



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

SR 167

HIGH OCCUPANCY TOLL LANES

JANUARY 2009 FOCUS GROUPS

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by

 **EnviroIssues**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	2
<i>Objectives</i>	2
Who participated?	3
<i>Participant Recruitment</i>	3
<i>Participant Demographics</i>	4
What did we ask?	4
<i>Background</i>	4
<i>Questions and Discussion Tools</i>	4
What did they say?	7
<i>Acceptance of the HOT lanes as a congestion management tool</i>	8
<i>Use of and access to the HOT lanes</i>	9
<i>Potential obstacles to HOT lane use and the magnitude of those obstacles</i>	10
<i>Equity issues related to income, mode use, opportunity, income and geography and differences in perceptions and responses between people in low-income groups and others</i>	12
<i>Differences in perceptions and responses to the lane by people who have transponders and those who do not</i>	13
Conclusion	14
APPENDICES A-G	16
<i>Appendix A – Project Overview</i>	18
<i>Appendix B – E-mail survey results summary</i>	19
<i>Appendix C – E-mail survey results</i>	22
<i>Appendix D – Worksheet for those without transponders</i>	26
<i>Appendix D (cont'd) – Worksheet for those with transponders</i>	27
<i>Appendix E – Worksheet results</i>	28
<i>Appendix F – Transcription notes for the typical users group</i>	32
<i>Appendix G – Transcription notes for the low-income group</i>	40

Executive Summary

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) conducted two focus groups in January 2009 as part of the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project. This round of focus groups was designed to complete the work WSDOT began in 2006 when six focus groups were conducted to gauge initial perceptions of the SR 167 HOT lanes and to compare responses by low-income and typical drivers. The purpose of the January 2009 focus groups was to learn about how the operation of the new HOT lanes is affecting drivers in general, and specifically low-income drivers.

Twenty-one participants, including low-income drivers, people with *Good to Go!* accounts, and residents living in the north and south portions of the SR 167 corridor participated in the focus groups. Nine were recruited directly from a WSDOT list of *Good to Go!* account holders and the rest were randomly selected through a recruitment service. Participants were asked to respond to questions regarding their commuting patterns, extent of their HOT lane use, transponder use, equity issues, and HOT lane operations.

The 2009 focus groups found few major differences in the attitudes of low-income and typical drivers. The largest difference – the level of awareness about HOT lanes and how they work – showed that drivers who do not use HOT lanes (non-users) knew less about their purpose and operations. The low-income group had many more non-users than the typical drivers group. However, because the typical drivers group was primarily recruited from a list of *Good to Go!* account holders, it is not clear to what extent income level affects drivers awareness of HOT lanes.

Neither group expressed concerns about a lack of fairness to low-income drivers, citing the fact that use of the HOT lanes is optional. This is similar to findings from the 2006 focus groups, except that in 2006 the low-income participants were much more likely to support the HOT lanes than participants in the typical drivers group.

Focus group participants in general showed strong support for the HOT lanes and many expressed an increase in commute satisfaction since the HOT lanes opened. Participants said that traffic levels, time savings and price point are the main factors they consider when deciding to use the HOT lanes. In the 2006 groups, time saved and trip reliability were important decision criteria for low-income participants.

Some participants voiced concerns about safety and enforcement, particularly mentioning the traffic problems entering and exiting the HOT lanes as a potential obstacle to HOT lane use. Enforcement was a key concern among participants in 2006 as well.

In general, participants agreed that paying for a transponder is fair and that the toll rates were also fair. Drivers with *Good to Go!* accounts valued their time more, while drivers without *Good to Go!* accounts had a lack of awareness or understanding of how the HOT lanes worked. As they learned more about the purpose and operations of the HOT lanes, non-users became more supportive. Some participants said they would open a *Good to Go!* account as a result of learning more about the HOT lanes.

Introduction

In May 2008, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) implemented the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project, which converted nine miles of the carpool lane in both directions into a high occupancy toll (HOT) lane. This pilot project, the first of its kind in Washington State, was designed to provide WSDOT with more information to help determine if HOT lanes would be used in other locations, what modifications will be needed, and the level of public acceptance (Refer to Appendix A for project overview).

HOT lanes are open to vanpools, transit, motorcycles and toll-paying solo drivers. The purpose of HOT is to maintain a reliable trip for transit, carpools and vanpools while allowing solo drivers the option of paying for a more reliable trip.

In early 2006, WSDOT organized six focus groups to gauge initial perceptions of the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project and to compare responses by low-income and typical drivers, as well as service employees or those who are self-employed.

To examine user perceptions eight months after the opening of HOT lanes, WSDOT conducted two focus groups in January 2009. One purpose was to compare low-income and typical driver responses, as well as those of people who have *Good to Go!* accounts and those who do not. The intent was to learn if and how the barriers and incentives to using the lane may vary for low-income and typical drivers. EnviroIssues moderated two 120-minute sessions at 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on January 8, 2009. The sessions were held at the following location:

Kent Senior Center
600 E Smith Street
Kent, WA 98030

This report summarizes the results of both focus groups and combines responses for the purpose of capturing key comments and issues.

Objectives

The purpose of the focus groups was to learn how the operation of the new HOT lanes is affecting drivers in general, and specifically low-income drivers. The following key issues were explored:

1. Acceptance of the lane as a congestion-management tool
2. Use of and access to the HOT lanes
3. Potential obstacles to HOT lane use and the magnitude of those obstacles
4. Equity issues related to access, mode use, opportunity, income and geography and difference in perceptions and responses between people in low-income groups and others
5. Difference in perceptions and responses to the lane by people who have transponders and those who do not

For purposes of this effort, “low-income” was defined in the following manner:

Household income of \$32,000 or less per year for one to four people; and \$53,000 or less per year for households of more than four people (income levels roughly 150% of the Federal poverty level). This was the same income criteria used in the 2006 focus groups, updated to reflect inflation.

Census data consulted prior to the 2006 focus groups indicated that non-English-proficient populations did not represent a significant enough percentage to warrant recruiting for and conducting a focus group in a language other than English.

Who participated?

Participant Recruitment

Recruitment guidelines were developed to gather input regarding potential differences in perceptions regarding income and geographic equity issues. One group was made up of low-income drivers and the other of typical drivers (non-low-income drivers). Please note these groups included participants that were recruited from a list of transponder owners who have previously indicated interest in providing feedback regarding the HOT lanes. These participants were not randomly recruited and are not necessarily representative of SR 167 commuters.

During the recruitment process, over 100 e-mails were received from transponder account holders interested in participating in the focus groups. Given that there were far more people interested than we could accommodate, we sent a short set of questions to individuals not selected for the focus groups in order to maintain their interest and get their feedback. Results can be found in Appendices B and C.

Guidelines for recruitment included:

- People who drive on SR 167 at least once a week.
- People who commute during the morning or afternoon rush hours (5-10 a.m. and 4-7 p.m. Monday through Friday).
- People who live within the following boundaries:
 - a. South of I-405/Renton
 - b. North of Puyallup
 - c. East of I-5
 - d. West of SR 169
- People who live north of Kent and south of Kent. This was intended to determine if where people live, and the distance they drive on SR 167, lead to any differences in perceptions about the HOT lanes.

- People with and without Good to Go! accounts and transponders
- Other recruitment guidelines to screen out people who work in transportation, media or who are frequent focus group participants.

Participant Demographics

A total of 21 people participated in the focus groups. In the typical drivers group of ten participants, six people owned transponders and four did not. There were seven females, three males; five people lived north of Kent, four people lived south of Kent, and one person lived in Kent.

In the low-income group of eleven participants, three people owned transponders and eight did not. There were three females and eight males; three people lived north of Kent and eight people lived south of Kent.

What did we ask?

Background

At the beginning of each session, the facilitator introduced herself and explained that the purpose of the focus group was to discuss transportation issues relating to SR 167. Participants were informed that WSDOT was sponsoring the focus groups and would be observing the sessions. In addition to the facilitator, there was a note taker, and each group was recorded on DVDs.

Each participant was asked to state their name, city of residence, amount of time living in the area, and mode of transportation to work or school. Participants' residences ranged from South Hill to Puyallup; length of residence ranged from three months to over 40 years; and all participants commuted by automobile, some occasionally carpooling with family members.

The facilitator asked participants whether they were familiar with the SR 167 HOT lanes, and gave an overview of the project. A three-minute video describing how to use the HOT lanes entitled "Rachel's Drive" was also shown. After the video, participants were asked to indicate whether they had *Good to Go!* accounts. Worksheets were given to all participants; those with transponders were given a set of questions distinct from those without. The purpose of the worksheet was to collect information about HOT lane use and attitudes from participants prior to discussion (Refer to Appendix D for worksheet questions and Appendix E for results).

Questions and Discussion Tools

Participants were asked to consider and discuss questions on the following topics. The following summarizes their responses. (Refer to Appendices F and G for transcription notes of the focus groups).

Introduction to the topic:

- Typical commute patterns
 - Of the 21 participants, the majority (14) travel northbound for the morning commute.
- Familiarity with HOT lanes
 - Good to Go! account holders were of course familiar with the HOT lanes. Most of those who do not have accounts were in the low-income group and had the least familiarity with the lanes.
- Perceived purpose of HOT lanes
 - Good to Go! account holders tended to understand the purpose of the lane, while non-users were likely to think the HOT lanes are designed to raise money.

