Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: May 5, 2009

Agenda Item No: 12(B)3

To: Honorable Chairman Dennis C. Moss
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager

Subject: Report Pursuant to Resolution Directing the Mayor or the Mayor's Designee to Consult with the Rental Car Companies on A Voluntary Rental Car Customer Awareness Program Relating to Appropriate Use of SunPass

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On December 2, 2008, the Board approved a resolution directing the Mayor or the Mayor's designee to consult with the rental car companies on the implementation of a voluntary program to educate customers on the use of the Sunpass program. Said program should explain, preferably in writing, the appropriate use of the SunPass and toll lanes in the County to minimize accidents caused by customers unfamiliar with the proper use of such lanes.

With a significant number of rented automobiles on County roadways, many automobile renters are frequently unaware that SunPass lanes on toll roads in the County are intended solely for drivers possessing a pre-paid toll transmitter. Drivers unfamiliar with the requirements of an open-road tolling facility present a serious safety problem when they take corrective action to avoid the prepaid lane in favor of the cash lanes. Their actions may cause accidents, which endanger both property and life.

The growing use of the prepaid toll lanes in the County has affected the rental car industry. Rental cars receive SunPass toll violation notices because unaware motorists incur unpaid tolls. In response to the growing number of claims, most companies added staff to reconcile the SunPass claims, and to bill customers. In an industry where companies work hard to retain customer loyalty, many customer-service issues arose from this practice.

As of January 31, 2009, the combined gross sales reported to the Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) for national companies operating at Miami International Airport (MIA) comprised 96 percent of the marketplace, while local companies comprise the remaining four percent. National companies' solutions vary, but include written material, the purchase of prepaid tolls, and even a window sticker encouraging the use of the prepaid toll lanes. Some also employ a third-party technology, which does not require a transponder, but relies on the video imaging of the vehicle license plate to produce a billing for payment. This solution minimizes operational impacts and increases customer satisfaction.

Royal Rent A Car, which has a 40 percent market share of the local company market, also employs the third-party technology solution. Solutions at the remainder of the local companies, comprising two percent of the overall market, run the gamut from written program to verbal instruction. Two companies did not to respond to inquiries.

The rental car industry is highly competitive. To differentiate brands from the competition, companies focus on being customer friendly and exceeding expectations. The result is companies serving 98 percent of the car rental market have some form of written program and/or technological solution for their customers, which comprises a Customer Awareness Program as contemplated by the Resolution.

Assistant County Manager