

Letters to the Editor

JUNE 18, 2015

MDX working to be part of the traffic solution

The traffic issues we face in our community are not easy to solve, but working together to develop options is a step in the right direction.

The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) oversees five of the county's busiest and most important east-west highways. Since 1996, MDX has had the responsibility of maintaining and operating these highways and, yes, it is expensive. Tolls collected by MDX stay in Miami-Dade and are put back into the highway system for maintenance, operations and improvements. These tolls are the only funds MDX receives — no property tax, gas tax or half-penny transit sales tax, and no state or federal dollars.

Closing the system (everyone pays) followed the principle of making the funding of the improvements more fair and equitable. This means that every motorist who uses these roads pays for the segment that they use. Although not a popular decision for MDX, the Herald's Editorial Board agreed with us when they wrote the 2006 editorial *The future of east-west traffic*.

MDX began down this path when we built and opened the extension of State Road 836 to Northwest 137th Avenue. Closing the system was planned to occur by 2010, but the MDX board of directors, in response to a recession, decided to postpone the final phase (SR 836 and SR 112) to 2012 and then to Nov. 15, 2014. Since 2006, MDX has continued to improve the highways under our jurisdiction, but we have also continued to work with our transportation partners to ensure that major projects become realities.

The June 7 story *Toll shock* clearly laid out the major improvements that MDX committed to on SR 836 and how these improvements will help traffic. Still, the truth is that the need to address congestion and the delivery of multiple transportation options in this community far outweighs the funds available.

There are no free rides in transportation. In having an honest conversation about transportation, why are we not discussing how much in gas tax has been collected (55 cents per gallon). It funds projects for FDOT and the county, not MDX.

Some solutions for providing our community choices in travel include developing express

bus service on the highways that connect transportation hubs throughout the county.

MDX is participating in the delivery of the Dolphin Park & Ride facility that, along with the concept of using SR 836 for an express bus service, will begin to provide choices to the community. And development of a Strategic Master Plan is well under way.

MDX has long stood for connectivity, technology and transit in the development of our projects.

It's imperative that our facilities connect effectively with other modes of transportation, that we prepare for the emergence of technology in transportation and that we prepare our highways to provide transit as a choice.

I invite the community to get informed (www.mdxway.com) and provide feedback on the strategic master plan as we bridge the gap between what we need today and what we want for tomorrow.

JAVIER RODRIGUEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MDX, MIAMI



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