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# FAST LANE

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## Marketing Managed Lanes

One task of the Managed Lanes project is development of a concept-marketing plan. As part of that effort, project team members researched public outreach efforts conducted around the country. The research focused on projects that have been implemented, as well as studies that have been performed. The research effort sought to:



- Identify public perception and how it was measured,
- Determine how the messages were communicated,
- Summarize approaches for matching community and project goals,
- Distinguish potentially negative perceptions, and
- Recognize unique approaches in gaining political and community support.

Many methods, such as interviews, telephone surveys, and focus groups, have been used to gather information and measure public perception of managed lanes projects. Research findings indicate there are several factors key to public support and subsequent successful project implementation. For instance, the public is more accepting of pricing or other operational strategies when the strategies are presented as part of a comprehensive, long-range transportation plan. Public support increases when issues such as revenue use, toll collection, and long-range planning are explained.

Public education is the first step in the planning process where managed lanes are being considered. Attempts should be made to include all parties with a vested interest in the planning process. This may include such non-traditional groups as the trucking industry, environmental groups, or energy conservation groups. From this initial public education process a project champion can emerge.



## Welcome to FastLane

Welcome to the second edition of *FastLane*: a quarterly newsletter that highlights ongoing activities and research on managed lanes in Texas. The research team has been extremely busy this last quarter moving forward on various tasks and wrapping up work on the operational scenarios analysis task. Look for results to be provided soon via this newsletter and the Internet. This issue features a new addition: a glossary of terms for managed lanes. Each quarter we will feature several commonly-used terms in managed lanes that serve as a framework upon which our researchers will base future efforts. Also look for an unveiling of the newly-designed web site in January at <http://managed-lanes.tamu.edu>. Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone who might be interested in its contents, and as always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

## Managed Lanes on the Web

Work on the newly designed managed lanes web site is expected to be completed in January. The site highlights ongoing research on managed lanes, provides key research results and access to related products, has information on meetings and other events related to managed lanes across the country, and has links to key related Internet sites. You can also read the newsletter online, access newsletter archives, and join our mailing list. Visit the site at <http://managed-lanes.tamu.edu>.

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## Marketing Strategies

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This person may be instrumental in communicating the project to the general public because often the person is a respected individual with a credible voice in the community.

Several common messages of successful projects were identified, including:

- *Choice* – Research has shown that the public does not perceive pricing as inequitable when it is presented as a choice for commuters.
- *Tool* – The public may perceive a pricing project as a “band-aid” or short-term solution. Messages should emphasize that it is only one tool that works with a comprehensive plan.
- *Efficiency* – Typically the public does not understand how underutilized an HOV lane may be. When shown that pricing maximizes available capacity the pricing concept is more acceptable.
- *Operations* – People want to know how the program will work. Presenting examples of successful projects and how they operate helps facilitate understanding and support. This is especially true in areas where there are no HOV lanes or toll roads. The public needs assurance that toll collection will not impede travel that is already congested because they may be unfamiliar with electronic toll collection.
- *Enforcement* – Enforcement is especially important in areas that currently operate HOV lanes. The traveling public wants to know that if they pay for a premium service others will not be allowed a “free ride.”
- *Revenue Use* – How the agency plans to use the revenue must be clearly defined from the outset of the project. Successful projects have targeted the money for improvements in corridor where the project is occurring. Public opinion research indicates that people are evenly split on revenue use for transit improvements or to fund roadway projects. Additionally, as part of the ongoing public information, improvements that are made with revenue should be highlighted.
- *Transportation Funding* – Research has shown that the public is unaware of how transportation projects are funded. Messages should focus on the funding shortfall and show pricing as a means to raise revenue for projects that might otherwise not be funded. This reinforces the idea that a pricing project is a management tool in a comprehensive plan that will impact the entire region.