Overview of HOT Lanes:

- Extent of HOT lane use
 - Of the 21 participants, 10 have Good to Go! accounts and all but one of those have at least tried the HOT lanes.
- Criteria for deciding whether to use the HOT lanes
 - Participants with Good to Go! accounts identified traffic conditions, price point, and schedule inflexibility as the top three reasons for using the HOT lanes.
- HOT lane use frequency and timing
 - Varies. This is discussed further on page 11.
- Flexibility of commute schedule
 - Seven of 10 participants with Good to Go! accounts indicated a need to arrive at work or school at a specific time.
- Carpool use of HOT lanes
 - One of 21 participants indicated regular carpooling in the HOT lanes; four of 21 participants indicated that they carpool using the HOT lanes on occasion.
- Traffic pattern changes since the HOT lanes opened, and perceived correlation to HOT lane opening vs. other factors
 - Some participants thought traffic was worse, some thought it had improved, and others thought it had stayed the same. HOT lane users were more apt to say that traffic has gotten better, even if they don't use them daily. Some identified the HOT lanes as a factor for improving traffic in the general use lanes; other factors identified included high gas prices and more use of alternate modes of transportation.
- Extent to which the HOT lanes are achieving the goals discussed in the video
 - In general, HOT lane users thought the lanes were effective, although they did not cover enough distance or offer a long-term solution to congestion.

Good to Go! Account / Transponder Use:

- Ways Good to Go! account holders learned about transponders, and whether they paid for them or received them for free
 - Of those with Good to Go! accounts, over half paid for their transponders and several people received theirs for free. Methods mentioned for learning about transponders included the WSDOT Web site, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge opening, signage on SR 167, and mailings from WSDOT.
- Reasons for getting transponders
 - Reasons included use of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, quicker commute, and quality of life and reduced stress.
- Likelihood of continued transponder/HOT lane use
 - Of those with Good to Go! accounts, all indicated that they plan to continue using the HOT lanes.
- Benefits of HOT lane
 - The top two benefits cited included reduced stress and improved commute times.
- Awareness of how to get a transponder
 - Although several of those without Good to Go! were unaware of the HOT lanes when they arrived, all participants indicated that after attending the focus group, they would be comfortable with the process of getting an account and transponder should they wish to have one.
- Difficulty/facility of process for acquiring a transponder
 - Good to Go! account holders explained the process of acquiring an account online or at a customer service center. No one mentioned any difficulties or problems, and most indicated it was easy.
- New knowledge gained at the focus group that would increase the likelihood of opening an account
 - Reasons cited by those who do not have accounts for getting account included saving time, inexpensive toll prices, and the ability to use their transponder on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. A couple people indicated they would open an account as a result of the focus group.

Equity Issues:

- Fairness of having to pay for a transponder
 - Most participants indicated that paying for a transponder seemed fair. This is discussed further on page 10.
- Fairness of existing toll rates
 - Most participants thought toll rates were reasonable, although some were confused by the toll pricing. This is discussed further on page 9.
- Other reasons for not using the HOT lanes

- This is discussed further on page 11.
- Suggestions for how to make it easier to get a transponder
 - This is discussed further on page 9.

HOT Lane Operational Issues:

- Understanding of how to enter/exit the HOT lanes
 - Some participants were unclear about how tolling worked and how to navigate the double white lines when they arrived, but all participants indicated an understanding of lane use after participating in the focus group.
- Difficulties entering/exiting the HOT lanes
 - This is discussed further on page 9.
- Method of figuring out how to use the HOT lanes
 - Participants mentioned the signage on SR 167 and consulting the WSDOT Web site.
- Effectiveness of existing signage
 - This is discussed further on page 9.
- Level of enforcement
 - This is discussed further on page 8.
- Degree to which understanding of HOT lane use was affected by focus group participation or other factors
 - All participants in both groups, especially those in the low-income group, indicated that the focus groups helped them better understand the HOT lanes.
- Degree to which the HOT lanes help traffic
 - Varies. This is discussed further on page 7.

At the end of the session, participants were asked the following question to help the project team plan outreach strategies:

- How do most people get information about SR 167?
 - Participants agreed that most people get information from word of mouth or signage on the freeway.

What did they say?

The section below highlights common themes that emerged at the two focus groups as they relate to the focus group objectives. Please note that the statements added below are not verbatim, but are paraphrased to help present a general idea of the input from the participants.

Acceptance of the HOT lanes as a congestion management tool

- **In general, there was strong support for the HOT lanes.**

Participants who use the HOT lanes regularly approved of the project, and non-users were curious to learn more about it. Those who were not interested in using the HOT lanes were not opposed to the concept, though perhaps one person indicated he was not supportive of tolling drivers to use the road.

Some HOT lane users indicated that they were skeptical of the lanes when they first opened, but that once they had tried them, were enthusiastic converts. Several people mentioned that they liked having the option of using the lanes, even though they did not use them all the time.

“I like having the option of using the HOT lane even if I do not exercise it.”

These responses are generally more favorable to HOT lanes than what was seen in the 2006 focus groups. At that time, low-income participants tended to be more supportive of the HOT lanes concept than typical users. Most of the low-income participants reacted positively to the HOT lanes pilot project and appreciated WSDOT’s efforts to try and relieve congestion on SR 167. Only a few adamantly expressed opposition. Those who reserved judgment were looking for more information but said they would probably consider using the lane when it is available.

- **Among HOT lane users, there was a substantial increase in SR 167 commute satisfaction since the HOT lanes were opened.**
 - One of 10 participants indicated moderate or high satisfaction (3, 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5) commuting on SR 167 prior to the HOT lanes opening.
 - Eight of 10 participants indicated high satisfaction (4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5) commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lanes opened.
 - Eight of 10 participants indicated high general satisfaction (4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5) driving on SR 167 using the HOT lanes.

“When I first heard about tolling on SR 167 I was angry, but now I am a believer – the HOT lanes save me time, and I use them almost every day.”

- **Participants would like the HOT lanes extended.**

Several HOT lane users remarked that the HOT lane stretch of SR 167 is too short, and should extend south past Auburn and north up I-405. Many participants also recommended implementing HOT lanes on existing HOV lanes on other corridors, in particular I-5 and I-405.

“It is eight miles of joy and then bottleneck.”

“WSDOT should do all the carpool lanes like this.”

Use of and access to the HOT lanes

- **Traffic level and price point were the main decision factors people have for using the HOT lanes.**

In both groups, people indicated that they choose whether to use the HOT lanes based on price point or traffic conditions. Those concerned with price indicated there is certain toll level that they would not exceed – generally around \$1.00 - \$1.25. Many pointed out that if they were in a hurry, they would pay even if the toll were higher.

“I won’t use the lanes if they are more than \$1 or \$1.25.”

Some people indicated they use the HOT lanes every day regardless of traffic conditions. They tended to have longer commutes (over 45 minutes) and valued any time savings they could achieve.

“It is forty minutes a day I do not have to sit on the freeway – I can go home and spend time with my family.”

“I’d give up all my lattes to use the HOT lanes.”

In the 2006 focus groups, time saved and trip reliability were important decision criteria for low-income participants and small business owners.

- **Factors that tend to build support for the HOT lanes.**

These included understanding the improved traffic flow, hearing about other participants’ shortened commute times, knowing that they could (should) not be cut off in the HOT lanes, understanding the use of transponders instead of toll booths, and understanding that transponder shields are available for HOT lane use when carpooling.

“I like the fact that people cannot cut in front of me when I am driving in the HOT lanes.”

“I can use my cruise control in the HOT lanes!”

Potential obstacles to HOT lane use and the magnitude of those obstacles

- **Awareness and understanding levels vary.**

Perhaps the biggest difference between the two groups was awareness of the lanes and how they work. The first group was made up primarily of people with *Good to Go!* accounts and who had experience using the HOT lanes. Only three in that group did not have accounts and only one was unfamiliar with the lanes prior to the focus group.

In the low-income group, eight people of eleven did not have accounts and were less aware of how the lanes work, when to use them and who could use them. As the session progressed, and people understood more about the purpose and operations of the HOT lanes, they were more supportive of them. Some in the low-income group indicated they were likely to open accounts as a result of the focus group session.

“I had heard people at work talking about them but did not know how they work.”

“I thought that they were going to be putting in toll booths.”

Specific items that were discussed included electronic tolling, opening the accounts, toll levels and HOV transponder shields.

Some noted the lack of awareness by the general public and had several ideas to improve public understanding. Suggestions included providing information at post offices, convenience or grocery stores, placing information alongside Sounder passes, or constructing signage on SR 167 with WSDOT Web site information. Participants also suggested posting HOT lane progress reports and user statistics on the WSDOT Web site, and allowing drivers a test run before they commit to purchasing a transponder. Some mentioned that the WSDOT Web site provided them with excellent information.

“Include information about HOT lane usage in the monthly e-mail bill.”

The 2006 groups also showed a lack of understanding about how the lanes work, which is to be expected given that they weren't yet operational. There was some skepticism about whether they would work.

- **Participants were concerned about safety and enforcement.**

Some people were concerned about the difference in travel speeds between HOT lane drivers and general purpose lane drivers. Some complained about getting cut off as they are exiting the HOT lanes to get to an exit ramp. Most indicated that

they see people cross the double white lines illegally on a daily basis. One participant pointed out that carpoolers think they are exempt from the double white line law, and that signage should indicate that it is illegal to cross the white lines “at all times

“In California they have concrete barriers. I’d like to see something more substantial than a double white line.”

