



BESTPASS ■ WHITE PAPER

How Does Toll Management Differ Between Cars and Commercial Fleets?

Whether you haul freight across state lines, travel cross-country for pleasure or commute to work inside one of America’s many urban centers, you’re liable to hit tolls. According to the Federal Highway Administration, over 3,500 miles of U.S. roads have tolls, and most of that distance is enforced by electronic toll collection (ETC) systems. Not all road users experience tolls the same way, though.

Tolls can vary significantly between passenger cars and commercial fleets, for several reasons. Cars are liable to make far fewer long-distance trips, so they pay fewer tolls and hit them less frequently. Fewer tolls also mean less potential for problems such as misreads of the vehicle-based transponders commonly used to access toll roads by those who sign up with toll collection providers like [E-ZPass](#).

With fewer problems, those that do arise are easier to address; a passenger car driver might be able to resolve issues with an occasional call to E-ZPass customer service. A truck driver who frequently hits tolls, by contrast, can quickly accumulate bills and violations to pay. This situation is compounded for a fleet manager managing multiple vehicles. Transponders can also present challenges that are unique to trucking — i.e., ones that passenger cars never need to deal with.

As a result, toll management is often simpler for passenger cars. At one point, those without transponders could simply pay cash for tolls. In most places, electronic tolling has replaced cash payments, but those who aren’t signed up with a provider like E-ZPass can still receive mailed invoices generated by plate recognition technology. At times, however, this will result in higher rates and surcharges; lower costs are liable to be associated with transponders. Still, for cars with minimal toll exposure, the cost differences may be negligible.

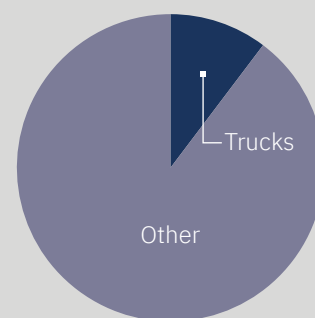
For fleets with monthly toll expenses, transponder services represent an attractive option. In addition to enabling cost savings, transponder data can be used to provide both drivers and fleet managers with an organized overview of tolls. Yet challenges persist, which is why trucking fleets are likely best served by more robust toll management solutions that go beyond simply collecting toll.

Transponder Challenges

Transponders are typically attached to windshields and operate by sending a signal to a toll gantry as they pass through. These gantries are primarily designed for passenger cars since, [as noted by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics](#), truck traffic remains a relatively small share of highway traffic. A recent (2019) figure pegs it at just 10.3 percent.

Yet the design differences mean that transponder misreads are more common among trucks. Placement matters — unlike in cars, transponder mounting is not standardized; the design of both the truck’s windshield and of the transponder itself must be considered. For example, if a truck is transporting cars, an alternative mounting scheme is required, in which case the transponder gets placed on the roof or plate of the vehicle. Truck drivers also may not be aware of transponder misreads when they happen. Misread indicators, where they still exist, can be difficult to see from the driver’s seat. The first indication of a misread might not come until one or more violation notices are received in the mail.

10.3%



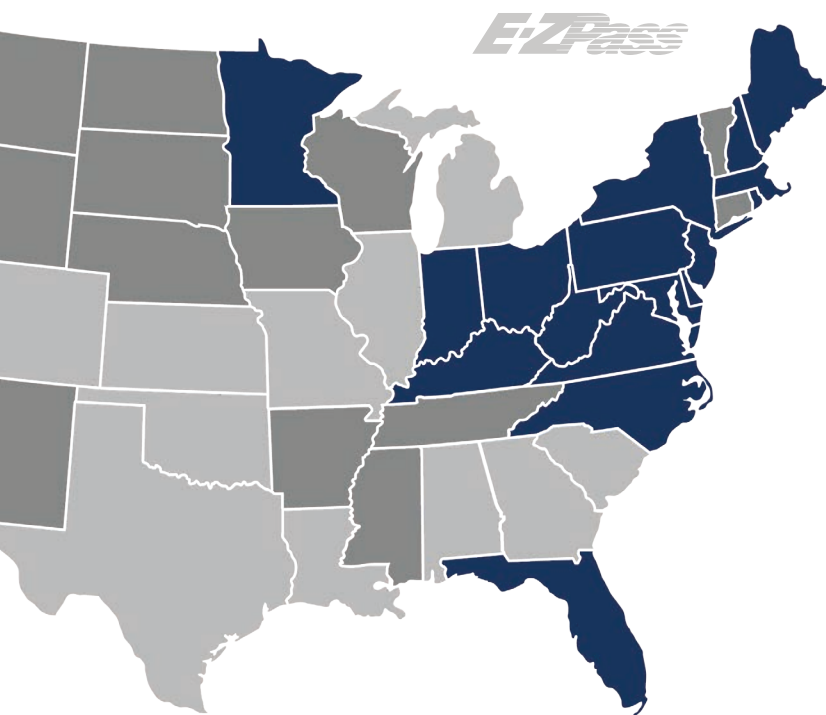
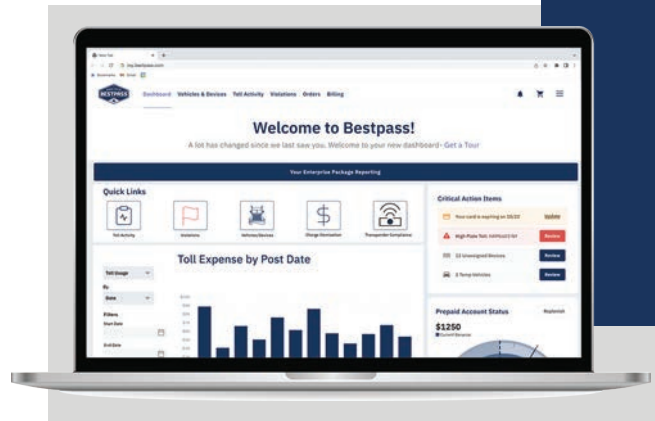
HIGHWAY TRAFFIC (2019)

