

3.0. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH FOR HOV/ MANAGED LANES

3.1. 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 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, and ramp metering will deliver a safer and more efficient freeway operation. If these outcomes cannot be assured, it is wise to make changes to the facility or treatment prior to broad-based promotion actions being undertaken.

3.2. Education and Outreach: Goals • Strategies • Markets • Messages • Mechanisms • Outcomes

3.2.1 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.

3.2.2. 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. 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

- ❖ Elected Officials
 - Cities
 - Counties
 - State
 - Federal
- ❖ Enforcement Officials and Judges
 - Local
 - State
- ❖ Media (as a community leader and opinion shaper)
 - Print
 - Broadcast

3.4. 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. Tables 3 through 7 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.

Table 3: Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for Corridor Users

<i>Key Messages</i>	<i>Communication Mechanisms</i>	<i>Desired Outcome</i>
<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 ❖ Desk-top distribution of brochure at area worksites ❖ Highlight website as mechanism to get information about project specifics and HOV/managed lane in general. Link to website for ridesharing and transit info ❖ Information distribution part of publicly sponsored transportation fairs ❖ Information distribution at “gathering spots” -- malls, festivals, etc. ❖ Newspaper advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Awareness 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

Table 4: 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Print and Broadcast News Media Relations ❖ Newspaper advertisements ❖ Talk Radio interviews ❖ 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 	<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

Table 5: Key Messages Conveying HOV/Managed Lane Benefits for Employers

<i>Key Messages</i>	<i>Communication Mechanisms</i>	<i>Desired Outcome</i>
<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 ❖ Highlight website as mechanism to get information about project specifics and HOV/managed lane in general. Link to website for ridesharing and transit information 	<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

**Table 6: 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 ❖ Highlight website as mechanism to get information about project specifics and HOV/managed lane in general. 	<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

Table 7: 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 information in NDOT and RTC annual reports 	<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