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Introducing HOV / Managed Lanes in Nevada

A Public Outreach Primer

1.0. THE CHALLENGE

Introducing high occupancy vehicle (HOV) or managed lane facilities to the public begins long before ribbon-cutting takes place. At the earliest stages of deliberation, when HOV or managed lane facilities are being considered as part of the environmental document development process, the public is introduced to this concept and offered an understanding about its purpose, role and benefits when compared to other alternatives being considered. This early introduction helps to set the stage for future education and outreach actions, should the HOV / managed lane alternative be chosen as the preferred alternative. At the earliest stages of consideration, planners and engineers present an understanding of the HOV and managed lane concept when seeking public comment on necessary environmental documents.

The alternative assessment process is elemental to successful HOV/managed lane introduction because even **the best education and outreach actions cannot sell a poorly planned or executed project. If the HOV or managed lane project is not crafted and cannot deliver on the promise of travel time savings and trip reliability, education and promotion will not mask this reality.** The purpose of HOV/managed lane education and promotion is to 1) convince the marketplace to try the product (the HOV or managed lane) and, 2) assure nonusers that HOV / managed lanes are the most desirable use of money and land. Successful education and outreach will convince a customer to purchase the product for the first time, with “purchase” defined as traveling in a carpool, vanpool or aboard a bus in the HOV / managed lane. After that, it is up to the facility itself to deliver what was promised, a safe, reliable and swift trip. If a customer has a poor experience in the HOV/managed lane -- difficulty accessing or exiting the facility or not realizing travel time savings and trip reliability – that customer will perceive future promotional messages about the HOV/managed lane with suspicion and will be unlikely to repurchase the product (travel in the HOV/ managed lane) until changes in the facility are made and those changes are advertised.

Poor customer experiences in or perceptions about the HOV/managed lane can also lead to “negative testimonials” in which people talk about their unacceptable trip in the HOV/managed lane or perceptions about the facility to friends and coworkers. These testimonials can take on many forms; one-on-one conversations, letters to the editors, even web logs (blogs) can be powerful and ultimately destructive to poorly planned or executed HOV/managed lane projects.

The education and outreach actions outlined in this report assume that the HOV/managed lane project being promoted will provide travel time savings and trip reliability in a safe manner. If this cannot be assured, it is wise to make changes to the facility itself prior to broad-based promotion actions being undertaken.

2.0. THE PRIMARY PARTNERS

Nevada Department of Transportation

The Nevada Department of Transportation has lead responsibility for the planning, construction, operation and maintenance of the 5,400 miles of highway and nearly 1,000 bridges that make up the state highway system. NDOT is divided into three districts, with a district engineer and at least two assistant engineers in each. The districts are responsible for supervising all state transportation activities within their local areas. NDOT's headquarters building is located in Carson City, with the three main district offices located in Las Vegas (District One), Reno (District 2) and Elko (District 3).

A seven-member Board of Directors oversees the Nevada Department of Transportation. Directors include Nevada's Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General and State Controller. Three additional Directors, one representing each of the three NDOT districts (Las Vegas, Reno and Elko) comprises the remaining membership.

MPO's and Transit Providers

Transit providers and Metropolitan Planning Agencies (MPO's) are partners with NDOT to help ensure successful HOV/managed lane facility planning and subsequent education and outreach actions. Because MPO's are the "local planning voice" with regard to HOV/managed lane vision, without their enthusiastic support, HOV/managed lanes have difficulty succeeding, as the additional programs which support HOV/managed lanes (park and ride lots, commute trip reduction programs) may not be prioritized. Additionally, because of the very nature of HOV and managed lane facilities in Nevada – to promote person movement – transit usage (and high patronage of the buses traveling on the HOV/managed lane) is elemental to facility success. It is impossible to over emphasize that transit is a key component to success, for without transit usage it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach the desired HOV/managed lane person-movement thresholds.

