

HOV Facilities in Toronto

Tom Mulligan

Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto

Mr. Mulligan summarized the current HOV facilities in the Toronto area. In addition, he provided information on planning activities for potential future projects. He covered the following points in his presentation.

- The greater Toronto area is a very vibrant and diverse metropolitan area, which is projected to continue to grow rapidly. Metropolitan Toronto is a regional municipality comprised of six local municipalities. Metropolitan Toronto is responsible for the major regional services, including police, welfare, transit, sewer and water, and regional roads. The regional road system includes two urban expressways and the arterial street network.
- The first HOV lanes were implemented in 1972. From 1972 through 1992, HOV lanes in Toronto meant bus-only lanes. Experiences with the bus-only lanes have included successes and failures. Most of the failures focused on attempts to convert general-purpose lanes into bus lanes. As a result, between 1975 and 1990, only one new bus lane was added in the area. However, since 1990 there has been renewed interest in HOV facilities. This interest has included the opening of the first HOV lane for carpools in the area and a comprehensive HOV network study.
- Currently, there are five bus-only lanes in operation on arterial streets in the Toronto area. These include lanes in the older portions of the city and in more recently developed areas. Existing bus-only facilities are located on Bay Street, Pape Avenue, Eglinton Avenue, Allen Road, and Lansdowne Avenue. Bus-only center left turn lanes have been used with some facilities to provide improved access to subway stations and additional travel time savings for buses.
- In addition to the five bus-only lanes, one HOV lane is currently in operation and one HOV lane is in the construction stage. The Dundas Street HOV lane is open to buses, vanpools, and carpools with three or more people. A study examining the potential for a network of arterial street HOV lanes has also been undertaken. More information on the Dundas Street project and the regional study will be provided in later in the conference. The future HOV network focuses primarily on suburban areas. A rideshare strategy study is also just starting to look at what is needed to market and promote carpooling and vanpooling.

Montreal Experience with Reserved Bus Lanes

Robert Olivier

Montreal Urban Transit Society

Mr. Olivier provided an overview of the bus lanes in Montreal. He discussed the Pie IX Boulevard contraflow lane and showed a video of the facility in operation. Due to time limitations the discussion of the Park Avenue contraflow bus lane was postponed until the workshop session. Mr. Olivier did cover the following points in his presentation.

- The Pie IX Boulevard facility was the first of two arterial street bus-only lanes opened in Montreal—the Park Avenue facility was opened later. Both projects focus on the downtown area, but different approaches have been used. Both are coordinated with the subway system and other transit and transportation elements in the area.
- Before the Pie IX Boulevard HOV lane was implemented, bus operating speeds in the corridor were very slow. A number of HOV lane alternatives were examined. For example, a curb lane was considered, but it was not selected due to concerns about turning vehicles, accessibility, and other issues. Instead, the project steering committee recommended a median location for a contraflow lane. In addition, focus groups were used to obtain input from passengers and business representatives about design and operational issues.
- Buses operating on the Pie IX Boulevard HOV lane have yellow flashing arrows on the front to help alert motorists and pedestrians to the oncoming vehicles. The buses are also equipped with radios, allowing drivers to communicate with the control center, which is responsible for monitoring the project.
- The project has been successful in attracting new riders and reducing bus travel times. Currently, the lane saves some ten minutes in bus travel time. The system has been operating safely with no major accidents or problems. Survey results indicate that riders are satisfied with the service.
- The success of this project has resulted in the examination of additional bus lanes in the Montreal area. The Park Avenue contraflow bus lane, which will be discussed more extensively in a workshop session, represents one of these. The bus lane on the Champlain Bridge crossing the St. Lawrence River is another example of the use of HOV lanes in Montreal.