

I was very disappointed to read the recent editorial in your newspaper that included references to our reversible express lane project that were completely inaccurate.

Your comment that **"The Tampa tollway is open only during rush hour, receives little use and is costing more than was expected"** paints a picture that is not supported in any way by the facts of our project.

The Tampa Hillsborough County Expressway Authority's Reversible Express Lanes has just won the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association's Toll Excellence Award as the Best Toll Operations Project in the World for 2007. IBTTA recognized the project because it provides one of the world's best combinations of time savings, convenience, safety and reliability for the price.

As opposed to what you wrote in your newspaper, the lanes operate 24 hours a day (except for two 1-hour periods when directional changes are made) and currently are running over 30% above first-year projections for traffic and more than 50% above first year projections for revenue. The project has completely eliminated peak-hour traffic congestion within the Expressway's transportation corridor from downtown Tampa to suburban Brandon (about 10 miles).

Drivers do pay \$1.50 toll for a trip on the Express Lanes which is \$.50 more per trip than was contemplated when the lanes were planned in 1999. However, the increased toll cost is directly related to the higher capital cost of the project which was due entirely because of a construction accident that is presently being litigated by the Authority.

You certainly have every right to take any position you wish about projects in your community, but there is no excuse for any journalist to support their position by presenting false information about someone else's project.

The facts about our project's operation, traffic and revenue are documented every month by the Florida Department of Transportation and are public information available to anyone under Florida's Sunshine Law. In other words, there is absolutely no reason for you or anyone else to ever present false data about the Reversible Express Lanes.

Martin Stone, Planning Director

The Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority is a public agency subject to Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes concerning public records.