

# Introducing HOV / Managed Lanes in Nevada

## *A Public Outreach Primer*

### 1.0. THE CHALLENGE

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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.