“That’s why they put those double lines there. The double lines are meant to keep people from just cutting over anyplace in front of 60 mph traffic and causing an accident.”

Some participants in both groups indicated that HOT lane use is not effectively enforced, although several noticed Washington State Patrol on SR 167 frequently. Several said they didn’t understand how the lanes were monitored or enforced.

Enforcement was seen as a major issue in the groups from 2006, particularly as it related to cheaters. They noted that the HOV restrictions were not being enforced at that time and were concerned that wouldn’t change with the HOT lanes.

- **There are traffic problems entering and exiting the HOT lanes, as well as on the on and off-ramps.**

Several people mentioned difficulties navigating to and from the lanes. Common comments included insufficient time to exit the freeway after crossing the dotted white lines, not enough space to enter/exit at the dotted white lines, and not enough places where you can cross the dotted white lines. One person mentioned moving HOT lanes on the right hand lane instead of the left to alleviate this problem.

“People won’t let you in when you’re trying to get from the HOT lanes to an exit – they think you are cheating if you’re driving alone.”

- **People want more and/or different signage.**

Participants indicated that signage around the HOT lanes was confusing in several locations. Specific comments were that the enter and exit signs were either too small or not in the right locations; that the double white line signs should be on the left side of the highway and indicate the rule applies to all; and that electronic signs should be added telling people how much time they can save by using the HOT lane.

- **There is a perception that the HOT lanes are a short-term fix.**

Although people understand that HOT lanes make traffic move better, many did not understand how changing (increasing) prices will keep them working over

time. They expressed concern that the lanes will get over crowded when too many people try to use them and therefore will not work in the long-term.

“Once people know about the HOT lanes, they won’t work. They are a quick fix for poorly designed highways.”

- **Use of revenue is important to drivers.**

Several participants indicated concern and lack of understanding about HOT lane operational costs and how the toll money is used, and thought that the HOT lanes generate revenue for WSDOT.

“It’s important to know where the money collected is being used.”

This was a strong sentiment from the 2006 focus groups, particularly among typical drivers.

Equity issues related to income, mode use, opportunity, income and geography and differences in perceptions and responses between people in low-income groups and others

- **People were neutral in their perceptions about the fairness of HOT lanes for low-income drivers.**

Neither group expressed substantial concern that the HOT lanes are unfair, particularly because they are optional. Some participants pointed out that the HOT lanes ease congestion for all drivers by reducing traffic in the regular lanes. Some participants expressed mild opposition toward tolling and taxing road users.

“If you can afford to drive back and forth on SR 167, then you can afford the option of using the HOT lanes.”

This closely matches the findings of the 2006 groups, at least among low-income drivers, most of whom said they would consider using the lanes if they needed to be somewhere by a specific time.

- **There were fewer HOT lane users in the low-income group.**

Three of 11 participants in the low-income group compared with seven of 10 participants in the typical drivers group indicated that they use the HOT lanes. The majority of people in the typical drivers group, however, were recruited from a pool of transponder owners, so one cannot conclude that the difference in users is due to income.

- **In general, participants agreed that toll rates were fair.**

Most participants indicated that the toll rates they had observed were within their price range, although there was some concern about prices going up in the future. Most thought that the concept of charging a toll for the HOT lanes was fair, since it remains a personal choice, although one or two participants were opposed to the concept of tolling. At least one person mistakenly thought that she was being charged for each segment of HOT lane.

- **People prefer getting a transponder for free, but do not think paying for one is unfair.**

Both transponder users and non-users remarked that they did not mind the idea of paying for a transponder. A few people mentioned, and most agreed, that paying \$3 for the carpool shield and \$12 for the transponder separately did not make sense. They noted that charging extra for the shield seemed to contradict WSDOT's goal to encourage carpooling. Most thought the \$30 minimum account charge was reasonable, although one person suggested lowering that amount to accommodate those who drive infrequently.

“I was surprised I had to pay for the carpool shield – it should all come together as one package.”

- **No geographical or mode use equity issues were mentioned.**

It should be noted, however, that most people were solo drivers. There were a couple people who carpool with family members, and a few who said they had tried transit in the past but it took too long to arrive at their destination to use it on a regular basis. The carpoolers, as mentioned above, were glad to hear about the transponder shield, and most people thought the shield and the pass should be bundled and sold together automatically.

Although we recruited people who drive short and long distances along the corridor, no comments came up regarding the fact that the rate is the same for all.

Differences in perceptions and responses to the lane by people who have transponders and those who do not

- **Reasons for getting a transponder varied.**

Some of the key reasons for getting a transponder included use of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, quality of life, avoiding traffic, and stress reduction. Some participants indicated that they were not sure if they would have gotten a transponder if they had not received one when the Tacoma Narrows Bridge opened.

“Sleeping in an extra fifteen minutes is worth it to me.”

- **Infrequent commutes were common among non-users.**
In the group without transponders, a few participants indicated that they commute less than once a week on SR 167.
- **Direction or time of day of commute differed between the groups.**
In the group without transponders, a few participants indicated that they commute in the reverse direction or during non-peak hours.
- **Length of commute was shorter among non-users.**
In the group without transponders, a few participants indicated commutes of 15 minutes or less on SR 167.

“If you don’t have a really long commute it’s probably irrelevant.”

- **Speed of HOT lane drivers.**
One or two non-users noted the slow speed of some HOT lane drivers as a possible disincentive.
- **Perceived value of time differed between the groups.**
In the group with transponders, there was more of a sense that their time was worth the extra money spent on tolls. Non-transponder users seemed less concerned about the value of their time.

“I time my commute so that I don’t need to rush.”

“Saving 15 minutes off my commute every day is worth a lot to me.”

- **There was a lack of awareness of HOT lanes or understanding of how they work among non-users.**
Most participants without transponders arrived without much prior awareness of the HOT lanes. Although most had seen them and some had used them for carpooling, all participants without transponders lacked a clear understanding of their purpose.

Conclusion

Focus group participants showed strong support for the HOT lanes, their commute satisfaction since the HOT lanes were opened has increased, and they would like to see HOT lanes expanded further on SR 167, as well as to other corridors in the region.

Participants' main concerns included safety, enforcement, and traffic problems entering and exiting the HOT lanes. The majority of participants agreed that the initial transponder cost and toll rates were fair.

Findings about low-income drivers were generally consistent with findings from the 2006 focus groups, and support for HOT lanes generally grew among typical drivers. Focus group participants without *Good to Go!* accounts and the low-income participants tended to have a lack understanding of how the HOT lanes worked. Neither group was concerned about a lack of fairness to low-income drivers, particularly because HOT lanes are optional.

WSDOT will use this information provided by the focus groups to continue developing informational materials that directly address the issues and concerns identified by the groups, and to inform other regional transportation projects. This focus group concludes the formal evaluation of low-income and equity issues about HOT lane, though monitoring will continue in the future.



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Department of Transportation**

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FINAL REPORT

APPENDICES A-G

Prepared by

 **EnviroIssues**

The logo for EnviroIssues, consisting of a small green square followed by the text 'EnviroIssues' in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

Appendix A – Project Overview

In May 2005, Governor Christine Gregoire signed legislation authorizing implementation of the HOT Lanes Pilot Project along SR 167. As a result, WSDOT converted nine miles of the carpool lane in both directions of SR 167 into high occupancy toll lanes beginning in May 2008.

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are lanes that are open to vanpools, transit, motorcycles and toll-paying solo drivers. HOT lanes are meant to maintain a reliable trip for transit, carpools and vanpools and allow solo drivers the option of paying for a faster and reliable trip when there is space available.

Tolls for HOT lanes are set to ensure that these lanes travel at 45-60 mph even when the regular lanes are congested. Toll rates vary depending on the level of congestion. The lower the congestion, the lower the toll. For the pilot project, HOT lanes users pay a single entry fee regardless of where they enter and leave the HOT lanes. The SR 167 HOT lanes are also free of charge for transit, vanpools, carpools and motorcycles.

Tolls are collected using an electronic tolling system. Motorists must open a *Good to Go!* toll account to use the HOT lanes. This includes purchase of an electronic transmitter (called a transponder), which is placed on the vehicle windshield. Tolls are tracked electronically as motorists drive beneath the overhead toll-tag readers, and paid through automatic bank account debits or a monthly bill. Since the toll costs are based on the level of congestion in the HOT lanes during the user's time of travel, the user's monthly bill fluctuates with congestion levels.

The SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project is the first HOT lane project in Washington State, designed to provide WSDOT with more information to help determine if HOT lanes could be used in other locations, what modifications will be needed, and the level of public acceptance.

Appendix B – E-mail survey results summary

EnviroIssues recruited nine participants for both focus groups from an interested party list of transponder recipients provided by WSDOT. During the recruitment process, EnviroIssues received e-mails from over 100 individuals stating their interest in the focus groups. As a result, a short set of questions about the HOT lanes was sent to individuals not selected for the focus groups. E-mail questions were sent to 113 people and 35 responses were received. Several respondents indicated disappointment in not being included in the focus groups.

The following questions were asked:

1. Do you use the HOT lanes?
2. What do you like best about HOT lanes?
3. What do you like least about HOT lanes?
4. What one idea do you have to make HOT lanes work better?

Question 1: Do you use the HOT lanes?

