

## **TxDOT to offer violation fee reduction to toll violators**

KTRE Channel 9, Lufkin, Nacogdoches

EAST TEXAS (KTRE) - Delinquent toll payers may soon get a break on violation fees under a one-time toll violation recovery program approved Thursday at the Texas Transportation Commission's monthly meeting.

While there are no toll roads in the Lufkin District, many residents travel to areas where toll roads are located. All 25 TxDOT Districts have toll violators.

In approving the measure, the state's five transportation commissioners directed Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) staff to develop a program that would reduce the violation fees accrued on delinquent toll accounts, while requiring the individual to open a TxTag account and pay all tolls accrued in full.

Final details of the toll violation recovery offer have not yet been determined, but will be announced in coming weeks. In addition to opening a TxTag account, those who take advantage of the offer will be required to keep that account in good standing for a period of time. Once the program is finalized, TxDOT will contact those eligible for fee reduction through direct mailings to the home or business address associated with the vehicle's license plate.

"For our bond-financed toll roads, TxDOT has a responsibility to collect toll revenues to repay bondholders. In addition, skipping on paying a toll, when other drivers are doing the right thing and paying their bills just isn't right," said Phillip Russell, TxDOT assistant executive director for innovative project development. "While the department can and will take violators to court, our goal is to develop a strong customer base that pays in full and on time. Offering a toll violation recovery program is one more way we can help those who - for whatever reason - haven't paid their tolls bring their account up to date and keep it that way."

On Loop 1, SH 130 and SH 45N in Central Texas and Loop 49 in Tyler, nearly \$3.2 million are owed in unpaid tolls and \$58.4 million are owed in unpaid violation fees. The department is optimistic that many of the approximately 140,000 account holders in violation will take advantage of this one-time offer. After the program concludes, the department will begin filing in court to collect the tolls and fees owed to the state, which will result in an escalation of violation and court fees.

This offer will not apply to violations on non-TxDOT toll roads, such as those operated by the North Texas Tollway Authority, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority or the Harris County Toll Road Authority and rental car companies will be excluded from participation in this program.

Toll road users may inquire about the status of their account by calling the TxTag Customer Service Center at 1-888-468-9824.