

## **Expressway e-toll collection has just 68 takers**

**Summary:** Waiting in a long queue with cash in hand or fishing for loose change to pay toll on the Pune-Mumbai expressway may be a thing of the past, if motorists switched over to the smoother and faster electronic toll collection (ETC).

Vehicle users can simply purchase pre-paid Radio Frequency Identity Tags (RFID) that are automatically read at the toll plazas and zip through the toll gate. It saves time and fuel, said officials.

However, with poor public awareness about electronic toll collection (ETC), just 68 people have opted for the facility. Thousands of vehicles use the expressway every day. Toll plaza officials claim that ETC was started on April 1, 2014 without much fanfare, but those collecting cash say the RFID tag facility has been made available only in the last three months.

Cash collectors at the toll plaza said 'trials' for ETC have been successful and with more awareness, more expressway users will opt for the facility. Most of the 68 vehicles that have radio tags are light commercial vehicles and cars. A private company has fixed tags for its fleet of seven to eight trucks, officials said

Although ETC was started a year ago, radio tags are currently available only at the Khalapur toll plaza. A private bank has set up a separate kiosk near the toll plaza to issue the tags. A similar facility will be launched at Urse (Talegaon) toll plaza on the Pune-end of the expressway, officials of the Ideal Road Builders (IRB) said. Two separate ETC lanes have been created at Khalapur and Urse toll plazas in either directions of Mumbai and Pune, but with very few vehicles with radio tags, the lanes are used for those without the tags.

"Hardly seven to eight vehicles which have tags pass through toll plazas on a given day. Currently, we allow all vehicles through the ETC lanes. People are upset if we block the ETC lane. Traffic on the expressway has increased because of which there are queues at toll plazas. We cannot afford to close the ETC lane only for radio-tagged vehicles," toll plaza officials said.

Toll plaza officials said banners have been put up at Khalapur toll plaza about ETC. Awareness drives will be taken up when the facility commences at Urse (Talegaon) toll plaza, later.

Electronic toll collection will save Rs 88,000 crore and cut waiting time at toll plazas, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari had said some months ago.

He was citing a Transport Corporation of India-IIM Kolkata study that said Rs 60,000 crore was lost on account of various delays at check posts.

**Paying e-toll**

- \*\* ETC works on Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, enabling vehicle users to pay highway tolls electronically without stopping at toll plazas, saving time and fuel
- \*\* RFID tags for the expressway are available at the toll plaza (currently at Khalapur) through a pre-paid account of a private bank
- \*\* RFID tags are now called FASTag and have to be affixed on the vehicle's windscreen
- \*\* The FASTag's unique number will be read by readers fit in the ETC lanes

### **Through Banks**

- \*\* Appropriate amount as per the class of vehicle will be automatically deducted from the user's account
- \*\* Pre-paid fee and deposit varies depending on the class of vehicle (cars, LCVs, trucks etc); the account can be recharged
- \*\* Vehicle users must open the FASTag account of a private bank by submitting documents including the registration certificate of the vehicle
- \*\* Vehicles with FASTag should pass dedicated ETC lanes; they would have colour coding for distinct identity

### **Works Well**

- \*\* ETC has been installed at over 55 toll plazas on the Delhi-Mumbai route via Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Last October, a pilot project for interoperable ETC system of 10 toll plazas between Mumbai (Charoti) and Ahmedabad was tested and is operating successfully

### **FASTags on slow track**

- \*\* IRB officials said advertisements were issued by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation initially when ETC was introduced
- \*\* Officials said increased public awareness more vehicle users will opt for ETC
- \*\* ETC was started on April 1, 2014, IRB officials claim
- \*\* Only 68 vehicle users have opted for ETC in the past year

Link: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/Expressway-e-toll-collection-has-just-68-takers/articleshow/46884067.cms>