

**Maryland Commuter
Assistance Study**

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The Maryland Department of Transportation is nearing the completion of an 18 month intensive effort to develop a multi-modal systems level plan. The plan focuses on the 24 most congested corridors. The structure of the department allows for this type of coordinated effort, in that we have a fully integrated trust fund. All transportation expenditures for the state come from this transportation trust fund.

By way of background, with the passage of the 1987 Surface Transportation Act at the federal level and a significant revenue increase at the state level, a number of projects that had been in the planning stage were able to move forward. This seemed like an appropriate time to start a long range planning effort. A multi-modal

approach is being taken to look at a full range of options within each corridor.

The study was initiated in 1989. Eleven of the 24 corridors under study are close to the Washington, D.C. area. A number of alternatives are being considered in each corridor and are being examined in a sequential manner. These include, carpools, vanpools, park-and-ride facilities, express bus service, highway improvements, a variety of types of HOV facilities, light rail transit, commuter rail, and heavy rail transit.

In terms of the process, one of the first steps was a detailed examination of the existing conditions in each corridor and the future plans for each area. The plan focuses on the year 2010. Capital and operating cost models have been developed for each of the alternatives for use in the evaluation process. For the purposes of the evaluation, HOVs are being defined as vehicles with 3 or more occupants and buses.

The evaluation will focus on four general areas. First, the existing and future problems will be identified in each corridor. Next, the alternatives will be evaluated based on how well they provide solutions to these problems and how practical they are. Last, the costs associated with each alternative will be examined.

The study should be completed in the near future. While no specific recommendations have been made yet, I think HOV facilities will be an important part of the plan. As you might expect, I think we will also see a mix of approaches in different corridors. One of our challenges as transportation professionals is to educate the decision makers on which solutions work best in each area and to explain why one approach does not work in every instance.