

NEWS FROM THE STREET



The Road To The Future

Spring/Summer 2004

Coming Fall
2004!



Lyndo Tippet

Secretary of Transportation

Dear Fellow North Carolinians,

From the natural beauty of our mountains and beaches to our thriving metropolitan areas, North Carolina remains a wonderful place to live and work. As more and more people come to know the unrivaled benefits of the Tarheel State, areas like the Charlotte metro region will continue to grow. Such growth places an increased demand on our transportation infrastructure and the need for more transportation options.

As part of a comprehensive vision to improve transportation in the Charlotte area, NCDOT is pleased to partner with the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) and the City of Charlotte to build the state's first HOV lanes on I-77 north of Charlotte. Charlotte is the largest metropolitan area in our state and one of the largest urban regions in the country, making it the perfect candidate for this flagship project in North Carolina. HOV lanes promote carpooling, vanpooling and riding transit by offering HOV users the incentive of a reduced and more reliable travel time. By carpooling or taking a van or a bus, HOV users save money as well as wear-and-tear on personal vehicles. In addition, every time citizens choose HOV travel over driving alone, they help the environment through reducing harmful vehicle emissions. HOV lanes offer a practical transportation option and have a proven record of success in metropolitan areas across the nation.

HOV lanes truly are the "road to the future." I encourage you to seize this opportunity to experience the benefits of HOV lanes for yourself.

Lyndo Tippet

Secretary, N.C. Department of Transportation

North Carolina's First HOV Lane to Open Fall, 2004

The North Carolina Department of Transportation will open the state's first HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lane along a stretch of I-77 north of downtown Charlotte. The southbound HOV lane will begin just north of I-485 and end at Brookshire Freeway, and the northbound HOV lane will begin at I-85 and end north of Harris Boulevard. The new HOV lanes on I-77 will be open 24-hours a day, 7 days a week and will be restricted to vehicles carrying at least two people. The HOV lanes are designed to alleviate future traffic congestion by encouraging more people to carpool, vanpool and ride the bus. CATS routes 83X and 77X will utilize the HOV lanes, and additional service will be added to those routes after the HOV lanes open.

What are the benefits of HOV lanes?

Faster Trips

HOV lanes move more people more quickly than the adjacent general-purpose lanes. While commuters in general-purpose lanes may experience delays in slow-moving peak-hour traffic, HOV lane users can travel at faster speeds.

"The opening of North Carolina's first HOV lanes is another indication that the state is preparing for the future. As the region grows, it will become even more important to have efficient ways for our citizens to get to work."

- Secretary Lyndo Tippet

Reliable Travel Times

HOV lane users can count on their I-77 trip taking the same amount of time each and every day. No more worrying and wondering about what traffic will be like on the interstate, and if congestion caused by traffic volume or accidents will cause them to be late to work.

Save Money

Gas, maintenance, car repairs and parking are expensive. If you carpool or vanpool you can share these expenses. Bus riders save even more, as bus fare almost always is far less than the money you would spend to take your car. HOV lanes are an appealing incentive to share your ride or ride CATS.

Less Pollution

Carbon monoxide from vehicle emissions is a major contributor to air pollution. Carpoolers, vanpoolers and bus riders are contributing to a cleaner, healthier environment.