- **Yes (19 of 35)**
Nineteen people responded ‘yes’ with no additional information.
- **Occasionally (7 of 35)**
Seven people responded that they use the HOT lanes occasionally.
- **Daily (6 of 35)**
Six people responded they use the HOT lanes daily or almost daily.
- **Other**
One person responded they use the HOT lanes once a month *after* seven p.m., one person responded that they use the HOT lanes only as an HOV lane, and one person responded they do not use the HOT lanes.

Question 2: What do you like best about HOT lanes?

- **Time savings (23 of 35)**
Over half of the responses mentioned the importance of being able to save time, get to work faster, cut down their commute or avoid sitting in traffic.
- **Ability to use the HOT lanes while driving solo (6 of 35)**
Six responses indicated that being able to travel without a carpool partner in the lane was the best part of the HOT lanes.
- **Nothing (2 of 35)**
Two people responded “nothing”—one who does not use the HOT lanes and one who does.

- **Other**
Traffic is more evenly spread, it is easy to get in and out of lanes due to less traffic, signs let you know the prices of tolls and the HOT lanes are safer.

Question 3: What do you like least about HOT lanes?

- **Double white lines (23 of 35)**
Twenty-three people mentioned problems with the double white lines, including: getting stuck behind slow drivers, drivers illegally crossing the double white lines, and limited access to enter and exit the lanes.
- **Pricing (5 of 35)**
Five people mentioned different pricing related issues, including: pricing is too low to avoid overcrowding, variance in cost is not based on traffic flow, lanes have already been paid for with taxes, and the price of the lanes does not afford a value for use because the traffic in the general use lanes moves just as fast for no fee.
- **Length of HOT lanes (4 of 35)**
Four people mentioned that the current HOT lanes are not long enough to be useful.
- **Carpool shield (3 of 35)**
Three people mentioned that they disliked the carpool shield because it costs extra, is a burden on HOV users that have *Good to Go!* accounts for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, or their type of car does not allow the carpool shield to work so they are charged regardless.
- **Other**
Lack of clarity in signage, lack of public awareness, and lack of enforcement.

Question 4: What one idea do you have to make HOT lanes work better?

- **Expand HOT lanes (10 of 35)**
Ten people would like to have the HOT lanes extended and specifically mentioned expanding HOT lanes the entire distance of SR 167 and on I-405.
- **More enforcement (6 of 35)**
Six people would like to see more enforcement of the HOT lanes, specifically of drivers illegally crossing the double white lines. One person mentioned they would also like to see *Good to Go!* stickers on the back window of vehicles for officers to easily identify who has a pass.
- **More signage (4 of 35)**

Four people would like to see increased signage, especially to alert drivers when they can enter or exit the HOT lanes. Two additional people mentioned increasing education about the HOT lanes.

- **Increase speed (4 of 35)**

Four people would like to see the speed limit in the HOT lanes increased.

- **Change double white lines (3 of 35)**

Three people had suggestions about the double white lines including: use curbing to stop people from crossing the double white lines, allow drivers to leave the HOT lanes across the double white lines but not enter them, and eliminate the double white lines completely.

- **Other**

Adjust price based on distance, add more entrances and exits to the HOT lanes, add left lane exits to the HOT lanes, and develop a built-in transponder in cars with an on/off button for carpooling.

One person stated they have no use for the HOT lanes and people should be encouraged to carpool.

Two people stated that they were happy with the HOT lanes and have no suggestions for improvement.

Appendix C – E-mail survey results

	Do you use the HOT lanes?	What do you like best about HOT lanes?	What do you like least about HOT lanes?	What one idea do you have to make HOT lanes work better?	E-mail
1	Yes, I commute to Bothell every day from Pacific, it's incredibly helpful in relieving some commuting stress and well worth the toll in my mind.	Obviously the time savings, and as I have a manual transmission the wear and tear on my clutch. For the most part the system seems to work well.	Slow drivers who won't move to the right when possible to let you by (this is a common traffic problem overall here though). The double white line system doesn't help in this regard either. Not sure what a real alternative is though.	Please, please, please expand it to 405.	daniel@danielseiger.com
2	Yes, I do.	The ability to use them when I don't have my carpool partner with me, and the freeway is congested. The rates being charged at this time are reasonable.	Drivers continually crossing the double white lines to enter and exit the lane		Jutta.Hood@veca.com
3	Yes, on occasion.	There are times it makes sense to pay a little extra. It seems overall use of the HOV lane is up, so it helps spread the traffic across all lanes.	Tailgaters and headlight blinkers in the HOV lane who expect you to move over across the solid line if you are not going fast enough.	Left lane exits to HOV users don't have to cross traffic.	dtgriffin@pobox.com
4	Yes	Convenience of being able to go where I need to at or close to the posted speed limits	It is often hard to merge into or out of the hot lanes during heavy traffic in the allotted space, if you have a semi or two near you it becomes almost impossible to get over before the double white lines.	I think Good To Go users should also have a sticker on the back window so that officers are able to easily identify those of us that have the pass.	moodydragon2002@comcast.net
5	Yes, every week day, morning and night.	The Hot Lanes are faster than the regular traffic flow. Although there may be some slow downs, I drive right by the major slowdowns in Kent between Auburn and Renton.	There is not much I don't like about the Hot Lanes. In general, I see people crossing the double white line both to get out and to get in on a regular basis. I also see a lot of contractor trucks – big trucks that can't keep up with the traffic speeds. It was difficult to scrape those comments up.	Extend the Hot Lanes to include the HOV lanes on 405 – then I could ride the Hot Lanes from Auburn to Bellevue – Sweet! Don't forget to ask for the Well Done's – The Hot Lanes are well marked – where to get on and or off, upcoming exits, etc. I don't tell people how well the Hot Lanes work because I don't want them to fill up!	naber1@comcast.net
6	Yes	Increase use of the former HOV lanes and a funding source for future SR167 improvements	8 months later people still don't get how to use them (people constantly cross double white lines; confusion how much they pay; rates not matching traffic flow - high with little or no congestion and low when the standard lanes are at a standstill; frequently the first sign in Auburn going North is out - so no visibility to rate being charged.	More education to increase usage and understanding coupled with closer monitoring to ensure rates match real time traffic flow.	limejohn@msn.com
7	Occasionally	I can use them if I am in a hurry and by myself	Seems like I have already paid for these lanes through my taxes. AND if I carpool, I have to purchase a shield so I won't be charged, since I have a good-to-go transponder for use on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge.	Enforce the "Illegal To Cross Double White Line" - right now it appears that since it is not enforced, that people cross them whenever they want to. I see it happen every day on my commute.	pflinn@flinn.us
8	Yes	When there is heavy traffic and I am going from Renton to Auburn they are sometimes nice	Two important things....one, when someone goes slow in front of you, you can't go around them and they can't pull over. Two, you can't get out of the hotlanes to make some exits. It's very frustrating!!!	Put up signs that says when to get out of the hot lanes for which exit!	

	Do you use the HOT lanes?	What do you like best about HOT lanes?	What do you like least about HOT lanes?	What one idea do you have to make HOT lanes work better?	E-mail
9	Yes, I do!	I like that it gets me to work faster and I don't have to sit in traffic anymore.	Paying for them, I don't like when the price is over \$2. Also don't like that sometimes the person in front of you is going slow and they can't get out to move because of the double lane. Another is when someone pulls into really quick and crosses the double line illegally, this makes me mad.	I am not sure, I like them & don't want them to go away. I wish the hot lane could be extended on 167 so I could start using them sooner, I live in Puyallup and can't get on until Auburn.	mmkollar@live.com
10	Yes	Safer	People violating the law by crossing over double white lines	More enforcement	exmayorlb@aol.com
11	Yes	Ability to avoid heavy traffic if I'm in a hurry	Can't think of anything. If anything I'd say pricing may be too low to avoid over-crowding.	Should explore with auto makers and other DOT's the idea of standardizing on a transponder standard that would allow for built in transponders in cars with a button/switch for on/off (i.e. for if you're carpooling), rather than having to have the sticker and big "shield"	bfoster@microsoft.com
12	Yes, about twice a week, I have a transponder	The ability to move faster in slow traffic	Sometimes the 55 limit is adhered to by a too cautious driver ahead of me	Allow faster speed in the HOT lane	DLonay@aol.com
13	Yes, I use the HOT lanes.	I like the way I'm able to just keep driving on those days when traffic is backed up bumper to bumper and no one is moving.	I don't like when someone enters the lane ahead of me and slows their speed, then I must slow down to follow them, and the regular lanes are wide open, but because of the double line, I'm unable to go around. I've read in the newspaper, people write in under the "rant and rave" section that the carpool lane is NOT the fast lane. I beg to differ, that lane is supposed to keep the traffic moving, not clog it some more. If I'm wrong in my opinion, more education is necessary for all drivers. Basic traffic laws should be reinforced.	My suggestion for making it better: more education. Besides signage (sometimes confusing,) maybe other articles in the newspaper, or fliers sent out that outline DO's and DON'T's even as I said, basic traffic rules, besides the HOT lane rules. For someone to deliberately slow down because of tailgaters is dangerous. Sometimes I tailgate without realizing it. I have been distracted by my children, or a problem on my mind, and I will come up on another driver. Obviously, I'm driving faster than that person; I'm not trying to make them mad, but if someone comes up on me, I figure I should speed up, or get out of their way. In any case, being in the HOT lane means you're stuck. I guess that's the chance you take in choosing to drive in that lane.	Robie.Dunten@va.gov
14	Yes	Less traffic	Too few entrance and exit opportunities	More entrance and exit opportunities	dfitschen@hotmail.com
15	No	Nothing.	Studies show that HOV lanes work to increase total person throughput on highways. "HOT" lanes stifle this model by allowing single occupancy vehicles into HOV lanes. Further, "HOT" lanes require an extra burden on high occupancy vehicle operators who have transponders by forcing them to utilize a clunky device to avoid a charge for using HOV lanes. The extra burden should be on the solo drivers if at all.	I have no use for "HOT" lanes whatsoever. People should be encouraged to car pool. Giving those with more money than brains access to HOV lanes while solo is a bad idea.	gerry@gerrybaldwin.com
16	Yes	Gets me to work much faster	Cost varies a great deal and does not seem to be based on traffic flow, many people weave in and out of lanes to pass.	Better patrolling of speeders and weavers	cindyklinger1@comcast.net
17	Yes	Quicker	Morons that drive below the speed limit in the HOV lane.	My suggestion- make the HOV 10mph more than the other lanes that way a slow driver can shoot for 70 but not annoy anyone if he fails to achieve the velocity and goes 65	timbasaraba@gmail.com
18	Yes, as often as I can.	It has cut my commute in half, if not more.	The type of car I have does not allow me to have the windshield pass so I can't cover my pass when I'm actually carpooling with another person. Therefore, I'm charged regardless which frustrates me. It doesn't stop me from using the HOT lanes but I'd like to see if you could develop an alternative soon!	I would like to see all highways turned into HOT lanes especially 405. And I think we should be able to get on the freeway on ramps in the carpool lane if we have a HOT pass without having to wait for the light.	kskmsk@comcast.net

