



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

PRESS RELEASE

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**COMPTROLLER STRINGER HOLIDAY TRAVEL ALERT:
RENTAL CAR COMPANIES RIP OFF NEW YORKERS WITH
HUGE FEES FOR E-Z PASS**

*Lose-lose for consumers: use E-Z Pass and pay through the nose
or sit in traffic*

*8 out of 11 rental car companies charge daily “convenience”
fee for E-Z Pass and cash rate for tolls; cost can be two to three
times more than E-Z Pass owners pay*

*Stringer calls on state legislature to pass laws that limit fees for
car renters*

(New York, NY) – A new [holiday travel alert](#) released today by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer found that rental car companies are putting drivers in a lose-lose situation by charging excessive “convenience” fees to use E-Z Pass, or forcing them to sit in pollution-causing cash-lane traffic at toll booths. The Comptroller’s report found that these fees can raise the cost of tolls by 82 to 270 percent on a four-day round trip from New York City to upstate New York.

“Rental car companies are sticking consumers with huge ‘convenience’ charges that turn E-Z Pass into ‘Expensive Pass’, and that’s bad news for the thousands of New Yorkers who are planning to rent a car to see family and friends this holiday season,”

Comptroller Stringer said. “Consumers shouldn’t have to choose between high costs and delays, congestion and inconvenience. It’s time for government to hit the brakes and force these companies to let all drivers use cashless toll systems without exorbitant fees.”

Most car rentals originate online, where consumers are quoted a base price for rental. When renters pick up the car, they will often be asked if they want to purchase the rental car’s E-Z Pass program. Costly “convenience” fees for these programs leave consumers with two unenviable choices: sign up and pay those steep charges in addition to the tolls, or forego the rental car company program and pay all tolls in the traffic-filled cash lane, contributing to increased congestion and pollution.

The report analyzed fees and penalties imposed by the 10 rental car companies serving the City’s airports—Advantage, Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz, National, Payless, and Thrifty—plus a newcomer to the City’s rental car market, Silvercar and found:

- **Daily E-Z Pass fees and higher costs:**
 - Ten out of eleven charge daily fees for E-Z Pass ranging from \$3.95 to \$21.49, even on days that car renters don’t go through *any* tolls.
 - Eight charge consumers the higher *cash* rate for tolls, rather than discounted E-Z Pass rate.
- **Penalties:**
 - Five out of eleven rental companies saddle consumers with significant penalties — up to \$25 per toll — for using E-Z Pass Lanes without signing up for their costly programs.

To illustrate the impact of these fees, Comptroller Stringer analyzed a case study of a four-day trip from Brooklyn to Schenectady using the New York State Thruway and the George Washington Bridge to visit relatives for Thanksgiving. The cost of this trip for car owners with their own E-Z Pass is \$22.77, but for rental car customers, costs are 82 to 270 percent more, from a low of \$41.40 to a high of \$85.96, depending on the company/tolling plan.

HOLIDAY TRAVEL ALERT

RENTAL CARS + E-Z PASS = EXPENSIVE



COST OF TOLLS AND FEES FOR A FOUR-DAY ROUND TRIP FROM BROOKLYN TO TIMES SQUARE



NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER SCOTT M. STRINGER

Source: "Fast Fees: An Analysis of E-Z Pass Fees at Rental Car Companies in NYC" Office of the New York City Comptroller, Scott M. Stringer

“When more than half of City residents don’t own a car, many have no other option when they need to go out of town than to rent a car. Rental car companies shouldn’t be allowed to saddle these consumers with unfair E-Z Pass charges. At this time of year, New Yorkers should be using their hard-earned money to put turkey on the table, not line the pockets of car rental companies,” Stringer said.

Comptroller Stringer recommended:

- Rental car companies work with tolling entities to provide a low-cost alternative for rental car users.

- This program would allow customers to bypass rental car companies' expensive E-Z Pass plans and directly pay the toll operator online or over the phone.
- Consumers would both avoid exorbitant fees charged for E-Z Pass plans and pay the discounted E-Z Pass toll rate.
- In California, the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District has successfully implemented a similar system.
- Pass a state law to ensure the fees charged by rental car companies to use cashless toll systems are reasonable and transparent that would:
 - Mandate that rental car companies pass on E-Z Pass discounts to consumers on any tolls they are billed for;
 - Require rental car companies to state – up front and in plain English – what their E-Z Pass fees and penalties are before a customer rents a car; and
 - Cap the “convenience” fee that rental car companies are allowed to charge to a reasonable amount.

“E-Z Pass has transformed the way New Yorkers drive, limiting pollution-causing traffic, reducing congestion at toll booths, and cutting down travel time,” Comptroller Stringer said. “But these rental car companies’ ‘convenience’ fees are anything but convenient. State lawmakers must pass legislation ensuring the fees charged by rental car companies to use electronic toll systems are reasonable and transparent.”

To read the full report, click [here](#).