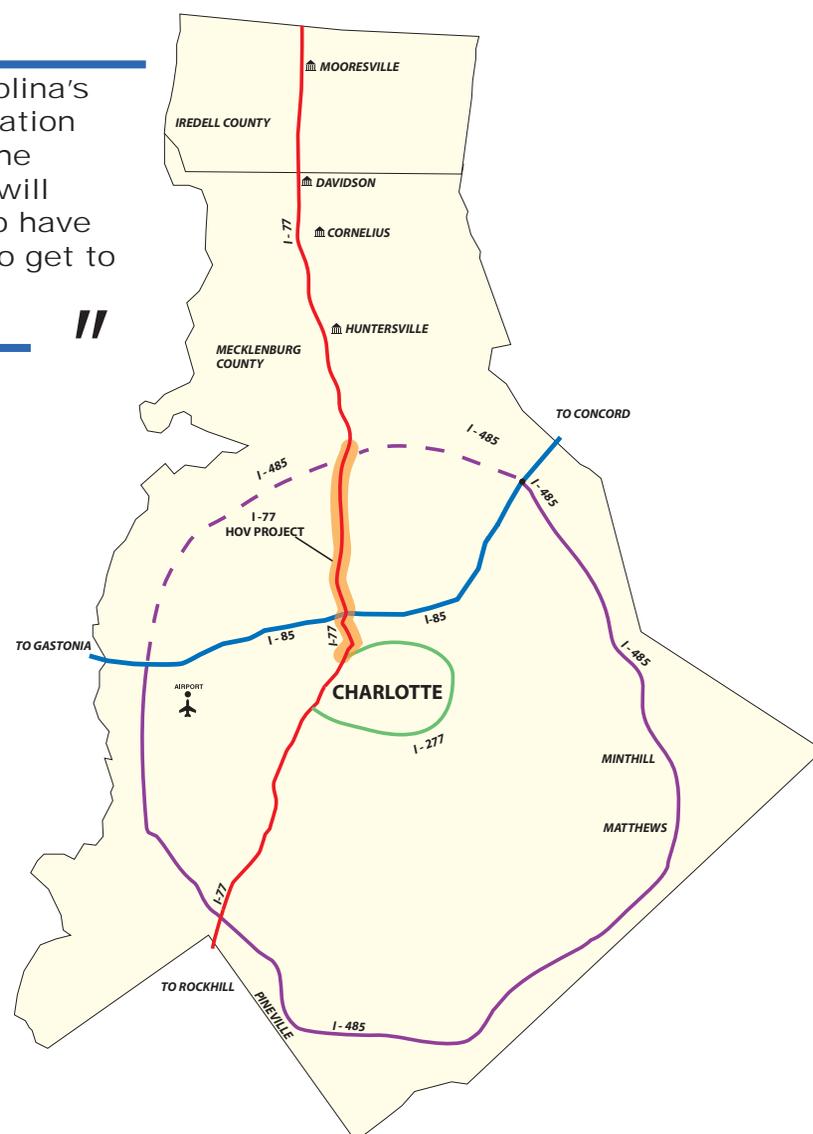
Less Stress

Sharing your ride or taking CATS makes your commute more pleasant. With that nagging "how long will my trip take me today" question a thing of the past, carpoolers, vanpoolers and bus riders can use that time to read, chat or snooze.

"The new I-77 HOV lanes will provide more options to rideshare, aiding in our efforts to meet federal air quality standards in the region."
- Huntersville Mayor Kim Phillips

Reduced Wear and Tear on your Vehicle

Your vehicle will last longer if you drive fewer miles. Vanpooling or riding the bus eliminates those miles completely. Carpooling can reduce those miles



significantly (if you and your pooling partners share the responsibility) or help to defray operating and maintenance costs if your passengers chip in to offset costs.

Rules of the Road

When are the HOV lanes open?

The HOV lanes are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Who can use the I-77 HOV lanes?

- Vehicles with two or more passengers
- Buses
- Motorcycles
- Emergency Vehicles



Who cannot use the I-77 HOV lanes?

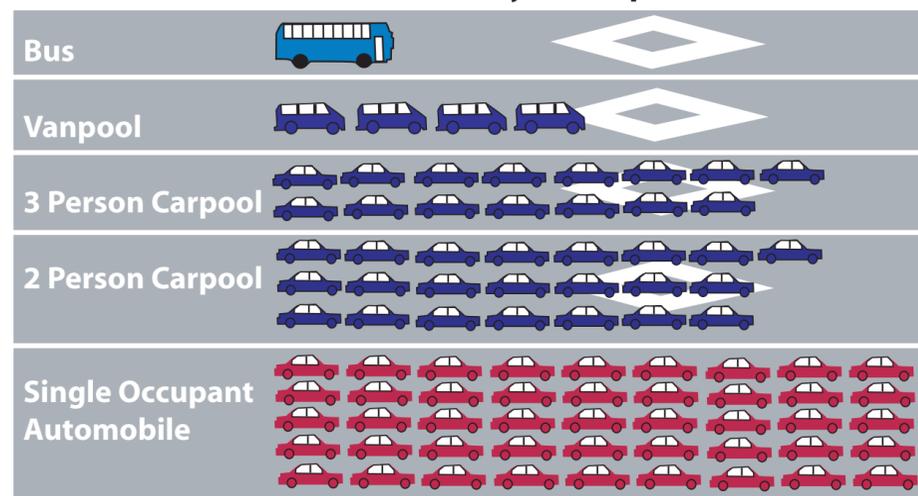
- Vehicles with more than three axles, regardless of the number of passengers
- People driving alone

Implementing the state's first HOV lanes is another step in providing transportation options and being responsive to regional commuters to help improve traffic flow between Uptown Charlotte and the North Mecklenburg towns. – Charlotte Mayor Patrick McCrory

How do I use the HOV lanes?