A new trend of [transponder theft](#), which is on the rise, poses further challenges. Perpetrators steal transponders, often from unlocked vehicles, replacing them with nonoperational devices to conceal the crime. They are then used to fund unauthorized travel, with tolls on the stolen device being charged to the fleet's account. Meanwhile, the vehicle with the nonoperational device accumulates toll violations.

Toll Management

While there are several options for managing tolls, not all are created equal. At one end of the spectrum are providers such as E-ZPass, which place an emphasis on toll collection. Because E-ZPass is self-managed, the burden of addressing problems such as transponder misreads or unauthorized charges is a customer responsibility. More robust solutions can be found in platforms such as [Bestpass](#), which help customers understand the reasons behind violations and preemptively catch problems. A pillar of the service is an online portal that provides a comprehensive overview of toll and allows fleets to upload details about each truck. The platform will also work with toll authorities to solve problems on the fleet's behalf.

The online portal can display alerts when there are indications of trouble, such as maximum toll charges being applied or plates being read instead of transponders — either of which could mean the equipment is improperly mounted or otherwise nonfunctional. (The Bestpass platform can also provide coverage by plate, expanding a fleet's options for toll management; E-ZPass only offers this as a stopgap to assess tolls on noncustomers.) Users can also set days and times that devices should be in use, enabling alerts for activity outside normal areas and travel patterns — a potential sign of theft or other unauthorized use.



In addition, E-ZPass covers only a limited portion of the country along the East Coast and in the eastern part of the Midwest; other toll management services are designed specifically for use in a single state, such as Peach Pass (Georgia) or SunPass (Florida). Compatible technologies allow partnerships to be formed; the I-Pass utilized in Illinois, which uses the same type of transponders as E-ZPass, is currently accepted at all E-ZPass locations. But navigating this patchwork of overlapping coverage can be an administrative nightmare for fleet managers whose businesses involve coast-to-coast travel. Bestpass has built relationships with tolling authorities throughout the country, so coverage follows the fleet wherever it may go.

Solving Problems

It's important to note that when troubles occur, robust toll management platforms go beyond simply sending alerts. Bestpass, for instance, leverages its relationships with tolling authorities to resolve problems on the behalf of its customers. When a maximum toll charge is applied, the service compares the charge to transponder activity and makes an automatic adjustment. When violations are uploaded to the online portal for processing, the service works to determine their cause; it can address issues like transponder theft or unauthorized usage to stop further violations from occurring.



Support can also take the form of online resources, such as [troubleshooting tips](#) on placement, weather conditions and other factors that can interfere with transponder function, and live customer support that can assist in solving whatever other issues may be causing misreads and violations. The Bestpass approach is to package its assistance through a single point of contact.

Summing Up

Tolling impacts just about every road user, but its impact varies significantly depending upon factors such as vehicle type, distance and frequency of travel, and whether the vehicle is part of a fleet. The nature of commercial trucking creates greater exposure to tolls and the administrative challenges of navigating a complex tolling landscape, making a compelling case for the value of toll management services that may be overkill for passenger cars.

While transponder services are a viable option for fleets, they do present challenges such as the potential for misreads or theft. Providers focused primarily on toll collection leave the burden of addressing such problems on customers' shoulders, whereas more robust platforms like Bestpass work to solve problems through a more comprehensive approach to support.

To learn more about whether Bestpass is right for your fleet or trucking operation, [visit bestpass.com](https://www.bestpass.com).