	Do you use the HOT lanes?	What do you like best about HOT lanes?	What do you like least about HOT lanes?	What one idea do you have to make HOT lanes work better?	E-mail
19	Yes, I do use the HOT lanes, but only as a HOV lane. I do not pay to enter the lane. As I stated before, the price of the HOT lane does not often afford a value for the use. The few times that I did use the HOT lane in the past, the traffic in the general use lanes moved just as fast for no fee. I am sure that if I used 167 during the peak times on any regular basis, I may be more inclined to pay the toll. The times that I generally use 167, I see the HOT lane being underused. I also observe a lot of violations, but I have never seen any enforcement.			My best suggestions for its continued use would be a lower fee during off peak times, or more time that it's open to all traffic.	haroldh@hughes.net
20	Yes	Reduced traffic time	Lack of clarity in signage	Add signage at each entry/exit point that indicates what the next available street/exit is.	jeremynordland@hotmail.com
21	Yes, I use the HOT lanes almost on a daily basis.	I normally can pick up 3-5 miles and several minutes by using the HOT lanes	There seems to be a fair number of drivers who use it to do "Sunday Driving" accruing a line of cars behind them and thus defeating the purpose of a HOT lane, unless the state sees this more as a revenue source rather than one to assist and expedite traffic flow. Also there seems to be a high number of "double white line violators"	Improved signage (bigger or more eye catching)	george@snyderonline.net
22	Yes, when traffic is bad and I have an appointment	It doesn't ever seem to be backed up. I was afraid too many people would use them and they would be too congested.	Not every exit ramp or entrance ramp has an associating hotlane opening (dotted line as opposed to the double white line) associated with it. There have also been many times when I have paid to use the Hot lane and ended up getting behind a car putting along at 50 mph. Because of the double white lines, I can't even get out of the lane to pass them. It is quite infuriating, and those people should be ticketed for obstructing the flow of traffic. There should also be signs up stating that.	1) The HOT lanes could have a speed limit of 65 miles per hour (5 miles faster than the regular lanes), that might alleviate the slow cars in that lane. 2) Add more entrances and exits to the hot lane. 3) Ticket those vehicles holding up traffic and not going the speed limit 4) the car pool lane needs to be extended southbound to hwy 410 or at least completely through Auburn.	Kathy.Sherwin@kraft.com
23	Yes	Not just sitting in traffic/saves time.	n/a	Put more of them in.	kmnutt@comcast.net
24	Yes, on the way to work 3-5 days per week.	Convenience, saves me time, makes my commute time more predictable.	Does not extend far enough southbound on 167 to make it worthwhile most of the time.	No ideas at this time; I am happy with the way they work now.	Donna.Hodel@pacar.com
25	Yes, I use the HOT Lanes when it suits my needs and the cost is not to high.	1. Flexibility 2. Availability	Getting behind someone going slower than the speed limit and being stuck there because of the double white line.	Extend it the entire 167 distance - all the way to and from Puyallup.	linda.partchell@dhl.com
26	Yes	They are available to use and have limited access to them.	There are not more of them. It is most aggravating that people ignore the "do not cross double white lines" and get away with it anytime they want.	Use curbing to stop people from jumping the double white lines. Put up notice how far apart the entrance and exits on the Hot Lanes.	Wayne.M.Drexler@grace.com
27	Yes, I use the HOT lanes both as a single driver and in a carpool.	When I'm driving alone, I use the HOT lanes when I want to drive faster than the regular lanes. I usually drive down 167 around noon, so for only \$.50 I can get to my destination faster.	When my significant other and I are carpooling down 167, it's frustrating when we get behind a carpooler that is barely driving the speed limit. Since we can't cross the double white line, we're stuck in the HOT lane behind them. At non-peak hours that means people are whizzing by us in the regular lanes. Since I carpool on 167 more often than I drive alone, this is very frustrating.	Change the rule so that people can leave the HOT lane across the double white line, but not enter the HOT lane. The signs could simply say "Do not cross double white line to enter HOT lane."	bclait@gmail.com

	Do you use the HOT lanes?	What do you like best about HOT lanes?	What do you like least about HOT lanes?	What one idea do you have to make HOT lanes work better?	E-mail
28	Yes	I love having the option to use them if needed.	The double white lines.	Get rid of the double white lines. If anything, having them makes the whole thing <i>less</i> safe rather than more. Because Seattle drivers have this thing about always wanting to be in front (not necessarily driving fast, just being in front), drivers tend to speed up knowing that other drivers are going to be looking to either get in or get out of the HOT lane during those brief non-double-white breaks. And that's not even getting into the drivers that simply ignore the double-white, so just when you think you don't need to worry about merging traffic, someone suddenly changes lanes!	wesley.t.shimaura@usps.gov
29	Yes, about once a month, usually right after 7 pm	Signs let you know the prices and when the lanes are open to all. Limiting access helps with merging issues.	Not enough access points. Current length is too short to be of value to my commute, especially considering access issues at both ends.	Expand them up I-405 and/or create direct access at the beginning and end of the current lanes. The amount of time spent transferring from SR 18 to 167 and back off due to congestion at both the I-405 and SR 18 interchanges negates any time savings utilizing the HOT lane currently.	benagain@sireneinternet.net
30	Yes, almost daily.	It does cut down on commute time or allow you to bypass congested areas.	That they do not extend to Hwy 18 (traveling South bound on Hwy 167)	Extend the HOT lanes the extra 2 miles down to the Hwy 18 interchange, this is where the bulk of the backlog is.	Michelesboogie@comcast.net
31	Yes. Usually one to two times every two weeks.	I enjoy using them to bypass the typical congestion points on SR 167 (i.e. 15th NW to S 277th going NB and the S 212th to Willis congestion SB)	The congestion at the end of the SB commute of SR 167's HOT lanes. I'm looking forward to the widening of the segment between 15th NW and Sumner. On weekends, the HOT lanes are a magnet for slower drivers. There's no benefit of using the HOT lanes when stuck behind slower traffic. On some occasions, the general purpose lanes move at a faster clip.	I think more enforcement would be beneficial. I see a lot of double line violators and HOV/HOT violators.	McCallT@wsdot.wa.gov
32	Yes	The convenience of moving faster than the regular lanes. This is helpful in my case since I am in sales and don't have a potential to carpool.	The length. I would be much happier if they extended up and down 405. Also, I would like to see the price adjust based on the distance. I noticed that if I come on in Kent (heading southbound) it is still the same rate as if I took it all the way from Renton. The rates should decrease as you get near the end.	See second part of #3 to the left.	mark2025@comcast.net
33	Yes	Nothing	Getting trapped there by slow moving vehicles	Increase legal speed limit in HOT lane by 10 mph	mkbjcurtin@comcast.net
34	Yes	Less traffic, easy to get in and out of	Can't think of anything	Can't think of anything	paraskier@comcast.net
35	Yes, I do use the HOT lanes just about every day.	I like that they make for a less congested lane of travel. Most single drivers won't go into the lanes if they don't have a pass which makes it nice for commuters and single drivers like myself.	What I like least are the few places where you can moved out of the lane if necessary. There are always the folks driving over the speed limit that want to tailgate in the hot lanes which it would be nice to have the ability to move out of the lane into the other two lanes to let the tailgater pass.	I would like to see the hot lane program expanded to I405 north and south.	jlrayment@stellurian.com

Appendix D – Worksheet for those without transponders

1. In the morning, which way do you commute on SR 167?
 From north to south (for example, Renton to Auburn)
 From south to north (for example, Auburn to Renton)

2. Do you drive in the HOT lanes? (circle one) Y N
 - a. If so, how often do you use them? _____
 - b. Do you drive alone or with others? _____