To use the HOV lanes, you must first have at least one passenger plus yourself. To use the HOV lanes, enter the freeway as you would normally and then merge over to the far inside lane. The HOV lanes on I-77 will be separated from the adjacent general-purpose lane by a wide single white skip line.

Number of Vehicles needed to carry 45 People



A diamond symbol, used both in pavement markings and on overhead signs, will also identify the HOV lane. Traffic can enter and exit the HOV lane in most places. To ensure safety for all travelers, double white solid lines will show where access to or from the HOV lane is prohibited.

Mecklenburg is a growing county that depends on an efficient transportation network. Having the state's first HOV lanes provides more options for the growth in our community. – MTC Chair Tom Cox

Who is considered a passenger?

For HOV purposes, a passenger is any human being in addition to the driver. Your spouse or child qualifies just like any other passenger. Pets do not qualify.

What if a single driver uses the lane?

Violators can be stopped and cited by law enforcement officers. The fine for violating the HOV lanes restrictions is \$100.00 PLUS court costs. An HOV violation can also result in 2 points on your driving license.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we have HOV lanes?

We all know that traffic congestion is increasing in the Charlotte area. This congestion increases traveler frustration and deteriorates air quality. Providing an incentive for people to leave their car at home and instead choose to travel by carpool, vanpool or bus will help to improve not only the quality of our trips but also the quality of our air.

Who benefits from HOV lanes?

Everyone benefits from the HOV lanes. Of course, HOV lane users benefit the most by enjoying a less congested lane. As additional growth occurs and traffic increases, the HOV lane will provide more significant time savings. And we all benefit from cleaner air.

HOV lanes represent regionalism at its best. They provide commuting options for people who do not enjoy the grind of the single-occupant journey, where the main landscape comes from the tail-lights of the car ahead.

– Davidson Mayor Randall Kincaid

Are other HOV lanes planned for our region?

These lanes are the first phase of an I-77 HOV system that will stretch over 23 miles, from I-485 near Huntersville to the South Carolina line. The Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) has approved HOV lanes along I-77 as part of this urban area's Long-Range Transportation Plan.



I drive alone to work. Why should I support HOV lanes when I can't use them?

By encouraging HOV travel (more passengers in fewer vehicles) these lanes help us manage congestion on heavily traveled thoroughfares and allow for future traffic growth. By reducing the traffic burden on highways, costly roadway expansion can be deferred. HOV lanes also help reduce exhaust emissions and improve the quality of our air.

What does a successful HOV lane look like?

Drivers along I-77 may think the new HOV lanes are a failure if they aren't filled with cars, but they should think again. New HOV lanes often suffer from image problems, especially if motorists use the wrong criteria to judge their effectiveness.

Commuters tend to count the number of vehicles using a lane as an indicator of a freeway lane's effectiveness: if there aren't as many cars in the HOV lane as in the general purpose lanes, the HOV lane is perceived as underused and ineffective. Commonly called "empty lane syndrome", this perception is wrong. By design, HOV lanes need to always maintain a "free flow" condition and cannot be allowed to reach saturation. Because HOV lanes are open only to carpools, vanpools and buses, they serve more people (in fewer vehicles) than a fully saturated freeway lane.

Commuter welfare – which takes into account the facility's impact on air quality, traffic congestion, best road usage and other factors – is the best overall way to evaluate the effectiveness of an HOV project. To initially label HOV lanes as ineffective because traffic flows as fast in the general purpose lanes is to overlook the role of HOV lanes in reducing the total number of vehicles on the road.

Why did we build HOV lanes on I-77 now?

Since HOV lanes represent planning for the future, they are often added to an interstate when freeways are widened and improved for all motorists. This is the case on I-77. This added capacity means congestion will be alleviated in the short term, and the travel times in all lanes – both the general-purpose lanes and the HOV lanes – may be similar at first. As traffic increases in the long term, the general-purpose lanes will become more congested, and the HOV lanes will move traffic more efficiently.

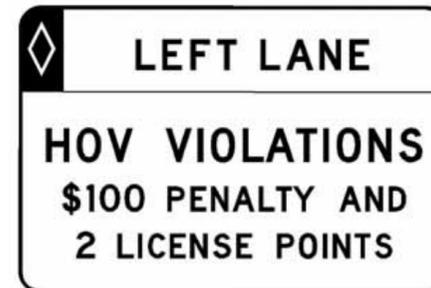
Is it legal to restrict publicly-funded highway lanes to HOV's?

