

**PLENARY SESSION: IMPLICATIONS
OF LEGISLATIVE AND
POLICY DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE
HOV SYSTEM**

Opening Comments

Lester Lamm



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Highway Users Federation*

Good morning. It is a pleasure for me to act as moderator for this plenary session, as I have been involved with different aspects of HOV facilities from the early days. I believe in the HOV concept and I hope the panel session this morning will provide a good deal of information on the different perspectives related to HOV facilities. I would like to make a few opening remarks concerning my thoughts on the subject and provide you with some information on the Highway Users Federation.

As I mentioned, I believe in the concept of HOV facilities and I think it is a concept whose time has come. HOV

facilities are in use in many areas. I think HOV facilities often represent the best public policy. Obviously, one of the key elements is financing the development of HOV facilities. I think this is a very appropriate and timely question given the uncertainty of the direction future federal highway and transit programs may take. As you are aware, the federal highway and transit programs are due to expire next year. The comments from many of our panelists this morning may give us some insights into what we might expect during the reauthorization process. In turn, I think it is important for people who are working on the legislation to know what the professionals in the industry are thinking. The real issue for all of us is ensuring the best use of public funds. As we all are so well aware, transportation demands far outweigh available funding. Establishing priorities and determining the most effective financing mechanisms will be a major challenge.

The Highway Users Federation has identified what we feel represents a logical 9 point highway and transit program for the future. Without going into the program in detail, the Federation believes that one of the greatest unmet needs relates to the growth in urban and suburban traffic congestion. We believe that any continued federal activity in transportation should include more assistance to state and local governments in relieving urban and suburban traffic congestion. In fact, our program recommends a significant increase in funding for both highway and transit programs. Under our concept, 4 billion dollars would be available from the trust fund for use in a flexible manner. Funding would flow through the states to the urban areas and would be available for congestion relief programs determined appropriate by the state and local governments. This would

allow for greater flexibility in the use of funds for a variety of projects.

As I mentioned, the important thing is that we are at a turning point in terms of federal funding levels and programs. I hope everyone of you will give some consideration to the level of funding and approach you would like to see included in the reauthorization. I would further encourage you to work with your Congressional delegation and with the different groups and committees to promote the approach you favor.

I would also like to suggest two points for consideration at future conferences on this topic. First, in relation to the financing issue, I think there is an appropriate role for the private sector to play. I think traffic congestion is a national problem that effects private industry very significantly. The people that suffer from traffic congestion include employees, employers, businesses and the economic activities of communities. When people are stalled in traffic it means that some kind of desired economic activity is not taking place. I think we would be well advised to involve the private sector as early as possible in the development of HOV facilities. Including them in conferences of this type might be one way to start this process.

The second point I would like to make relates to the application of advanced technologies to HOV facilities. We are now experiencing the rapid development of advanced technologies in a number of different areas, including both vehicle and communication technologies. Terms like "smart vehicles", "smart highways", and Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems (IVHS) are being used to describe these systems. I think that technology is going to be an even

greater help to us in the future than it has been in the past. HOV facilities represent a real potential for the application of much of this technology. I would encourage you to become actively involved in these activities.

The panel members you will be hearing from cover the national, both administrative and legislative, and state perspectives. This will provide valuable insight into what is currently going on in each of these areas and what we can expect in the future.