3. What are your reasons for not getting a transponder? Check all that apply:
 Traffic conditions in the free lanes are not that bad
 The toll is too expensive
 Only a small part of my commute is on SR 167
 I didn't know about HOT lanes
 I don't like tolls
 I don't use the HOT lanes
 The transponder is too expensive
 I don't know where/how to get one
 I'd like to get one but haven't time to look into it
 Other (please explain) _____

4. On a scale of 1-5 (1=very low satisfaction; 5= very high satisfaction) how would you rank the following?

1 2 3 4 5 My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 *before* the HOT lane opened in May

1 2 3 4 5 My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 *after* the HOT lane opened in May

5. Would you like to be contacted about HOT lanes in the future? If so, please leave your name and contact information below:

Appendix D (cont'd) – Worksheet for those with transponders

1. In the morning, which way do you commute on SR 167?
 North to south (for example, Renton to Auburn)
 South to north (for example, Auburn to Renton)

2. How often do you use the HOT lane? _____

3. Do you drive alone or with others? _____

4. Do you ever *not* use the HOT lane for any of the following reasons?
Check all that apply:
 Traffic is flowing smoothly so I don't need to use the HOT lane
 Vehicle I'm driving doesn't have a transponder
 HOT lane toll rate is more than I want to pay
 HOT lane toll is too expensive, I can't afford it
 Other (please explain) _____

5. What factors lead to your decision to use the HOT lanes? Check all that apply:
 I don't have a lot of time to spend driving
 I need to arrive at my work/destination by a specific time in the *morning*
 I need to arrive at my work/destination by a specific time in the *evening*
 Traffic conditions in the free lanes are too slow
 The price when I arrive at the HOT lanes
 Other (please explain) _____

6. On a scale of 1-5 (1=very low satisfaction; 5= very high satisfaction) how would you rank the following?

1 2 3 4 5 My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 *before* the HOT lane opened

1 2 3 4 5 My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 *after* the HOT lane opened

1 2 3 4 5 My satisfaction with driving on SR 167 *using* the HOT lane

7. Would you like to be contacted about HOT lanes in the future? If so, please leave your name and contact information below:

Appendix E – Worksheet results

Group 1 (Typical commuters)

Commute direction	<i>North to South</i>	<i>South to North</i>		
	4 of 11	7 of 11		
Frequency of HOT lane use	<i>5+ days per week</i>	<i>1-3 days per week</i>	<i>Once a week or less</i>	<i>Never</i>
	2 of 9	3 of 9	2 of 9	2 of 9
Commute alone or carpool	<i>Alone</i>	<i>Carpool</i>	<i>Both</i>	
	8 of 9	0 of 9	1 of 9	

Reasons for not using HOT lanes (those with transponders)	Yes
Traffic is flowing smoothly so I don't need to use the HOT lane	6 of 7
Vehicle I'm driving doesn't have a transponder	2 of 7
HOT lane toll rate is more than I want to pay	5 of 7
HOT lane toll is too expensive, I can't afford it	0 of 7
Other (Not in a hurry)	1 of 7

Reasons for using HOT lanes (those with transponders)	Yes
I don't have a lot of time to spend driving	5 of 7
I need to arrive at my work/destination by a specific time in the morning	5 of 7
I need to arrive at my work/destination by a specific time in the evening	2 of 7
Traffic conditions in the free lanes are too slow	7 of 7
The price when I arrive at the HOT lanes	5 of 7
Other (Impatient)	1 of 7

Reasons for not getting a transponder (those without transponders)	Yes
Traffic conditions in the free lanes are not that bad	1 of 3
The toll is too expensive	0 of 3
Only a small part of my commute is on SR 167	2 of 3
I didn't know about HOT lanes	0 of 3
I don't like tolls	0 of 3
I don't use the HOT lanes	0 of 3
The transponder is too expensive	0 of 3
I don't know where/how to get one	0 of 3
I'd like to get one but haven't time to look into it	0 of 3
Other (Not yet a big enough problem)	1 of 3

	Very low 1	2	3	4	Very high 5
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 before the HOT lane opened in May (no transponder)	1 of 3	1 of 3	1 of 3	0 of 3	0 of 3
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lane opened in May (no transponder)	1 of 3	0 of 3	1 of 3	1 of 3	0 of 3
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lane opened in May (transponder)	2 of 7	4 of 7	1 of 7	0 of 7	0 of 7
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lane opened in May (transponder)	0 of 7	0 of 7	1 of 7	4 of 7	2 of 7
My satisfaction with driving on SR 167 using the HOT lane	0 of 7	0 of 7	1 of 7	1 of 7	5 of 7

Six individuals indicated they would like to be contacted about HOT lanes in the future.

Group 2 (Low-income commuters)

Commute direction	<i>North to South</i>	<i>South to North</i>		
	3 of 11	8 of 11		
Frequency of HOT lane use	<i>5+ days per week</i>	<i>1-3 days per week</i>	<i>Once a week or less</i>	<i>Never</i>
	2 of 11	2 of 11	0 of 11	6 of 11
Commute alone or carpool	<i>Alone</i>	<i>Carpool</i>	<i>Both</i>	
	6 of 11	1 of 11	3 of 11	

Reasons for not using HOT lanes (those with transponders)	Yes
Traffic is flowing smoothly so I don't need to use the HOT lane	2 of 3
Vehicle I'm driving doesn't have a transponder	1 of 3
HOT lane toll rate is more than I want to pay	1 of 3
HOT lane toll is too expensive, I can't afford it	0 of 3
Other (I want a hassle free exit)	1 of 3

Reasons for using HOT lanes (those with transponders)	Yes
I don't have a lot of time to spend driving	2 of 3
I need to arrive at my work/destination by a specific time in the morning	2 of 3
I need to arrive at my work/destination by a specific time in the evening	1 of 3
Traffic conditions in the free lanes are too slow	2 of 3
The price when I arrive at the HOT lanes	2 of 3

Reasons for not getting a transponder (those without transponders)	Yes
Traffic conditions in the free lanes are not that bad	0 of 8
The toll is too expensive	3 of 8
Only a small part of my commute is on SR 167	1 of 8
I didn't know about HOT lanes	4 of 8
I don't like tolls	1 of 8
I don't use the HOT lanes	2 of 8
The transponder is too expensive	1 of 8
I don't know where/how to get one	2 of 8
I'd like to get one but haven't time to look into it	2 of 8
Other (I'd get one but getting charged)	1 of 8
Other (I am adjusting my commute to use public transit)	1 of 8

	<i>Very low 1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Very high 5</i>
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 before the HOT lane opened in May (no transponder)	1 of 8	2 of 8	5 of 8	0 of 8	0 of 8
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lane opened in May (no transponder)	2 of 8	1 of 8	4 of 8	0 of 8	1 of 8
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lane opened in May (transponder)	1 of 3	2 of 3	0 of 3	0 of 3	0 of 3
My satisfaction with commuting on SR 167 after the HOT lane opened in May (transponder)	0 of 3	0 of 3	1 of 3	1 of 3	1 of 3
My satisfaction with driving on SR 167 using the HOT lane	0 of 3	0 of 3	1 of 3	1 of 3	1 of 3

Five individuals indicated they would like to be contacted about HOT lanes in the future.

Appendix F – Transcription notes for the typical users group

Welcome, Introduction and Ice-breaker (10-15 minutes)

Introductions

Name	City of residence	Time in area	Routes travelled to work/school
Joann Hurley	Kent	18 years	167 or back roads
Kelly Tynon-Brown	Renton	8 years	Federal Way to Olympia – different routes
Steve Hanson	Kent	17 years	Works all over area
Sameth El	Kent	2 years, Renton 10 years	167
Nancy Tripp	Buckley	12 years	167 / Buckley to Bellevue
Juli White		20 years	Drives
Greg Stave	Auburn	8 years	Drives, 167
Steve Reinke	Renton to Kent	1 year ?	Drives, 167
Gloria Rigley	Renton	30 years	Works part-time, drives 167
Darlene MacAaron	Kent/Covington	30 years	167 to Seattle

Introduction to the topic (15 minutes)

Most of you use SR 167 on a regular basis to commute to work or school. Is that correct? (Check around the room for head nods.)

- Yes, all heads nod

On a typical work or school day:

How many of you drive alone?

- Everyone (10 people)

How many of you take transit or carpool?

- No one

How many of you do some of each – drive or carpool for example?

- No one

Do you typically travel during the so-called “rush hour” or at other times?

- Three rush hour commuters

- Two reverse rush hour commuters

How is the commute on SR 167? Good? Bad?

- Depends on what time you're on it; 10 minutes can make a 30 minute or hour difference
- Conditions vary a lot
- I go from Kent to Auburn every night, and it's always different
- Sometimes there is not a good reason for why it's backed up
- It's bad where the HOV lane ends in Sumner. Even if it's clear the whole way, everything slows down there
- So much new building and not enough roads
- Wonder why the HOV ends there since most people live south of that
- I almost always use the HOT lanes
- I drive down 167 every day to and from work, usually it's only backed up getting on
- There was a flashing sign going into Auburn was on last night, I hadn't ever seen it on before, people were slamming on their brakes when they saw the sign. The sign said that the road was closed.

Would you say it has gotten better in the last year? Worse? Why do you think that?

What's different?

- Worse
- Better for me at the north end
- No change (two people)
- Worse for most but better for me driving in HOT lanes
- I love the HOT lanes on 167

How many of you are familiar with the HOT lanes?