Federal legislation – the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century – specifically encourages states to consider and implement, wherever feasible, HOV lanes in areas experiencing air quality or traffic congestion problems.

Why will motorcycles be allowed in the HOV lane?

Federal law allows motorcycles to use HOV lanes, even with only one passenger. This is because it is safer for everyone to keep two-wheeled vehicles moving rather than to have them traveling in start-and-stop traffic conditions.

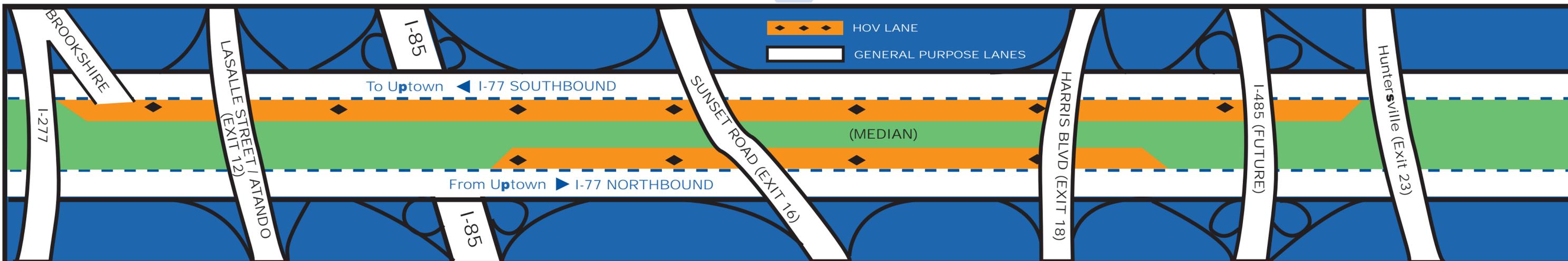
We are very proud of the success and growth in the 77 North Meck Express ridership and can only imagine how Cornelius and other North Mecklenburg citizens will embrace the highly anticipated I-77 HOV Lanes. These HOV Lanes are important to our region's quality of life in reducing commute times and help meet federal air quality standards for our growing community. – Cornelius Mayor Gary Knox



The new HOV lanes allow CATS' express routes and vanpools to move out of congestion providing a faster commute for our customers. – CEO Ron Tober Charlotte Area Transit System

FAST FACTS

- I-77 HOV will be North Carolina's First HOV lane in operation.
- The HOV lanes are 10 miles southbound and 5 miles northbound.
- There are 2,500 miles of HOV lanes in the United States.
- Los Angeles area HOV lanes move almost a million people each day, and they save an accumulated total of more than 30,000 hours of delay.
- In Seattle an HOV lane moves as many people as four adjacent lanes during rush hours.
- A bus-only HOV lane in New Jersey moves over 32,000 people each hour, which is more people than could be moved in 15 congested freeway lanes.



Express Routes

CATS Express routes serving the towns of North Mecklenburg County and the city of Mooresville will use the new I-77 HOV lanes. Riding CATS express routes already makes your commute less stressful and saves you money, but with the new HOV lanes, CATS express routes will save you time as well.



Vanpools

Vanpools are a convenient and affordable way to get to work. Sharing a ride is less stressful and more fun than driving alone, and it costs less. A vanpool is a group of people who live and work near each other and share similar commuting schedules. Each vanpool tailors its schedule around the group's needs, with all members deciding on the pick-up and drop-off locations and times.

A typical vanpool consists of 9-14 people with one rider agreeing to be the driver and at least one other rider agreeing to be the back-up driver. The average vanpool travels 50 miles round trip and the cost for a vanpool of 12 riders is typically \$40 per person per month. This monthly cost includes gas, maintenance, insurance, wear-and-tear on the van and use of the Guaranteed Ride Home program. There are currently 10 vanpools that depart from the North Mecklenburg / Mooresville area each day.

To join a vanpool or learn how to form a vanpool visit www.ridetransit.org and choose vanpools.

Guaranteed Ride Home

We know life comes with unexpected events and last-minute surprises. That's why we're making sure life also comes with a guarantee: The Guaranteed Ride Home. The Guaranteed Ride Home is a service for riders of CATS Express buses and CATS Vanpools – it assures you can always get where you need to go. Anytime a rider has an emergency, a medical appointment or an unplanned work schedule change, we'll guarantee to pick you up. It's free twice a month!

When you discover you're going to need to leave work, call **704-336-RIDE**.

