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NTTA to file civil suits to collect tolls, will publicize those who owe most

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By Michael Lindenberg mlindenberg@dallasnews.com 1:11 pm on June 20, 2012 | Permalink

North Texas Tollway Authority board members today authorized staff to file civil suits against drivers who repeatedly fail to pay tolls.

The agency also said it would post names of drivers who owe 100 or more tolls on a new website to be created as part of an effort to shame those they deem to be top violators.

NTTA's conversion to all-electronic tolling marked the fast-growing authority as a pioneer in the industry — a status that has brought with plenty of risks normally associated with the term.

The switch, completed in 2011, has triggered increased use of its roads — as not having to stop traffic to collect change greatly increased the traffic that can move freely each hour. It also trimmed personnel as hundreds of cash booth positions were no longer needed.

But it also has required millions of dollars in camera technology and an enormous customer-relations staff to handle accounts receivable. The agency has been far less effective in collecting revenue than expected when board members decided to make NTTA the nation's first legacy toll agency to entirely do away with manned booths.

Many people who use the toll roads are never billed. Millions of transactions are missed each year. The NTTA's extensive network of cameras sometimes fails to record vehicles using the roads without toll tags. Sometimes drivers can't be billed correctly because incorrect addresses are associated with license plates recorded by the cameras.

The vast majority of toll tag customers pay. Most, in fact, pay in advance. But an increasingly large percentage of those billed through the mail simply do not pay.

Those violations — which can lead to citations — have overwhelmed local justice of the peace courts, where hundreds of thousands of potential cases are backlogged.

Increasing lack of certainty about collections is seen as a potential threat to the agency's continued access to cheap credit.

Today's action signals a broadening of the war against those who do not pay. Civil suits against the heaviest violators would give NTTA another weapon in its self-admitted weak arsenal of steps to collect more tolls.

And the use of a web page to publish offenders' names is a complete reversal of recent NTTA policy. In the past 18 months, NTTA lawyers and leaders had vigorously challenged The Dallas Morning News' attempts to persuade the agency to release the names of top violators, arguing that they either could not or would not divulge that information.

74 49

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Douglas Lang · [★](#)Top Commenter · Plano, Texas

How about the NTTA post actual income from tolls (complete history), pay outs to employees (complete history), and a complete history of the cost of the road work. I DARE THE NTTA TO DO THAT!

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Robert Schlein · [📄](#)Subscribe ✓ Subscribed · Works at Big Tall Direct. Big and Tall Clothing at Reduced Prices

Aggregate the charges and add it to the license plate renewal. Can't be that hard to do.

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Tracey Edwards · [★](#)Top Commenter

I would go for that as soon as they correct their issues will billing existing toll tag customers. I have had the same vehicle and plates for years and it seems that once a year I get an invoice. My toll tag is always in my vehicle. If they can identify the plate and myself as the owner they should be able to identify I am an existing customer. I wonder how much money they are losing as a result.

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Julie Barrett · [★](#)Top Commenter · Self employed at Writer, Photographer, Web Geek

Tracey Edwards They definitely need to fix the billing issues. My mom used the toll road one day and expected a bill in the mail. Two months later she got a bill with a huge late fee. It was her first bill. She got then to waive the late fee, and then she went ahead and got a TollTag, though she hardly ever uses the toll roads.

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Rudy Oeftering · Works at Oeftering Property Management, LLC

NTTA has some answering to do of their own. It's ridiculous fine schedule for such minor infractions as using the wrong tag for the wrong car need to change

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Michael Jannise · [★](#)Top Commenter

The NTTA is totally out of control. I would rather have pot hole roads than deal with those crooks. Take away the toll booths, then charge you 8 bucks a pop to send you an invoice, then fine you 150 bucks if you dont get it for whatever reason....all for a dollar toll????

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they charge you \$8 to send you a late notice, not for the initial invoice.

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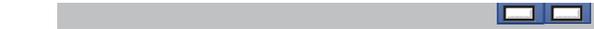
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How 'bout a cost-benefit analysis of that toll road, comparing the revenues generated by that road vs. what it would have cost the taxpayers to build the thing in the first place?

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Byron Titus · Dallas, Texas

As a small business owner, it makes me sick to look at my NTTA acct for 2011 I spent a little over \$3,700 on toll tag charges. They raise our rates at will, I dont mind paying for the toll way, but we need realistic charges not .70 cents per exit.

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their rates equate to about 14 to 15 cents a mile. What would be fair? Regional transportation council (elected officials) have urged NTTA to raise its rates for years. Witness: once New LBJ opens, private firm will set managed lane rates will be several times that of the normal NTTA roads.

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