

# 5 states joining E-ZPass to cover most of the East

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Motorists will soon be able to drive nearly anywhere in the East without stopping for tollbooths.

By next year, E-ZPass motorists will be able to drive nearly every toll road from Maine to the Mississippi River without stopping to fork over money.

For motorists and truckers, it's about convenience. More than 6 billion toll transactions, at an average of \$1 each, occur each year on the nation's 7,000 miles of toll roads.

"People don't object to paying tolls," says Pat Jones, director of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association, a toll trade group. "They object to stopping and waiting to pay tolls."

Five states – Illinois, Indiana, Maine, New Hampshire and Virginia – are joining Delaware and six other Northeastern states in the E-ZPass consortium.

The system seems poised to go national. Twelve of the 28 states that impose highway tolls now use E-ZPass – and collect 75 percent of all such tolls, industry experts say.

Advocates of electronic col-

lection say it rids congestion at tollbooths and reduces time on the road. For many states, that makes toll collection more palatable and profitable. Receipts are generally used to fund road construction.

A toll taker can handle 300 cars per hour, says Jack Finn, national director of toll services for the engineering firm HNTB Corp. in New Jersey. Dedicated electronic tolling lanes, with reduced speeds through the toll plaza, can process 1,000 cars per lane per hour.

A high-speed electronic system, where toll plazas are eliminated altogether can manage

2,200 cars per lane per hour. "You can see the impact that can have on a congested roadway," Finn says.

Critics of electronic tolling worry about privacy since the system can be used to track a person's movements. Investigators used E-ZPass records to trace the route assistant U.S. attorney Jonathan Luna's car took Dec. 4 from Baltimore through Delaware to where he was stabbed to death near Lancaster, Pa.

Most states require subpoenas to look at the records. New York has received fewer than 200 such requests in six years.