

SH 45 SW Committee
HOT Lane Proposal
May 8, 2009

This is to request that the Texas Department of Transportation and/or the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority include the evaluation of HOV and HOT lanes in the toll and revenue study to be done for SH 45 SW.

HOT lanes are free lanes that operate alongside existing highway toll lanes that provide users with a faster and more reliable travel option. Buses, carpools, and emergency vehicles will have free access to HOT lanes. Where as drivers with fewer than two-three occupants can choose to pay to in the access the lanes. The premise of the concept is by offering a free lane for high occupancy vehicles, commuters will be induced into carpooling or mass transit. The free lane alongside the toll will cause an increase in high occupancy vehicle usage, thus relieving traffic congestion and pollution.

As part of this proposal we suggest the evaluation of the following three possible scenarios:

- **Scenario 1:** This scenario contains a four lane tolled highway open to all users. At the toll there would be two toll booths for regular non-HOV commuters and one declaration lane for HOV commuters.
- **Scenario 2:** In this scenario there is a four lane tolled highway that would have a dedicated lane in each direction for free HOV use.
- **Scenario 3:** This plan would include a four lane tolled highway open to all users. At the toll there would be two toll booths for regular non-HOV commuters and one declaration lane for HOV commuters. In time if there is congestion, one of the lanes could be augmented for a dedicated free HOV lane.

In support of this request we note that the U.S. Congress and the Federal Highway Administration endorsed the concept of HOT lanes when it introduced the Value Pricing Pilot Program in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. In 2006, they reinforced their support in Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which has provisions specific to HOT lanes. SAFETEA-LU authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the five-year period 2005-2009

HOT lanes are working successfully to ease congestion in five states, including California, Minnesota, Texas, Colorado, and Utah. More projects are in planning in California, Texas, Florida, Virginia, and Georgia and an additional 17 projects are going through environmental approvals across the United States.

- **SR-91 in Orange County, Calif.:**
SR-91 has logged more than 64 million vehicle trips, and has shown to save travelers over 32 million hours of commuting time. These time savings have produced measurable benefits including some \$480 million in added economic productivity and quality-of-life benefits for commuters, their families, and businesses.

 - **I-15 in San Diego, Calif.:**
I-15 in San Diego was the first HOV facility to begin conversion to HOT lanes in 1996. The HOT facility has since proved successful with users reporting a travel time saving of 20 minutes per trip.

 - **I-10 in Houston, Texas:**
Houston's I-10 HOT lanes allow two person carpools to use I-10 West and U.S. 290. The average travel time saving on I-10 HOT lanes is around 20 minutes. Additional options – including allowing solo drivers to use the lanes if they pay a toll – are also being considered.

 - **I-25 in Denver, Colo.:**
Since I-25 Express Lanes opened in Denver in June 2006, usage levels are above predicted use. In June 2006, the first month of operation, 21,551 vehicles used the HOT lanes. This increased by 73 percent to 80,665 in March 2007. Furthermore, Regional Transportation District buses operated over 96 percent on time in the first year of operation of the HOT lanes.
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