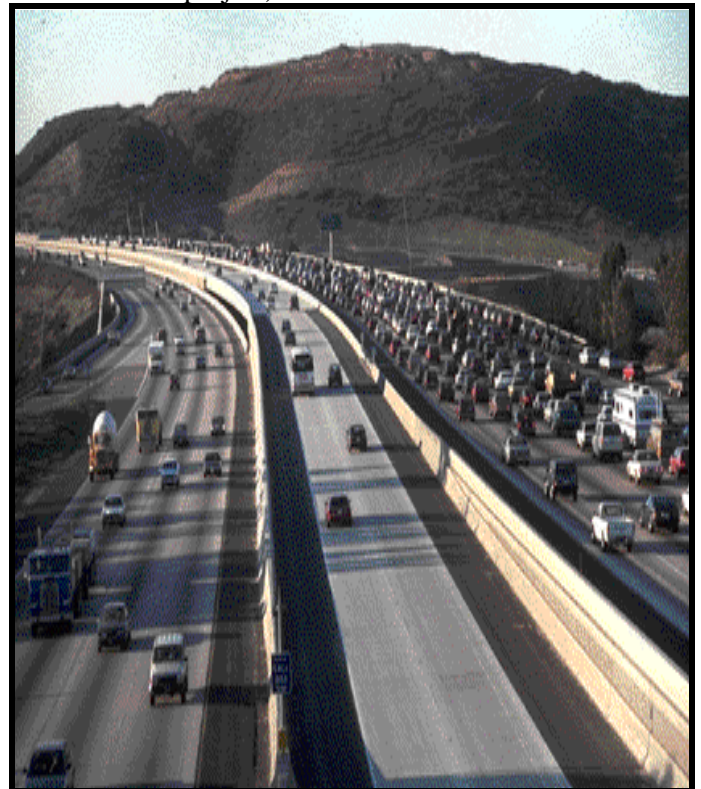
The messages above have been identified as concerns of the public. A knowledgeable project champion and a comprehensive public education campaign should identify the issues important to each community and address them honestly and openly. It is important to remember that the

public may initially react negatively but public support may increase with education.

## I-15, FasTrak – San Diego, CA

This project began as a three-year pilot program on an 8-mile stretch of two reversible HOV lanes on I-15 between State Route 52 and State Route 56. The HOV lanes are barrier-separated from the main lanes of I-15. FasTrak is the program that allows buy-in for single-occupant vehicles (SOV). Access is only available at the northern and southern termini; there is no intermediate access on this 8-mile stretch. This route serves commuters from the suburban communities known as the “Inland North” area to employment centers in central San Diego. Certain parameters established at project implementation, included:

- Solo drivers on the Express Lanes could not adversely affect the current level of service (LOS) which was determined to be no worse than LOS C;
- Revenue generated from the demonstration project would be used for capital and operating expenses for transit improvements and HOV facilities in the corridor;
- Enabling legislation that was required for the project would expire after three years (length of the Federal demonstration project).



Courtesy of the San Diego Association of Governments  
**I-15 in San Diego California**

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## *I-15, FasTrak – San Diego, CA*

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The project began in December 1996 with Phase I, known as Express Pass. Express Pass sold a limited number of monthly passes for SOV use at a fee ranging from \$50.00 - \$70.00. These passes were windshield stickers that identified SOV users on the Express lanes as FasTrak participants. In June 1997 the windshield stickers were replaced with electronic transponders to allow for automatic vehicle identification (AVI) monitoring of daily lane use.

On March 30, 1998, the project transitioned to Phase II, known as FasTrak. FasTrak customers used electronic toll collection and a debit system to pay on a per-trip basis for use of the Express Lanes. The tolls are set dynamically, based on real-time traffic data and can change every six minutes depending on congestion on the Express lanes. Congestion is monitored through information collected by loop detectors and transmitted to a traffic management center. The SANDAG Board of Directors set an initial toll schedule, varying from \$ .50 to \$ 4.00 per trip. The fee can be as high as \$ 8.00 if major incidents on the Express Lanes cause the Level of Service to drop below C. Some adjustments have been made to the toll schedule to more fully distribute the traffic in the peak. For instance, the tolls have been lowered during the peak-period shoulders to create an incentive for motorists to adjust their travel times out of the heaviest of the peak hours. Carpools and motorcycles are free; commercial trucks are not allowed on the Express Lanes.

By the end of the federal demonstration project in December 1999 over 11,000 transponders had been issued to 7,500 account holders. Almost 11,000 HOVs were using the Express lanes as well as an additional 3,000 SOV drivers participating in the FasTrak program. In February 2000 the Express Lanes averaged 16,900 daily vehicles and one-fifth of the vehicles were SOV FasTrak customers. The latest figures from SANDAG, through the end of November 2001, indicate that over 18,500 are using the Express Lanes and over 4,500 of these motorists are SOVs taking advantage of the FasTrak program.

