

- Other elements supporting the Transitway system include downtown bus lanes, a bus mall, and bus priority at a few selected traffic signals. In addition, many downtown employers have adopted flexible working hours and partially subsidize employee transit passes. More than 70 percent of all riders use passes. OC Transpo has also worked extensively to improve passenger information through the use of a telephone information system and video screens at some stations.
- Future plans call for the completion of the first phase of the Transitway. The 19-mile, 26-station Phase 1 system is anticipated to be completed in the near future. A Phase 2 system, which includes an additional 19 miles, is planned for the future. Eventually, tunnels will also be built in the downtown area to address growing levels of traffic congestion. OC Transpo continues to explore the use of a wide range of advanced technologies to support and enhance the system.

Provincial HOV Planning and Policies

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Mr. AppaRao provided a summary of HOV planning and policy activities at the provincial level. Further, he discussed some of the recent projects undertaken by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. Mr. AppaRao covered the following topics in his presentation.

- HOV facilities are being considered in Ontario for a number of reasons. These include increasing traffic congestion, deteriorating air quality levels, environmental concerns, and declining mobility. These are similar to the reasons other areas are considering HOV projects. HOV facilities are viewed as one element of a complementary transportation solution. Further, HOV projects support the Ministry's goals relating to the efficient movement of people and goods, reducing congestion, increasing transit use, reducing energy consumption and pollution, providing cost-effective alternatives to highway expansions, and making better use of the existing infrastructure.
- In the 1970s, the first bus-only lanes opened in some cities in Ontario. The first applications focused on the peak-period use of curb lanes by buses on downtown streets. In 1989, the Ministry of Transportation began a policy study to examine the current use and potential future application of HOV facilities in Ontario. The study resulted in the adoption of policies promoting both the development of HOV projects and support for
- ridesharing programs. The Ministry recognizes that it will have to work with the municipalities to develop HOV facilities as part of an integrated system. Further, the need and feasibility for HOV facilities must be examined for each project to avoid the empty-lane syndrome.
- The Ministry also recognizes that a variety of supporting services, facilities, and policies must be in place to help ensure the success of HOV projects. The goal is to maximize the utilization of the highway system. An initial demonstration project is being explored for an HOV lane on the provincial highway system. In Ontario, the provincial and the municipal governments are responsible for funding the transportation elements, such as highways and transit. Currently, the Toronto area is using arterial street lanes, while Ottawa has developed a transitway system.
- Marketing and educational activities will be needed to obtain and maintain public support. Coordination with other transit and transportation modes is important. Supporting elements such as park-and-ride and park-and-pool facilities, ridematching services, and bus services are also needed to help ensure the success of HOV facilities.
- A study is currently being conducted on Highway 403 in the Toronto area. A future widening of this facility may provide an opportunity to introduce the first freeway HOV lane in the Toronto area. There may be other opportunities for future freeway HOV projects in the Toronto area also. The first phase of the Highway 403 HOV lane demonstration project is currently underway. This phase involves looking at the projected HOV volumes and the project justification. Alternative design and operational approaches are also being examined. The long-range plan for the corridor may include general purpose lanes, HOV lanes, and a separate transitway for buses.
- The Ministry has supported ridesharing activities for a number of years. The Ministry developed a commuter software program, called Share-a-Ride, and a handbook for employers to use. Funding for HOV facilities is also being examined by the Ministry.