We'll arrange for a taxi service to pick you up and get you back to where you left your car. Guaranteed Ride Home is available to CATS Express monthly pass-holders Monday through Friday, at times when the regular Express routes aren't running (Until 10 p.m.), and to CATS Vanpool riders 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You can use the service in those instances when life throws you an unexpected curve, like a last-minute deadline at work or a child who's sick with the flu. It's free twice a month.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit www.ncdot.org/hov
or www.ridetransit.org
OR CALL
704.336.RIDE or 866.779.CATS

Daily Round Trips Miles	Average Monthly Commuting Costs*	Monthly Savings When Riding		
		Express Bus**	Vanpool***	Carpool (2 riders)
15	\$207	\$145	\$183	\$104
20	\$262	\$200	\$231	\$131
30	\$374	\$312	\$347	\$187
40	\$485	\$423	\$455	\$245
50	\$597	\$535	\$565	\$298

* = US Statistical Abstract cost of commuting including gas, maintenance and insurance 53 cents per mile; plus \$40 per month parking fee.

** = Cost savings after \$62 per month express pass.

*** = Vanpool assumes 14 passengers

Services will be added to the bus schedules when HOV lanes are open.

ROUTE 83X MOORESVILLE EXPRESS

To Uptown

Express does not stop between Port Village Shopping Center and Trade St. at Cedar St.

El Autobus Express no hace parada entre Port Village Shopping Center y el calle de Trade por la Cedar.

www.ridetransit.org

WEEKDAYS / DE LUNES A VIERNES						
A.M.	5:40	5:53	6:00	6:35	6:45	6:50
	6:20	6:35	6:45	7:25	7:35	7:40
	6:40	6:55	7:05	7:45	7:55	8:00

ROUTE 83X MOORESVILLE EXPRESS

From Uptown

Express does not stop between Watermark Shopping Center and Trade St. at Cedar St.

El Autobus Express no hace parada entre Watermark Shopping Center y el calle de Trade por la Cedar.

www.ridetransit.org

WEEKDAYS / DE LUNES A VIERNES						
P.M.	4:30	4:40	4:45	5:25	5:35	5:50
	5:05	5:15	5:20	6:00	6:10	6:25
	6:00	6:10	6:15	6:50	6:57	7:10

ROUTE 77X NORTH MECK EXPRESS

To Uptown

This Express Bus does not pick up or discharge passengers between Food Lion Park-N-Ride at Exit 23 and Gateway. Este autobus de Express no sube ni baja pasajeros por el Food Lion Park-N-Ride a Exit 23 y la Gateway.

www.ridetransit.org

WEEKDAYS / DE LUNES A VIERNES						
A.M.	5:50	5:57	6:04	6:10	6:48	7:01
	6:06	6:13	6:20	6:26	7:04	7:17
	6:21	6:28	6:35	6:41	7:19	7:33
	6:31	6:38	6:45	6:51	7:29	7:43
	6:41	6:48	6:55	7:01	7:39	7:53
	6:50	6:58	7:06	7:15	7:53	8:07
	7:14	7:22	7:30	7:39	8:17	8:31
	7:34	7:42	7:50	7:59	8:37	8:51
	7:55	8:02	8:09	8:19	8:57	9:11
	10:40	10:47	10:53	10:59	11:29	11:40

ROUTE 77X NORTH MECK EXPRESS

From Uptown

This Express Bus does not pick up or discharge passengers after Gateway until Food Lion Park n' Ride at exit 23. Este autobus de Express no sube ni baja pasajeros después Gateway hasta el Food Lion Park n' Ride a Exit 23.

www.ridetransit.org

WEEKDAYS / DE LUNES A VIERNES						
P.M.	11:58	12:10	12:15	12:39	12:46	12:59
	2:06	2:16	2:21	2:45	2:52	3:05
	2:53	3:05	3:10	3:35	3:42	3:55
	3:43	3:55	4:00	4:25	4:32	4:46
	4:03	4:15	4:20	4:52	4:52	5:04
	4:03	4:15	4:20	4:50	4:50	5:04
	4:28	4:40	4:45	5:10	5:17	5:31
	4:48	5:00	5:05	5:30	5:37	5:51
	5:03	5:15	5:20	5:45	5:50	6:04
	5:03	5:15	5:20	5:45	5:52	6:04
	5:33	5:45	5:50	6:15	6:22	6:37
	6:03	6:15	6:20	6:45	6:52	7:05
	6:59	7:10	7:15	7:38	7:45	7:58
	9:59	10:10	10:15	10:38	10:45	10:58



Cost to print: 27 cents