In Northern Nevada, the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County serves the citizens of Reno and Sparks along with unincorporated areas of Washoe County and is responsible regional public transportation and the transportation network for Washoe County. The RTC of Washoe County was formed in July 1979 as a result of legislation approved by the Nevada Legislature, which consolidated the Regional Street and Highway Commission, the Regional Transit Commission and the Washoe County Area Transportation Study Policy Committee.

The RTC of Washoe County is supervised by an executive director and directed by a regional board comprised of five representatives appointed from three government jurisdictions – two from the Reno City Council, one from the Sparks City Council and two from the Washoe County Board of Commissioners.

In Southern Nevada, the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, or RTC, is the regional government agency that performs many transportation activities within the Southern Nevada community. The RTC was created in 1965 and in 1981; the agency was named the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Las Vegas Urban Area and charged with the responsibility to state and federal governments for maintaining a continuing, cooperative and

comprehensive transportation planning process. In 1983, state legislation enabled the agency to own and operate a public mass transit system, known today as Citizens Area Transit (CAT).

The Southern Nevada RTC is directed by an executive director and overseen by a Board of Commissioners. Board membership is set by State statute and consists of two members from the Board of Clark County Commissioners, two members from the city council of the largest incorporated city and one member from the city council of every other incorporated city in the county. Additionally, the Nevada Department of Transportation Director serves as an ex-officio member.

3.0. HOV/MANAGED LANE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Goals • Strategies • Markets • Messages • Mechanisms • Outcomes

3.1. HOV/Managed Lane Education and Outreach Goals

As HOV/managed lane facilities are being planned, partnering education and outreach goals need to be developed. The following goals will help the project team to focus efforts necessary to secure public understanding and support for high occupancy vehicle lanes or managed lane facilities.

- ❖ Create high visibility of HOV/managed lanes as a high-impact, incremental step for achieving the long-term vision for mobility in the region.
- ❖ Increase understanding of the vital importance HOV/managed lane/ managed lane projects have to positively impact economic vitality and environmental sustainability of the region.
- ❖ Maintain, strengthen and broaden jurisdictional, corporate and community partnerships through the introduction of HOV/managed lane options.
- ❖ Introduce the concept of HOV/managed lanes as an important strategy in making greatest and best use of transportation resources.
- ❖ Ensure mechanisms for the public to receive additional information and establish dialogue with project implementation team members.

3.2. HOV/Managed Lane Education and Outreach Strategies

Education and Outreach goals can be addressed by utilizing the following strategies:

- ❖ Support Project Committees
 - ▶ Example: Currently in the Las Vegas area, a variety of projects with HOV/managed lane components are in various stages of consideration, from planning all the way through to construction, with US 95 being the most immediate project soon to come online. HOV/managed lane education and outreach strategies need to be an element of each of these projects.
- ❖ Take advantage of the environmental documentation process to communicate directly with a variety of publics about how HOV/managed lane projects, fit in with the broader NDOT and RTC vision of mobility.
- ❖ Broaden the ally network by educating potential supporters and provide opportunities for them to actively participate as project messengers.
- ❖ Use proactive and creative media relations to promote key HOV/managed lane messages, particularly travel time savings and trip reliability messages.
- ❖ Use audience research to monitor public opinion, refine messaging, provide a platform to demonstrate continued strong support for improvements, and identify information needs for the implementation phase.