The results of the three-year demonstration show that the project goals have been met. Existing capacity is being better utilized and the HOV lanes have maintained free-flow conditions. The revenue generated is approximately \$1.2 million annually; approximately \$430,000 is spent annually for operating costs and \$60,000 is spent annually on enforcement by the California Highway Patrol. The remainder is used for transit and HOV facility improvements. In fact, the *Inland Breeze* bus service (Route 980 and 990) is completely funded by FasTrak revenue. Bus service in the corridor has increased by approximately 9 percent over the study period from Fall 1996 to Fall 1999. The maximum ridership was reached in Spring 1999. San Diego State University conducted the

Phase II, Year Three Bus Study. Their findings indicate that most of the ridership on the *Inland Breeze* consists of riders that used other modes of transit for the same trip. However, the proportion of riders that were former solo drivers has increased from Fall 1998 to Fall 1999. Greatest impact from the *Inland Breeze* service will come from attracting non-traditional bus riders.

In September 1999, the California legislature extended the enabling legislation for an additional two years. In January 2000, the project became fully self-supporting and has continued without Federal funding. Recently, the California legislature, in SB 252, extended the legislation until January 2002.

The FasTrak project team continues to work with other toll authorities to ensure interoperability of transponders allowing for access on other toll roads and bridges in Southern California. Pricing is seen as a planning solution on the I-15 corridor. There are plans to create a 20-mile managed lane facility in the median of I-15 between SR 163 and SR 78. The plan calls for a 4-lane HOV facility with a moveable barrier, multiple access points to regular highway lanes and direct access ramps for buses. Bus Rapid Transit will be operated in the managed lanes. Consultants have identified five alternative operating scenarios to consider and staff at SANDAG have identified two preferred alternatives. The Transportation Committee will consider these recommendations in mid-December.

For more information on the FasTrak program visit [http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us/data\\_services/fastrak/](http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us/data_services/fastrak/).

## *Managed Lanes in the News*

### *New Georgia HOV Lane*

The I-85 HOV Lane and County Express Bus System Opened in Georgia. On November 2, 2001, Georgia Governor Roy Barnes attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the I-85 HOV lanes and the Gwinett County express bus system. The 13-mile extension of the I-85 HOV lanes are the first HOV lanes located outside of the I-285 perimeter in Atlanta. The bus system is the first mass transit system for Gwinett County, a major metro-Atlanta county of 500,000 people, who have historically rejected mass transit. For more information on Georgia HOV: <http://www.dot.state.ga.us/communications/hov/index.html>

### *Vancouver Washington HOV Project*

Vancouver, Washington recently began a one year HOV project. The 4-mile section of I-5 from 99<sup>th</sup> Street to Mill Plain Boulevard opened October 29, 2001. The section is utilized as an HOV lane from 6 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. weekday mornings. For more information on the project, <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/Southwest/>.

## Web Sites of Interest

This portion of *FastLane* is intended to highlight other online resources that are germane to managed lanes.

★ The IH 35 Waco web site, <http://www.i35waco.com>, has been updated. Section 3 existing conditions schematics have been added to the web site. The schematics are available for viewing in PDF format at: <http://www.i35waco.com/s3/index.shtml>.

## Managed Lanes Terminology

This feature of *FastLane* will highlight several commonly-used terms in managed lanes that serve as a framework upon which our researchers will base future efforts. The entire glossary of terms may be accessed on the managed lanes web site that is scheduled to go online in January.

★ Barrier Separated — an HOV lane separated from the regular lanes of traffic by a concrete barrier. This facility may be one-lane/reversible or a two-lane bidirectional.



**Example of Barrier Separation**

★ Congestion Pricing — the policy of charging drivers a fee that varies with the level of traffic on a congested roadway. Congestion pricing is designed to allocate roadway space, a scarce resource, in a more economically feasible manner. Synonym: congestion-relief tolling.

★ High Occupancy Vehicle — a passenger vehicle carrying more than a specified minimum number of passengers, such as an automobile carrying more than one or more than two people. HOVs include carpools and vanpools as well as buses.



**Houston HOV Lane**

★ HOT Lanes (High Occupancy Toll Lanes) — HOV facilities that allow lower occupancy vehicle, such as solo drivers, to use these facilities in return for toll payments, which could vary by time-of-day or level of congestion.

★ High Occupancy Vehicle System — development and operation of a coordinated approach of physical improvements such as HOV lanes, park-and-ride lots, and supporting services and policies.

## The Managed Lanes List

A listserv has been set up by the managed lanes research team at TTI. This list unlike many other listservs is not a discussion list. It is merely a means for the research team to disseminate information to members of the list in an efficient manner. Information posted on the list will include *FastLane*, information about upcoming conferences, notices about available reports, and similar information of interest to the group. This listserv is open to anyone interested in managed lanes topics or research.

If you have any concerns or questions about the list, wish to be removed from the list, or know of someone who would be interested in joining the list, please contact Beverly Kuhn at [b-kuhn@tamu.edu](mailto:b-kuhn@tamu.edu).