

## Conference Welcome

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Welcome to Seattle and King County. It is nice to have the National HOV Facilities Conference in Seattle this year. I know you will have a productive conference and an enjoyable time. We are proud of the fact that Seattle was the site of one of the early HOV lane demonstration projects. I'm sure many of you have heard of the Blue Streak project, which was the first use of HOV facilities in the Seattle area. Its success has led to the development of an extensive HOV lane network in the area.

The subject of your conference is of great interest and importance to elected officials, agencies, and the general public in this region. I often think that people in transportation, especially those responsible for HOV lanes, have a difficult job. Convincing people to change their commute habits and use buses, carpools, and vanpools is not an easy task. In politics we have a great rule; where there is no solution, there is no problem. When you keep this in mind, life goes along much easier.

In King County, which encompasses some 31 cities and 1.5 million people, we have been trying to concentrate our growth in the urbanized area. This represents approximately one-fourth of the geographic area. We are facing many of the same problems as other metropolitan areas throughout the country, including traffic congestion. We realize that we need to use a variety of approaches and techniques to better manage our transportation system.

As a member of the Puget Sound Air Quality Board, I am also aware of the air quality problems we face in the region. We have initiated an overall program to reduce all types of air pollution, including pollutants generated from industries, motor vehicles, and even wood stoves. Air quality issues relating to the automobile is one of the major concerns of the Board. We realize it will take a coordinated and cooperative effort on the part of many agencies, jurisdictions, and employers to encourage greater utilization of high-occupancy commute modes and reduce automobile generated air pollution. King County currently requires travel demand management planning for major developments. There is also a traffic mitigation fee for new developments. Further, the private sector is actively involved in a variety of programs to encourage their employees to use alternative forms of transportation.

I have used the HOV lanes in the Seattle area for many years and I think they work. I would also like to put in a promotion for more bike lanes and bike facilities. I think by working together we can develop the creative solutions that it will take to deal with our transportation problems. Conferences like this help in sharing those solutions and ideas. Good luck with your conference and I hope you enjoy your stay in the Seattle area.