3.3. HOV/ Managed Lane Education and Outreach Target Markets

HOV/managed lane target markets – those groups that benefit from or are impacted by these lanes--need to understand HOV/managed lane treatments as integral to encouraging greatest and best use of transportation resources – include a broad cross-section of the region. Markets include not only corridor users, but also those in the position of setting and supporting transportation policies. By segmenting the messages sent to individual HOV/managed lane markets, education and promotion strategies can be developed which could turn those individual markets into users and/or supporters of the HOV/managed lane. HOV/managed lane target markets by segment include:

❖ **Corridor Users**

- ▶ Daily Peak-Hour Trip Travelers (work, school)
- ▶ Off-Peak Period Travelers
- ▶ Freight and Good Transporters
- ▶ Taxi Trips

❖ **Employers**

- ▶ Adjacent to the Corridor
- ▶ Local

❖ **Community/Special Interest Groups**

- ▶ Adjacent Neighborhoods
- ▶ Senior Citizen Groups
- ▶ Environmental Groups
- ▶ Business/Commerce Groups adjacent to the Corridor
- ▶ General Business/Commerce Groups
- ▶ Automobile Clubs
- ▶ Tourism Interests
- ▶ Event Planners

❖ **Elected Officials**

- ▶ Cities
- ▶ Counties
- ▶ State
- ▶ Federal

❖ **Enforcement Officials and Judges**

- ▶ Local
- ▶ State

❖ **Media (as a community leader and opinion shaper)**

- ▶ Print
- ▶ Broadcast

3.4. HOV/Managed Lane Market Messages, Communication Mechanisms and Desired Outcomes

Market messages are those benefits that the HOV/managed lane facility provides to the specific target market. In order to ensure successful positioning of the HOV/managed lane facility – with success defined as **understanding and embracing the purpose of HOV/managed lane treatments as part of transportation facilities mix** – the education and outreach actions must be designed and implemented to reach a broad cross section of travelers, residents and stakeholders. A variety of communication mechanisms are necessary to effectively and efficiently reach the target markets listed above. The following tables recommend HOV/managed lane benefit messages segmented by market and the communication mechanisms suited to those markets. Additionally, maintaining a clear vision of the outcome of a specific communication strategy helps to focus the key messages for those strategies.

3.4.1 Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for Corridor Users

Key Messages	Communication Mechanisms	Desired Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ HOV/managed lane facilities provide for current and future mobility ❖ Immediate travel time savings for HOV/managed lane users ❖ Predictable travel time for HOV/managed lane users ❖ Less stress for HOV/managed lane users Incentive for commuters to make a carpool/vanpool/transit choice ❖ Address enforcement to ensure equity and fairness for users and non-users ❖ Accurate and detailed information on what HOV/managed lane can (and cannot!) accomplish for the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Print and Broadcast News Media Relations ❖ Project brochure distribution via requests and point-of-purchase displays ❖ Signage with website for more info ❖ Desk-top distribution of brochure at area worksites ❖ Highlight website as mechanism to get info. about project specifics and HOV/managed lane in general. Link to website for ridesharing and transit info ❖ Info distribution part of publicly sponsored transportation fairs ❖ Information distribution at "gathering spots" -- malls, festivals, etc. ❖ Newspaper advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Aware that HOV/managed lane facilities are an important element in providing travelers transportation choices. ❖ Positive anticipation of the HOV/managed lane opening. ❖ Motivated to call for transit/ rideshare information ❖ Understand that HOV/managed lane facilities are a prudent use of limited funds and scarce land ❖ Familiar with HOV/managed lane operational rules and benefits ❖ Aware that violators will be prosecuted to full extent of the law

3.4.2 Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for the Community

Key Messages	Communication Mechanisms	Desired Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ HOV/managed lane facilities provide for current and future mobility ❖ Incentive for commuters to make a carpool /vanpool /transit choice ❖ More efficient utilization of transit ❖ Predictable travel time for HOV/managed lane users ❖ Immediate travel time savings for HOV/managed lane users ❖ Less stress for HOV/managed lane users ❖ Provide choices to commuters ❖ Effective use of existing resources ❖ Accurate and detailed information on what HOV/managed lane can (and cannot!) accomplish for the region ❖ Improved access to/from community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Print and Broadcast News Media Relations ❖ Newspaper advertisements ❖ Talk Radio interviews ❖ Signage with website for info ❖ Project brochure distribution via requests ❖ Window/bulletin board posters ❖ Information distribution at "gathering spots" -- malls, festivals, etc ❖ Point-of-Purchase brochure distribution at public and retail sites ❖ Highlight website as mechanism to get info about project specifics and HOV/managed lane in general ❖ Public service announcements (radio) ❖ Tabloid-style newsletter ❖ HOV/managed lane opening ceremony ❖ Advertising in event-sponsored advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that HOV/managed lane facilities are a prudent use of limited funds ❖ Positive anticipation of HOV/managed lane opening ❖ Familiar with HOV/managed lane operational rules and benefits

