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PA Turnpike and Bucks County District Attorney Partner to Focus on Serial Toll Evasion

More than 50 percent of all state's toll violations occur in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

Bensalem, PA – The PA Turnpike Commission and the Bucks County District Attorney today announced a partnership that will crack down on the area's toll violators, or scofflaws, owing more than \$2,000 in unpaid tolls.

For the past two years, the PA Turnpike has been working with county district attorney offices to prosecute those who are using the turnpike on a regular basis and racking up significant amounts in unpaid tolls. The Bucks County District Attorney's Office is the first to address the issue with a special unit. This new unit will focus on theft of service charges for toll evasion that occurs at PA Turnpike interchanges in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

"Our discussion here today is centered on toll violators specifically in Bucks and Montgomery counties," explained PA Turnpike Commissioner Pat Deon. "Toll violations that occur in these counties represent more than half of all the toll violations statewide. In total, there are 709,497 violations here which add up to more than \$21 million in unpaid tolls."

"Those who decline to pay tolls are not just stealing from the commission," continued Commissioner Deon. "They are stealing from the vast majority of those who dutifully pay their tolls, whether at the toll booth or when money is deducted from their E-ZPass accounts."

"These violators are not those who understandably may be confused by the toll lanes or forgetful about paying a bill. These are people who regularly and intentionally get on the turnpike with no intention of paying their tolls ever. That is – until now."

Owing to a grant from the PA Turnpike Commission, the Bucks County District Attorney's Office has hired a new county detective and will hire an additional attorney to investigate and prosecute motorists whose unpaid tolls exceed the \$2,000 felony threshold.

Previous investigations in Bucks County have resulted in felony charges against 13 individuals and the recovery of tens of thousands in unpaid tolls.

"Whenever we travel across Pennsylvania, we can choose to take the turnpike, or some other road. By taking the turnpike, millions of travelers agree to pay their tolls," said District Attorney Matthew D. Weintraub. "If people choose to take unfair advantage of the turnpike chronically

and repeatedly while not paying the toll in Bucks or Montgomery counties, these most persistent violators will be held criminally responsible.”

The PA Turnpike has allocated \$327,705 per year as part of this three-year pilot partnership.

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