

NTTA will ban persistent toll scofflaws from its roads



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North Texas Tollway Authority officials pushed on two fronts Wednesday to keep toll dodgers from costing the agency money.

NTTA board members unanimously agreed to ban habitual toll violators from its roads, exercising new enforcement powers granted by the Legislature. Banned motorists caught on the agency's roads next year will face a misdemeanor ticket and impoundment of their vehicle.

Also Wednesday, board member Bill Moore asked staff members to figure out how to keep scofflaws off the new LBJ Freeway toll lanes that will open next month. The Texas Department of Transportation and a private development consortium are rebuilding LBJ. The new tolled lanes will pay for construction.

The NTTA will handle the transactions and is financially responsible for all tolls incurred on the new lanes. That means the agency will have to make up for any shortfalls between incurred tolls and money actually collected.

"We have a lot at stake," Moore said at the board's monthly meeting Wednesday.

While the NTTA can — and soon will — ban drivers from its roads, staff members said it's unclear what powers the agency has over roads it doesn't own. That would include the state's LBJ Freeway expansion.

Assistant executive director of operations James Hofmann told board members that agency staff members are exploring their options.

"We're going to work through this," he said.

While TollTag users see their credit or debit cards charged automatically, drivers without the tags are billed after they incur a certain amount of tolls. Tens of thousands simply ignore the bills.

The agency considers about 70,000 drivers to be habitual violators, defined by state law as people who owe money for 100 or more tolls incurred in the past year. That group owes the NTTA \$53 million in unpaid tolls.

For years, the agency had little ability to force motorists to pay up other than to send their debts to collections agencies. But the Texas Legislature gave some tolling authorities new enforcement powers this year to help them recoup money and prevent further losses.

Those abilities include banning drivers and blocking the annual renewal of their vehicle registration. The NTTA is already working with the state and three county tax offices to implement the registration blocks.

The roadway bans approved Wednesday are expected to go into effect early next year. The agency is planning to buy license plate scanners to put on squad cars of state troopers who enforce laws on NTTA roads. If the plate reader picks up a banned driver's vehicle, the trooper will be alerted.

Drivers face a Class C misdemeanor for violating the ban a first time. The second time their vehicle can be impounded.

“We’re coming to the conclusion that we’re going to have to stop cars in the roads,” Moore said at Wednesday’s meeting.

Staff members have yet to work out details about how or whether state troopers will run special patrols looking for banned drivers. They also haven’t determined how many violators will be part of the initial test of the ban, or what criteria will determine whether they get on the first list. But agency workers have already begun drafting the letter that will go out to habitual violators warning them they’ve been banned.

“A lot of it is just going to be to continue to ramp up and get ready,” said agency spokesman Michael Rey.

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Thomas West 31 minutes ago
scofflaw is not the problem. TXDOT the Governor, Legislators and PRIVATE corporations lining their pockets is the actual problem.. Everyone needs to stop being distracted by this, the problem is metastasizing and soon all of our private property rights will be in jeopardy. Stop, take a breath and see the problem for what it truly is.

Still think scofflaw is the problem? search sunset ntta on facebook and look at the unbelievable numbers owed by other states, corporations and leasing companies. It is NOT the problem your being propagandized... all of you.

Reply

0 0

Manu Dance 1 hour ago
Maybe NTTA can help fix the broken immigration system?

Reply

0 0

Chris Blake 2 hours ago
State Troopers? Now we have to pay for them (through taxes) to collect money? Shouldn't NTTA have to pay for their own policing of their roads?

Reply

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3 1

 **Manu Dance** 28 minutes ago

NTTA gets us with triple taxation we pay their bonds to build roads, we get taxed with gas taxes, and get fees and faulty billing. Sounds like a federal lawsuit waiting to happen

0   0

 **Anonymous** 3 hours ago

not to worry, Obama is going to let them use their food stamp cards

[▼ 1 reply](#) 3   4

 **Chris Blake** 50 minutes ago

I thought Perry provided the food stamps in Tx

0   0

 **Manu Dance** 4 hours ago

Great power be unelected folks contact the FBI its triple taxation without representation. Hope one does not mistakenly get on their system through no fault of their own. What next banning folks for the political beliefs?

2   4

 **Harry Bacardi** 4 hours ago

yea ban them...that will work

3   0

 **Ed Lopez** 5 hours ago

NTTA should do something about their bloated administrative cost namely the over the top executive salaries they pay.

9   0

 **Bart Trollent** 11 hours ago

You forgot to mention that the NTTA inflates bills over to the point that \$50 of unpaid tolls can cost thousands of dollars.

I'm paid up and think you should pay your tolls, but NTTA engages in extremely unethical ballooning fee practices.

Unfortunately Texas' state government strongly supports unethical business practices.

[▼ 1 reply](#) 11   3

 **Tracey Edwards** 3 hours ago

Except that you are leaving out the fact that these fees were waived for anyone purchasing a toll tag and were also waived for a period of months to anyone wanting to pay off their balance. The fact remains that nobody is forced to use the roads and these people chose to ignore all bills.

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