3.4.3 Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for Employers

Key Messages	Communication Mechanisms	Desired Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trip reliability for employees ❖ Reduced employee parking space requirements ❖ HOV/managed lane facilities provide for current and future mobility ❖ RTC and NDOT are helping employers to plan by providing current and future employees with travel time savings and trip reliability ❖ Accurate and detailed information on what HOV/managed lane can (and cannot!) accomplish for the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Direct Mail of brochure and targeted cover letter signed by ranking NDOT and RTC official; Request employer assistance in desktop distribution of brochure to employees ❖ Courtesy copy of press packet with cover letter signed by NDOT and RTC official ❖ Employee Transportation Coordinator Training ❖ Worksite promotional activities and display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Knowledge about the purpose of the HOV/managed lane ❖ Positive anticipation of HOV/managed lane opening ❖ Enthusiastic about the positive impacts HOV/managed lane facilities can have on reducing corporate parking costs ❖ Improving reliability of employee arrival times ❖ Gear-up for HOV/managed lane implementation through increased in-house rideshare promotions and work-site transportation events ❖ Understand that HOV/managed lane facilities are a prudent use of limited funds

3.4.4 Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for Special Interest and Neighborhood Groups

Key Messages	Communication Mechanisms	Desired Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ NDOT and RTC adding strategies to encourage carpooling and transit as a travel mode ❖ HOV/managed lane facilities provide for current and future mobility ❖ Accurate and detailed information on what HOV/managed lane can (and cannot!) accomplish for the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mail targeted cover letter signed by NDOT and MPO official to neighborhood group leadership; Ask leadership to help with brochure distribution through their newsletters, point-of-purchase display at customer/tenant gathering locations ❖ Speaker's bureau with tabloid-style newsletter ❖ Courtesy copy of press packet with additional "newsletter-type" story appropriate for insertion into constituent-targeted newsletter ❖ Direct mail to traffic court judges and meeting ❖ Fact sheets/cards, briefings of transportation media specialists, editorial board briefings, corridor tours, media kits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that HOV/managed lane facilities are a prudent use of limited funds ❖ Positive anticipation of HOV/managed lane opening ❖ Willing to assist distributing information about opening of HOV/managed lane ❖ A fair treatment of HOV/managed lanes based on the facts and not on perceptions ❖ Aware that violators will be prosecuted to full extent of the law

3.4.5 Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for Business and Commerce Groups

Key Messages	Communication Mechanisms	Desired Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trip reliability for people in vehicle carrying two or more people ❖ Reduced destination parking space demand ❖ HOV/managed lane facilities provide for current and future mobility ❖ Accurate and detailed information on what HOV/managed lane can (and cannot!) accomplish for the region ❖ Effective use of existing resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Join other major metropolitan areas in US that are implementing /expanding their HOV/managed lane systems ❖ Mail targeted cover letter signed by NDOT and RTC official to business and commerce group leadership. Include copy of project brochure ❖ Corridor Tour ❖ Highlight website as mechanism to get info about project specifics and HOV/managed lane in general ❖ Courtesy copy of press packet with additional "newsletter-type" story appropriate for insertion into constituent-targeted newsletter ❖ HOV/managed lane info. In NDOT and MPO annual report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand that HOV/managed lane facilities are a prudent use of limited funds ❖ Positive anticipation of HOV/managed lane opening ❖ Willing to distribute information about opening of HOV/managed lane