

FASTags - UPSC Notes

FASTags are rechargeable tags that are used in toll booths for the collection of tolls from vehicles using the national highways. This is a topic that is often seen in the news since the Central Government has made all vehicles to have FASTags mandatorily by January 2020. In this article, you can read all about FASTags for the [UPSC exam](#).

FASTags

FASTags are basically stickers enabled with RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology, that are stuck to the windowpanes of vehicles so that automatic deduction of toll can happen in toll booths, without having the vehicle to stop.

- This is primarily meant to decrease the traffic at toll booths and also to enable more digital transactions in the country.
- These tags are linked to bank accounts and other payment modules and are prepaid. Once the amount is exhausted (or the customer reaches the minimum amount to be kept in the tag), they can be recharged.
- When a vehicle crosses a toll booth, the tag is detected by the sensor, and the amount is automatically deducted from the tag.
- The barrier then opens up for the vehicle to pass through.
- The user then gets a notification on his linked phone number about the deduction.
- This should significantly reduce waiting time at the highway toll plazas, which generally see a lot of congestion.
- This also reduces the need for the drivers to carry liquid cash.
- A FASTag is valid for 5 years and after purchasing, it can be recharged as when needed.
- Currently, in national highways, cash is not being accepted at FASTag lanes, and any vehicle entering it will be charged twice the toll amount.
- Customers living close to toll booths (within 10 km as per a government notification) can get a concession on the toll amount which can be paid by the FASTag.
- The [National Highways Authority of India \(NHAI\)](#) is trying to get all states on board so that FASTags can be applied all across India over both national and state highways.

Benefits of FASTags

FASTags offer many benefits for users and the government.

- Digital transaction making it easier and convenient - no need to carry cash.
- Decrease of congestion at the toll plazas.
- Enables non-stop movement at the highways leading to lower fuel usage.
- Online recharge possible for FASTags.
- Reduced effort in managing the toll booths because of a hassle-free system.
- Environmental benefits because of reduced paper usage.
- Monthly passes for a specific toll booth is available for regular users.
- FASTags work all over the country and are not specific to the user's place of residence or registration.

Problems with FASTags

Although FASTags offer many benefits, there are a few challenges being seen. Some of them are:

- There could be technical issues like the sensor not reading the tag properly. Technical glitches could also see a user being wrongly charged.
- They have not necessarily reduced the waiting time in the toll booths significantly because of some teething issues like people trying to pay by cash in the FASTag lanes, etc.
- FASTags can be bought directly from the NHAI or from banks. Those sold by NHAI are bank-neutral, that means they can be recharged from any bank. However, those sold by banks are not, which means they have to be recharged from the same bank.

UPSC Questions related to FASTags

How to buy and activate your FASTag?

Certified banks are issuing FASTags. They can also be bought from national highway toll plazas and also e-commerce outlets.

Is FASTag compulsory?

The central government made it compulsory. However, there are some still lanes which collect cash. But, any vehicle entering a FASTag lane without the tag will have to pay twice the toll amount.

Who is implementing the FASTag programme?

It is being implemented by the Indian Highways Management Company Ltd. (IHMCL) (incorporated by the NHAI), along with the National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI).