll increase on the Dolphin (SR 836) and Airport (SR 112) expressways.

It has been reported that these increases will more than double the tolls paid by many of us as we commute to and from work and could cost a driver commuting from FIU to downtown Miami more than \$400 a year in additional tolls.

MDX plans to use this new money, which will total over \$50 million a year, to bond new projects to make so-called "improvements" to its network of toll roads including SR 836/Dolphin, SR112/Airport, SR 874/Shula, SR 878/Snapper Creek and SR 924/Gratigny. We will continue to be in a state of perpetual construction and we all will experience more construction congestion and longer and more frustrating travel.

What is wrong with this picture?

Building more highways only will lead to more cars, more congestion and more pollution.

MDX needs to invest these funds in improved public transportation. The money from these toll increases could be more than enough to fund a network of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lanes on the entire MDX network. BRT is being implemented with great success on I-95 in Miami-Dade and I-595 in Broward through the foresight and innovation of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). FDOT plans

on expanding the High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes to other expressways such as I-75. BRT systems are springing up all over this country and around the world.

The systems developed in cities such as Bogata, Colombia with the TransMilenio system are worldwide models and standards for urban mobility.

Imagine being able to hop a new articulated bus with Wi-Fi and go non-stop from FIU to the airport or downtown Miami. This would save time and money to say nothing of taking cars off the road and reducing pollution.

It could turn a grueling daily commute into a smooth and comfortable journey spent reading or catching up on emails. It is time that MDX became part of the solution. The MDX charter states: "an expressway authority may finance or refinance the planning, design, acquisition, construction, extension, rehabilitation, equipping, preservation, maintenance or improvement of a public transportation facility or transportation facilities." These new toll proceeds should be used for public transit as well as highways.

Let's stop building more roads and build solutions to our transportation problems.

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MDX is only interested in collecting more money for the salaries of all the politically appointed executives and cronies. People are avoiding the highways and now MDX has created more city street traffic.