



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
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**NCDOT INSTALLS SPECIAL SIGNS ON I-77 IN CHARLOTTE**  
**STATE'S FIRST HOV LANES COMING SOON**

**RALEIGH**¾ In anticipation of the Fall 2004 opening of the state's first HOV lanes, the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has installed special "HOV Coming Soon" signs along I-77 in Mecklenburg County.

The installation of the signs follows the recent opening of one additional general-purpose lane in each direction on I-77 from I-85 to north of the future I-485. The new HOV lanes will be freeway lanes reserved for cars carrying two or more people, vanpools and buses. HOV lanes are an increasingly popular transportation alternative in congested urban areas because they save time and improve travel predictability for those who choose to use them. HOV users can also help the environment by reducing harmful vehicle emissions.

When the widening project is complete, I-77 will include an HOV lane and three general-purpose lanes in each direction along this section. The I-77 HOV project is a partnership among NCDOT, the City of Charlotte and Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS).

“With the addition of the new general-purpose lanes along I-77, these new HOV lanes will serve as part of a comprehensive strategy to improve transportation in the Charlotte area,” said Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippett. “The opening of the state’s first freeway HOV lanes will help us prepare for the future. As urban areas like Charlotte continue to grow, it becomes even more important to have efficient ways for citizens to get to and from work.”

“Although the HOV lanes won’t open until Fall 2004, the ‘Coming Soon’ signs will help people start thinking about HOV lanes and how they can make the lanes a time-saving part of their commute,” said project leader and Division 10 Deputy Engineer Barry Moose.

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## NCDOT Installs Special Signs Along I-77 in Charlotte For State's First HOV Lanes

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"We are excited to be the site of the state's first freeway HOV lanes," said Charlotte Department of Transportation Assistant Director Bill Finger. "These new lanes will provide people traveling to and through Charlotte with transportation options that are both responsible and convenient."

Once open, CATS will use the HOV lanes to operate the express bus routes that currently serve the towns of Huntersville, Davidson, Cornelius and Mooresville. "By providing travelers with the incentive of swift and reliable travel time if they choose to carpool, vanpool or ride the bus, HOV lanes offer a travel benefit that I-77 commuters will never outgrow," said Olaf Kinard, Marketing & Communications Manager of CATS. "The more people who choose to use the lanes — whether it's through carpooling or taking a bus — the better off we'll be overall."

Cars traveling in I-77 HOV lanes must have at least two occupants. Buses and other mass transit vehicles, as well as emergency vehicles, may use the lanes regardless of their occupancy. Violators of HOV regulations are subject to a \$200 penalty -- a \$100 fine and an additional \$100 in court costs -- and will receive two points against their driver's licenses for each HOV violation.

The leftmost lane in each direction will be designated as the HOV lane. The northbound HOV lane is about five miles long and begins north of the I-85 interchange and ends north of the I-77/W.T. Harris Boulevard interchange. The southbound HOV lane is about 10 miles long and begins north of the I-77/W.T. Harris Boulevard interchange and ends south of the exit ramp for I-277 (Brookshire Freeway) and features a bypass that will allow HOV travelers to avoid the heavily traveled I-77/I-85 interchange.

While new to North Carolina, there are currently over 125 HOV projects in 30 cities across the United States. Collectively, these HOV lanes move more than 3 million commuters each day, and that number is growing as HOV lane systems across the country expand. In the United States there are currently more than 2,500 HOV lane-miles — more than enough to stretch between Charlotte and Raleigh 14 times. HOV lane-miles in the United States are expected to double to over 5,000 by the year 2025.

For more information on HOV lanes and for a map of the project, visit <http://www.ncdot.org/hov>.

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