ISTEA and HOV Facilities in the United States

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Federal Transit Administration Perspective

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It is a pleasure to be here in Ottawa and have the opportunity to speak at this conference. My charge this morning is to talk about the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and provide a perspective on the transit-related aspects of the act. As many of you know, the ISTEA has made major changes in the federal, state, and local partnerships that fund transportation projects in the United States. The ISTEA authorized approximately $150 billion for the six-year transportation program. In addition to the actual authorization of funding, the ISTEA established the procedures and rules governing the use of those funds.

"Intermodal" is the first word of the act, and there has been a good deal of discussion on defining intermodalism and how it differs from multimodal. For those of us involved in HOV planning, intermodalism is not new. HOV projects have historically involved a mix of modes. The exact definition of intermodalism is still evolving, however, as the regulations and procedures outlined in the act are being developed by the different responsible agencies.

I would like to focus my comments this morning on how the ISTEA has influenced the various federal funding programs administered by FTA. I would also like to provide a few examples of how these programs are being used to implement HOV and busway projects. Finally, I would like to review the procedures that have been developed regarding the sharing of responsibilities between FTA and FHWA.

The Section 9 program, which is authorized at approximately $16 billion over the six-year period, is intended to cover the routine needs of transit systems. Funding is allocated by a formula that considers urban population and service factors. In the early years of the program there was also some funding available for system expansion. This is no longer the case in most areas, however. Further, as needs have continued to grow, funding levels have not always been adequate. Many areas are also being pressed to meet the requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and the Clean Air Act Amendments. The 1993 Section 9 appropriation represents about ten percent of the six-year authorization.

The Section 3 program is not based on a formula, but rather is largely a discretionary program. It is authorized at $12.4 billion over the six-year period. For 1993, the appropriation is for Section 3 is $1.725 billion. The three categories within Section 3 and their funding levels are: new starts (40 percent), fixed guideway modernization (40 percent), and bus (20 percent).

The new start category is designed for large, one-time only investments in fixed guideway projects. This section is typically considered the funding category for new rail transit projects. These projects require large expenditures of funds in relatively short time periods. The new start category has also been used to fund HOV lanes and transitways. For example, new start funds were used on some of the Houston HOV lanes and the North I-25 HOV lane in Denver.

The ISTEA earmarked approximately 40 projects for new start funding over the six-year life of the act. Some of these involve HOV projects. Examples include the Multimodal Transit Parkway in Los Angeles, the South Boston Pier Transitway, and the Houston HOV lanes. One problem is that the cost of all these earmarked projects is greater than the total amount of available funding. Thus, there will be competition among the earmarked projects for annual appropriations. FTA evaluates projects on an annual basis and makes recommendations to Congress on how the funds ought to be spent. Projects are rated on a number of different elements including project justification and the source and stability of local funding.

The second Section 3 category is fixed guideway modernization. These funds are allocated by a formula established in the ISTEA. A major share of funds in this category are allocated to cities with old rail systems. Cities like Boston, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia can use these funds to upgrade older rail systems. The formula includes any type of fixed guideway system, however. HOV lanes over seven years old are included in this category.

The bus program is the last category of funding in Section 3. This program is for extraordinary bus needs that cannot be met through Section 9. HOV projects may be eligible for funding through this category. In 1993, all of the funds available within this category have been earmarked by Congress. One of the earmarked projects involves building park-and-ride lots associated with the Dulles Toll Road HOV lane, a project that is no longer in operation. It will be interesting to see how this works out.

Within the ISTEA, there are a series of flexible funding programs under Title 1, which is the highway portion of the ISTEA. Funds within those programs can be used for either highway or transit projects. These include the National Highway System program, authorized

at $21 billion, the Surface Transportation Program, authorized at $23.9 billion, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, authorized at $6 billion. Funding from those programs is potentially available for both highway and transit projects.

I would like to use the Pittsburgh Airport HOV/busway project as an example to demonstrate how the ISTEA may work in actual practice. The project is a proposed two-lane, eight-mile HOV/busway from downtown Pittsburgh to the airport. Eight stations are proposed, along with a new HOV bridge into the downtown area, and the conversion of the Wabash Tunnel into an HOV facility.

The Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAT) has been the lead agency on the project. The initial concept focused on a busway to be funded out of the transit program. Following the passage of the ISTEA, PAT contacted the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) concerning the availability of flexible funding through the Surface Transportation Program (STP). PennDOT indicated an interest in exploring possible funding, but suggested that HOV use of the busway be considered. As a result, a carpool/vanpool alternative was added to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is currently being circulated for review and comment, and a decision is expected soon regarding the locally-preferred alternative.

The institutional relationships that developed on this project are interesting. Although PAT took the initial lead, and is still the lead agency, they are working closely with PennDOT. Further, FTA and FHWA are working together on the federal EIS. The financing plan being developed includes a package of highway and transit funds. Funding sources include Section 3, STP/CMAQ, ISTEA earmarks, local bonding, and other local sources.

I would like to close by discussing some of the administrative aspects of the ISTEA flexible funds. In general, FTA will manage projects that are clearly transit, while FHWA will manage projects that are clearly highway-oriented. Decisions concerning intermodal projects will be made on a case-by-case basis. HOV facilities may fall within those projects that will be determined on an individual basis.

In conclusion, the ISTEA represents a major milestone in the partnership between federal, state, and local transportation agencies. New procedures, new relationships, and new roles will be needed to take advantage of the flexible funding and other requirements of the ISTEA. It will take time to determine the appropriate approaches and to fully understand the opportunities offered by the act. The Pittsburgh project is one example of an approach that can be used to develop busway/HOV projects.

Federal Highway Administration Perspective

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Federal Highway Administration

It is a pleasure to be able to participate in the Sixth National Conference on HOV Systems. The Federal Highway Administration is pleased to help sponsor the conference along with the Federal Transit Administration. I would like to thank the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transit Commission and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation for their sponsorship of the conference as well.

I am very optimistic about the future of HOV facilities as a result of provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. I would like to cover three topics this morning. First, I want to discuss the provisions of the ISTEA that clearly support the potential of HOV facilities. Second, I would like to provide you with an overview of HOV-related activities by federal regions. Finally, I would like to discuss the potential of other ISTEA provisions to greatly expand the inventory of HOV facilities.

As you are aware, the number of miles of operating HOV lanes has greatly increased in the United States since 1969. Currently, slightly over 350 center-line miles are in operation. The increased popularity and demonstrated effectiveness of HOV facilities may have influenced Congress to include the HOV provisions in the ISTEA. There are four primary provisions in the ISTEA that address HOV facilities. These are Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (Section 1008), Interstate Maintenance (Section 1009), Metropolitan Planning (Section 1024), and Statewide Planning (Section 1025). I would like to briefly discuss the aspects of each of these provisions as they relate to HOV projects.