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\$7.50 a week, \$30 a month

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For months, there has been talk of tolls on the Snapper Creek Expressway's extensions and connections, but not until the concrete and metal garrisons went up last week did jaws like mine drop.

The signs ahead were easy to read for the 74,000 Kendallites who use the expressway daily: Commuting to work everyday is going to cost a lot more. We're not happy.

``Total outrage, that's the only way I can express what people are feeling," David Lyons, president of the Kendale Homeowners Association, told me.

Sparks flew at a recent town hall with residents and officials from the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, which runs and maintains the highway. Here's where the anger comes in:

Starting in July, the cost of a round-trip from Killian Parkway to U.S. 1 will cost \$1.50.

That's \$7.50-a-work week, \$30-a-month in a *deep* recession. That's not counting weekend trips or other tolls we encounter daily. That \$30 is half my cable bill or barely a week's worth of the cheapo \$5 lunches I buy.

Adding salt to our wounds in this recession -- did I say how *deep* it is? -- is the way those electronic toll gantries pop up within a minute or two of one another. Within a five-mile stretch, motorists will be hit with *three* 25-cent toll gantry -- two on the 878, my road, and one near the Killian Parkway exit.

Commuters and Miami Dade College students will be hit hard, Lyons points out.

Cindy Polo-Serantes, an MDX spokeswoman, says I and my fellow Kendallites haven't been paying our share because we hop on the expressway in sections where there is no toll. ``Only 46 percent of the motorists using Snapper Creek have been paying for its upkeep," she said. ``That has not been fair." She said motorists don't realize that MDX's five roadways are solely funded by tolls.

Aside from the monetary hit in this deep, deep -- did I mention *deep*? -- recession, the toll gantries will take away the homey feel of our neighborhood roadway. Since moving to Kendall in the mid 1990s, I have been a loyal user of the 878 extension that allows me to skip a large section of congested Kendall Drive and the dreaded Palmetto Expressway to get to downtown Miami. I get on Kendall heading east, but only for three blocks; then with a left turn I escape the traffic by jumping on the hidden-away 878 extension ramp, right after

Southwest 92nd Avenue.

Just as I'm starting to enjoy my morning Diet Coke, I ready for my brief, scenic and fast-moving ride on the long and winding, one-lane entrance ramp. As I round a corner on the ramp, I can see to my left scores of motorists in the parking lot that is the Palmetto -- but I'm zipping along.

On the right, I see the emerald green baseball field in the rear of the Boys & Girls Club. But I can't enjoy that too much; stragglers are honked at on this single-lane stretch of the ramp.

After jockeying for a good lane and sitting through two lights, I finally hit U.S. 1. I'm satisfied as I take my last gulp, ready to battle three-lane traffic to work.

I've never needed a SunPass. Now I will have to purchase one, for fear of being caught without change at a toll gantry. Either that, or travel clogged Kendall Drive to U.S. 1.

We Kendallites should have seen this coming when MDX recently added a brand new ramp that eventually connects motorists to the Don Shula and the Palmetto..

Some residents aren't giving in to The Man that easily, though. ``I will tell you now that we will do whatever it takes to stop this toll from taking effect," Lyons told me.

On Tuesday afternoon, he will appear in front of the MDX board of directors to again express Kendall residents' displeasure with the sprouting tolls in the midst of this deep -- yeah, yeah, you know -- recession.

As for me, I'm going to enjoy the free ride until it ends, sipping my soda. What will you do?

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