- Everyone

Has anyone not heard about them prior to this focus group experience?

- No one

What do you think is the purpose of HOT lanes?

- To make my life easier
- Wish it were longer, and went all the way to Sumner
- Wish it were on other roads – I-405, I-5
- I assume it was to ease the traffic, raise money to implement elsewhere, test whether a good idea to implement elsewhere
- Market-driven approach to congestion control will work, it's just not politically correct. I'm in favor of a market approach because I have that flexibility.
- I just learned how the whole thing works tonight. I work odd hours.
- Could signs indicate how much time would be saved by using the HOT lanes? Like the sign on I-5?

- Sometimes the traffic guy on KOMO or KIRO will talk about how much time can be saved driving in the HOT lanes.

Overview of HOT Lanes (10 minutes)

Can I see a show of hands – how many of you currently have a *Good to Go!* account with a transponder in your windshield?

- Seven of 10 (three without)

General HOT lanes discussion (20-25 minutes)

Have you have used the HOT lane? Why or why not?

- See above

How do you decide whether or not to use it?

- Don't drive frequently enough to get one
- Don't work enough to need to get one

Do you use it regularly or just sometimes? For example, daily, weekly, monthly – you tell me how you define “regularly”. Mornings or afternoons?

- Sometimes
- Price point issue, use it if less than \$1.00
- If the price suddenly goes to \$4.00, does that tell me that traffic has suddenly gotten bad? Or is that price based on number of cars in the HOT lanes?
- I heard that they wanted it to be no slower than 45 mph
- The rational thing for me would be to never use it unless the price goes high
- Price point is not an issue for me, I get in no matter what
- Most I've ever paid was \$2.50
- More apt to use it in the morning, I have to get to work on time and can sleep in later
- I'd rather get home fast, so would rather use in the evening
- I use it based on how traffic is flowing, not price
- I use it even on the weekends
- Don't take it away!
- Even if they don't do the HOT lanes on the other roads, they should at least have double white lines to improve traffic flow

Were any of you HOV/carpool lane users before the HOT lanes opened? Do you still use the lane as a carpooler? Why or why not?

- N/A

Do you think traffic has changed since the HOT lane opened? If so, how much of this change do you think is due to the HOT lanes versus other factors?

Are the regular lanes better as a result?

- Sometimes
- About the same as it was before.
- Only a small number of the total number of cars drive in the HOT lanes.

Do you think the lanes on SR 167 are achieving the goals discussed in the video? Why or why not?

- Definitely
- Put them on other roads
- When are we getting HOT lanes on other roads?
- Put an HOV lane and a HOT lane on I-5
- Does it raise enough money to implement elsewhere?
- No tollbooths

Transponder Use Questions (10 minutes)

How many of you have a *Good to Go* transponder?

- Seven

Does anyone have a *Good to Go!* account NOT use the HOT lane? Why not?

- Three
- Because they don't need one for work (See above)

Do you recall how you learned about getting a transponder?

Did you pay for it or get it for free?

- Businesses offer them to employees, take out of paycheck
- Learned about it online
- In media when building the Tacoma Narrows Bridge
- Signage on SR 167 led me to WSDOT's web site
- I think WSDOT did a great job on their web site of explaining things, but it amazes me how many people were not informed or paying attention
- Some people avoid SR 167 because they think they have to pay
- Some people think carpoolers can't go in the lane without paying
- Got it at the Gig Harbor office
- Easy to manage my account online
- Has WSDOT reached out to employers about this program?
- Free
- Cost \$12
- Surprised I had to pay for the carpool shield – it should all come together as one package

- WSDOT didn't analyze how many folks would use the carpool shield
- If you can afford to pay for the HOT lanes, should be able to afford the transponder
- I like the online aspects for managing my account

Why did you get a transponder?

- Tacoma Narrows Bridge
- Don't know if I would have gotten one otherwise
- Commute to Seattle
- Quality of life/sitting in traffic
- Stress; I feel less stressed not having to fight traffic
- Less worries about people driving slow or cutting you off
- Do I get charged again if I leave the HOT lane for a segment to pass someone and re-enter?

How likely are you to continue using your transponder? Why? What benefits do you get?

- Definitely
- Might change if pricing structure changes
- If all lanes suddenly opened up
- Price is not an issue for me; convenience more important

For those of you who don't have a *Good to Go!* transponder, do you know how to get one? Do you have any ideas?

For those of you who got transponders, how did you get one? Walk us through the process. Was it easy? hard? What could be better?

If you don't have a *Good to Go!* transponder, did you learn anything new that would increase the likelihood you'll opening an account and use the HOT lanes now?

Are there other reasons you wouldn't get a *Good go Go!* account and transponder?

Equity Related Questions (15 minutes)

What do you think about asking people to pay for a transponder? Do you think people should have to, or do you think they should be free? Why or why not?

- OK to pay, but should be packaged together (see above)

What are your thoughts about toll rates. Would you say they are too high, too low, or about right?

- OK
- Whether I use the lanes depends on how high the tolls are
- I won't use them if they are more than \$1 or \$1.25

- They are not more expensive from the beginning of the HOT lanes

Now, for those who use the HOT lanes, what do you think about the rates?

For those who don't, are you aware of the rates? Do you think they are too high, too low, or about right?

- My time is worth it, and I would pay them if I needed to use 167.
- I don't see a correlation between traffic congestion and the rates
- Don't entirely understand the solid double white line where there is an HOV lane
- Why are tolls so high in the middle of the night? This tells me that the pricing is not rational
- Tolls should go down to nothing after a certain time, like 7:00 p.m.
- If people want to drive in the HOT lanes at all time, why not have them pay
- It's kind of liberating to be able to get in that lane and pass traffic
- I like having the option even if I don't exercise it
- One other selling feature is that people can't cut in and out on you
- I think rates are fine. I have a limit, but sleeping in and freedom are important benefits and make it worth it.
- Traffic is very stressful

Is there anything besides the rates that would keep you from using the HOT Lanes?

- If traffic flow is OK, I don't use the lanes.
- Some people at work ask why they would pay for it when they don't see traffic in the area getting better – already paying too much for transportation
- Information from WSDOT doesn't tell me where the money is going
- Important to know where money collected is being used
- Could progress reports be made available on the web site? Statistics would be interesting
- Sound Transit published Sounder ridership every week on their web site
- I would like WSDOT links on other places in the country where HOT lanes are being used
- Well-done web site
- More info on growth and traffic, how lane is being used
- Information could be provided by e-mail or in a monthly statement
- Will we have an opportunity to comment on transportation in general?

Other questions:

When you first heard about the HOT lanes concept, what was your reaction?

- Excited
- Doubted that I would need or want to use the lanes
- Skeptical that I would have to pay to use the lanes
- Skeptical about how it would work, but website helped alleviate some of my concerns

- My first reaction was, we already paid to have the pavement laid down and now we're paying again
- State government needs to work on its image

Do any of you have any concerns about equity issues for low income people?

- People receive benefits from commuters using HOT lanes
- Low income people might not commute during normal rush hours
- If there are poor people that want to use it, add a piece that the state could subsidize
- This question didn't cross my mind, but was listed in the pros and cons section of the WSDOT web site

HOT Lane Operational Issue Questions (10 minutes)

As you approach the HOT lanes, do you know what you are supposed to do? Meaning, how do you actually use them?

- Need to plan ahead and look ahead
- At first I thought the dotted areas were too short, but now they seem OK

Does anyone know when or where you can enter exit the HOT lanes?

- Yes

How did you figure that out the first time?

Do you have any troubles getting in or out of the lanes? What are they?

- Sometimes it's full and hard to get over
- When trying to get out, can be difficult

What do you think about the signage? Is it helpful?

Did the signs provide adequate information about how to use the lanes, the toll rate, etc.?

- Would be smart to put up signs on the left notifying people which exit is coming up
- "Illegal to cross the double white lines" sign doesn't work well on the right side of the road – should be in median signs with upcoming exit signs

Do you see the State Patrol enforcing the lanes? How often?

- I have seen them around 516
- Have seen a lot of them in the flow of traffic
- There are more disguised cars with civilian plates now

The lane is separated from other traffic by double white lines. Do you know what those white lines mean? Does anyone know about that?

- Need to communicate better what the double white line means – carpoolers think they are exempt. Add “at all times”
- Some people don’t know what they mean
- Some people think carpoolers can cross

Have you crossed over them to get in or out of the lane?

- Once I did cross the double white lines because traffic stopped

Do you better understand the lanes’ operations now? If so, was that as a result of driving them, researching more (i.e. going online, reading the newspaper) or because of tonight’s discussion?

Would knowing this information encourage you to try the HOT Lanes?

- Yes, I might be willing to try them
- People have to want it bad enough to spend five minutes
- If the transponder were free, then more people might use it
- If it were free, I wouldn’t get one

Are there any other reasons you would not try the HOT lanes?

Even if you don’t choose to use them yourself, do you think they help traffic?

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Does anyone have any additional thoughts that have not been captured?

- Add HOT lane to I-405
- Add HOT lane all the way from Auburn to Sumner
- Lower the \$30 limit to \$10 or \$15. Why \$30? Is this a convenience fee for using credit card?
- There needs to be an entrance to the HOT lanes between 212 and Central because traffic is bad

How do you think most people get their information about SR 167?

