

State Perspective

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Seattle, and the surrounding Puget Sound area, continues to experience rapid economic growth and population increases. This translates into increasing congestion on our roadway system. HOV lanes were first implemented in the Seattle area in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The lanes are now a central part of the area's transportation system. Currently only about a quarter of the planned system has been completed.

Much of the early development of HOV lanes grew out of concerns related to expanding freeway facilities in many parts of our community. While many freeways were stopped, the population and economic development boom continued. The good news out of this is that we have economic growth, but the bad news is that we have grid-lock. HOV facilities are an innovative, energy efficient, cost-effective, and

environmentally sound way of maximizing the capacity of freeways.

HOV facilities in the Seattle area include those on SR 520, I-5, I-405, and I-90. Today there are some 41 lane miles of HOV lanes in operation, and plans for an additional 114 lane miles. This would result in a total of 156 lane miles of HOV facilities. In addition, many local jurisdictions have plans for HOV lanes. However, just adding HOV lanes to the highway system is not enough. The HOV facilities in Seattle are part of an overall transportation management plan called the FLOW system. The major elements of this system are:

- HOV lanes
- Park-and-ride facilities
- Express bus service
- Surveillance, control and driver information system
- Carpool and vanpool programs
- Arterial sign control system
- Reversible roadway system
- Tow truck operations

These elements are either currently in operation or soon will be. However, all of these physical facilities, or hardware, as they are sometimes referred to in the Seattle area, work only if people use them. Additional efforts are needed to encourage usage. The HOV system "software" includes activities such as public and private ride-matching and vanpool programs, target marketing, rideshare programs, city ordinances that control parking provisions or mandate other HOV incentives, the guaranteed ride home program, a monitoring and information gathering processes that allows us to evaluate the system, employer funded HOV incentives, and the HERO program, which is designed to allow motorists to report HOV lane violators.

A few examples indicate the success of many of these program elements. On SR 520, the HOV lane carries 42% of the people and in only 7% of the vehicles during the morning peak-hour. On the I-5 HOV lane, carpoolers can travel twice as fast as the single driver travelling in the adjacent freeway lane. The HOV lanes also provide more reliable travel times. For example, in 1984, 25% of the office employees in the central business district rode the bus or carpooled or vanpooled to work. The city of Bellevue has enacted an ordinance requiring new development outside the central business district to establish transportation management programs, including such elements as a guaranteed ride home program. Recent results indicate that the Bellevue rideshare program has increased the number of employees using transit and carpooling from 17 percent to 42 percent over a 15 month period. The easy-ride program implemented in the I-90 and Bellevue areas has resulted in 183 new vanpoolers, 251 new carpoolers, and 197 individuals registering for the guaranteed ride home program. In addition, 43 percent of the daily home-based work trips to the Seattle central business district are by transit or carpool.

There are numerous plans for additional facilities and services in the Seattle area. The Council of Governments, Seattle Metro, and the Washington State Department of Transportation all have plans for additional HOV lanes and support services. To help fund these activities the Washington state legislature passed four critical pieces of legislation in 1990. First, the gas tax was increased from 18 cents per gallon to 23 cents per gallon. Second, truck weight fees were increased by 40 percent. Third, the state motor vehicle excise tax was increased. Last, legislation was passed

allowing for local option transportation taxes.



I-5, Seattle

In addition, a major high capacity transportation bill was passed that is referred to by its number-1825. Representative Dick Nelson, who is also attending this conference, and I were responsible for this bill. It addresses rail freight, high capacity system development, and AMTRAK facilities, as well as HOV lane development. The bill allows counties to impose local taxes to assist in the development and construction of HOV facilities. The bill provides for the use of an employer tax up to \$2.00 per employee per month and other funding mechanisms that require voter approval. In addition, cities that operate transit systems, county transportation authorities, metropolitan municipal cooperations, and public transit benefit areas may submit up to a 1% sales tax to the voters.

Thus, funding options are now available to accelerate the development of HOV lanes, park-and-ride lots, and other support facilities. However, to be successful, we believe a partnership among federal, state, and local authorities is needed. Now is not time for the federal

government to withdraw financial support. A continued joint effort from state and federal transportation agencies, local jurisdiction, and the private sector is needed to provide an environment conducive to HOV development. It was not an easy task to get these measures approved, as this is an election year in the state of Washington. All of the House is up for re-election, along with half of the senate. It is never easy to pass tax bills and run for re-election at the same time. The two houses are also split politically, with the democrats controlling the House and the republicans controlling the senate. The Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee is a republican from eastern Washington. He was concerned with the roads in the eastern part of the state, while I was interested in the high capacity bill. We both got what we wanted. I voted for his taxes and he voted to get the high capacity bill through.

The legislature also passed a growth management bill this year. The bill ties land use to capital improvements and transportation. It is an approach that has not been really tried before. Overall, I think transportation did very well this session in the state of Washington and I was proud to be a part of the effort.