- Word of mouth
- Signs on freeway itself
- Media
- WSDOT website

Appendix G – Transcription notes for the low-income group

Welcome, Introduction and Ice-breaker (10-15 minutes)

- Are there any questions about how things will work tonight, or does anyone need clarification on anything?

Introductions

Name	City of residence	Time in area	Routes travelled to work/school
Dora Sheppard	Kent	25 years	167
Chuck Gonzales	Kent	4 years	167
Jenny Dougherty	Auburn	2 months	167 and I-405
Eric Sturgis	Tacoma	20 years	167 to Kirkland
Tracie Stone	Auburn	40+ years	Seattle & eastside on 167
Andrew Warren	Kent	3 ½ months	167 every day
Justin Chase	South Hill	12 years	167 into Kent
Matthew Miller	Auburn	1 ½ years	167, 405, I-5
Ryan Grulich	Edgewood	4 years	167 to Woodinville
Anton Sylvester	Kent	1 year	167
Ralph Lyon	Puyallup	30+ years	167

Introduction to the topic (15 minutes)

Most of you use SR 167 on a regular basis to commute to work or school. Is that correct? (Check around the room for head nods.)

On a typical work or school day:

How many of you drive alone?

- All but one raised hands

How many of you take transit or carpool?

- 3 indicated that they do sometimes

How many of you do some of each – drive or carpool for example?

- 3 raised hands

Do you typically travel during the so-called “rush hour” or at other times?

- Yes, all hours including during rush hour
- Mornings and night
- Some flexible schedules, some typical rush hour

How is the commute on SR 167? Good? Bad?

- Not bad
- Worse than other highways
- Small window of opportunity to hit SR 167 when there is a decent flow of traffic

Would you say it has gotten better in the last year? Worse? Why do you think that?
What's different?

- Worse
- Better
- Some questions about HOT lanes came up – speculation about how they work; a couple of participants noted that they have transponders and pay a toll to use the HOT lanes

How many of you are familiar with the HOT lanes?

- Some discussion about transponder use
- I was totally against the HOT lane use when they started it, but now I am in favor of it
- Should continue; creates bottleneck at Auburn where it ends
- Haven't seen any advertising or marketing for the transponders
- I got my transponder for free because of the Tacoma Narrows bridge (2 or 3)

Has anyone not heard about them prior to this focus group experience?

- A few participants indicated they had not heard of the HOT lanes

What do you think is the purpose of HOT lanes?

- Ease congestion
- There were so many single commuters that couldn't use the HOV lane
- Charge us more money

Overview of HOT Lanes (10 minutes)

Can I see a show of hands – how many of you currently have a *Good to Go!* account with a transponder in your windshield?

- 3 people – Eric, Ralph, and Tracie

General HOT lanes discussion (20-25 minutes)

Have you have used the HOT lane? Why or why not?

- HOT lanes are open to all 7 p.m. to 5 a.m.
- I time my commute so that I'm never in a hurry
- I don't have to be in until 9, but there is always something that needs to be done, so I could use it and get in earlier
- When I'm carpooling, I use it

- I'm not paying enough attention to notice it
- Traffic is bad no matter what
- It's a good idea but I don't think you should have to pay for it
- People drive slow in the HOT lanes
- I don't like/understand the tolling price changes
- I have never used it. I have heard some people talk about "Good to Go." If I commuted every day, it would be a benefit to me because it would get me to and from work faster
- It doesn't benefit me
- I don't think it would shorten my commute
- I don't use the HOT lane unless it's free.
- I use it all the time, because sometimes I have to be at work at a certain time. My only problem is that the lanes stop at Auburn.
- I use it every day going to work. I don't care what it costs because my commute is 59 miles each way.
- It seems like all the lanes are always backed up.
- I drive in the HOT lane because there's less standing water in it

How do you decide whether or not to use it?

- See above

Do you use it regularly or just sometimes? For example, daily, weekly, monthly – you tell me how you define "regularly". Mornings or afternoons?

- See above

Regular lanes – notice a difference?

Were any of you HOV/carpool lane users before the HOT lanes opened? Do you still use the lane as a carpooler? Why or why not?

Do you think traffic has changed since the HOT lane opened? If so, how much of this change do you think is due to the HOT lanes versus other factors?

- Worse
- Always bad
- Better than it was
- Gas prices improved traffic
- People started riding bus and train

Do you think the lanes on SR 167 are achieving the goals discussed in the video? Why or why not?

- I think more people need to be aware of it
- 8 miles of joy and then bottleneck
- I wonder what the long-term objectives are
- Relatively short distance, seems like benefits don't justify the costs

- Seems like a quick fix. As soon as it's saturated in the media, everyone will get the pass and it will go slow.

Transponder Use Questions (10 minutes)

Do you recall how you learned about getting a transponder?

- Read about it on the WSDOT website
- I look at the WSDOT website maps and cameras
- When Tacoma Narrows bridge opened, I saw signage
- I received a flyer when waiting in line
- I received mailings from WSDOT

Did you pay for it or get it for free?

- 1 free
- 2 paid for them, plus paid for shield

Why did you get a transponder?

- Shorter commute to work

How likely are you to continue using your transponder? Why? What benefits do you get?

For those of you who don't have a *Good to Go!* transponder, do you know how to get one? Do you have any ideas?

- Can go online

For those of you who got transponders, how did you get one? Walk us through the process. Was it easy? hard? What could be better?

- Pretty easy to do online
- Went to customer service center, asked questions, explained, set up account, took bank information for automatic payment.
- Went to customer service center, gave them money in cash rather than bank account information, they allow you to add money online.
- Why not offer transponders at DOL for those renewing licenses?

If you don't have a *Good to Go!* transponder, did you learn anything new that would increase the likelihood you'll opening an account and use the HOT lanes now?

- No, I don't need one
- As long as it's 50 cents
- It will save me twenty minutes of sleep
- I foresee tolls becoming a standard thing
- Will they make it so everyone has to have one?
- How do they enforce it? What do they do if you don't have a sticker?
- Price by zones rather than current pricing
- Put up signs "For more information, visit WSDOT web site"

- Fact that I can use it for Tacoma Narrows too
- Wish it went out to downtown Seattle and I-405
- Prices should fluctuate with gas prices so that when they're higher I'm not paying more
- Expand it!
- Non-transferability is a pain

Are there other reasons you wouldn't get a *Good to Go!* account and transponder?

- See above

Equity Related Questions (15 minutes)

What do you think about asking people to pay for a transponder? Do you think people should have to, or do you think they should be free? Why or why not?

- No, they shouldn't have to pay but not unreasonable
- If you're not working, why are you driving up and down the freeway?
- Yes, reasonable

What are your thoughts about toll rates. Would you say they are too high, too low, or about right?

- Costs more money when more cars using lanes
- This is the pilot, will tolls go up later?
- I would pay up to \$2.50
- Depends on what your time is worth
- Where is the money going? That's the bottom line

Now, for those who use the HOT lanes, what do you think about the rates?

- OK

For those who don't, are you aware of the rates? Do you think they are too high, too low, or about right?

- Should not charge people to use lane, 50 cents is a lot of money to some people
- It's a personal choice, so seems OK
- Does the money just sit there if you don't use it?

What would make it easier to get a transponder?

- Make available alongside Sounder passes
- Make available at post office or grocery store
- More signage with website information
- Allow people a test run before they commit to the full amount

How many people have to be at work at a certain time?

- Seven
- Not a very good insurance policy, but it is better than the alternative

HOT Lane Operational Issue Questions (10 minutes)

As you approach the HOT lanes, do you know what you are supposed to do? Meaning, how do you actually use them?

- Yes

Does anyone know when or where you can enter exit the HOT lanes?

- Yes

How did you figure that out the first time?

- Signs
- Watched other drivers

Do you have any troubles getting in or out of the lanes? What are they?

- Yes, there aren't enough places where you can cross the double white line
- Not enough space in general
- People don't allow enough space between vehicles
- Have to pay attention to where your exit is and get over
- Traffic problems by on and off ramps
- Double lines that you are not supposed to cross bother me
- Not enough time to get off the freeway once you reach the dotted lines

What do you think about the signage? Is it helpful?

Did the signs provide adequate information about how to use the lanes, the toll rate, etc.?

- Big huge signs like those before the Tacoma Narrows Bridge opened helped
- Directional signs are too small, font too small
- Concrete barriers instead of a double white line

Do you see the State Patrol enforcing the lanes? How often?

- Enforcement not adequate
- Patrol vehicles are there but you don't see them

The lane is separated from other traffic by double white lines. Do you know what those white lines mean? Does anyone know about that?

- People cross them every day in order to get out of the HOT lanes
- Consider putting HOT lane on the right hand side

Have you crossed over them to get in or out of the lane?

- Yes, sometimes

Do you better understand the lanes' operations now? If so, was that as a result of driving them, researching more (i.e. going online, reading the newspaper) or because of tonight's discussion?

- Yes, they're a good idea
- Tonight's discussion

Even if you don't choose to use them yourself, do you think they help traffic?

- Yes

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Does anyone have any additional thoughts that have not been captured?

- More carpool lanes in the state should be done like this
- HOT lane only seems worth it if you make a longer drive
- Need to add another lane south of Auburn
- Give examples of projects in other states
- Better explain where the money is going
- Companies could hand transponders out as incentives
 - Give businesses a tax break for promoting the transponders
 - Companies are cutting back and may not be interested

How do you think most people get their information about SR 167?

- Signs on SR 167