

Appendix 7(a): I-405 Managed Lanes History

The following description highlights the I-405 managed lanes studies and legislative actions that have led up to the Eastside Corridor Express Toll Lanes Study WSDOT is currently preparing. Reviewing these studies is not an apples-to-apples comparison. Although we have studied managed lanes since 2002, each study analyzed a unique set of operational assumptions, traffic projections and corridor improvements. Successive reports have further developed and modified previous study information.

2002: The EIS and Selected Alternative identified in the 2002 I-405 Corridor Record of Decision (ROD) included a four-foot buffer separating HOV and GP lanes, and allowed for future consideration of managed lanes operations on I-405, which could include up to two lanes in each direction.

Subsequent to the 2002 ROD, the legislature enacted the 2003 and 2005 funding packages that funded improvements along the I-405 Corridor. In addition, the legislature passed a number of provisos which have directed the department to study the implementation of managed lanes along the corridor.

2003/2004: We evaluated an I-405 corridor-wide managed lanes concept, which resulted in the 2004 Managed Lanes White Paper (last updated in April of 2007). This effort was undertaken to help determine whether a one or two lane system would work best for the corridor and also whether tolled lanes made sense on I-405. This study found that a two-lane system had the highest performance results for the corridor and that tolling those lanes resulted in even greater benefits. This study assumed all of the “I-405 Implementation Plan” improvements were constructed in each of the scenarios analyzed and therefore found a 2+ HOV toll free occupancy requirement performed adequately. (A copy can be found at Appendix 7b.)

2006/2007: Following the findings of this study, we took a closer look at express toll lanes on the northern part of I-405 as the legislature had funded an additional lane in this area. An initial study was completed in September 2007, which evaluated two express toll lanes between SR 520 and SR 522 and a single express toll lane from SR 522 to I-5. The analysis assumed a 2+ HOV toll free occupancy requirement and did not assume any of the other “Implementation Plan” improvements were in place.

The study found that the concept had merit and provided significant traffic and operational benefits. However as traffic grew beyond year 2014 projections, the study found that HOV 2+ toll-free occupancy limited the ability to manage the lanes effectively. In fact, beyond year 2020, traffic projections show the HOV 2+ vehicles filling up the express toll lanes, eliminating any ability to manage the lanes through pricing. (A copy can be found at Appendix 7c.)

2008: Based on the findings in the 2006/2007 study, we initiated a planning level traffic and revenue study to develop these concepts further in the SR 520 to I-5 area. This study assumed a 3+ HOV toll free occupancy requirement. This planning level study concluded that with a HOV 3+ toll-free occupancy requirement, the lanes can be a long term sustainable and reliable system. We reviewed these draft materials with WSDOT executives and received direction to continue studying the concept. These draft study materials were not formalized into a final report. (A copy can be found at Appendix 7d.)

In summary, all of the above studies have shown that managed lanes show merit, providing traffic operational benefits.

In May 2008, the legislature provided direction for our current study. The specific budget proviso language (ESSB 5352) states:

“By January 2010, the **department must prepare a traffic and revenue study for Interstate 405 in King county and Snohomish county that includes funding for improvements and high occupancy toll lanes**, as defined in RCW 47.56.401, for traffic management. The department must develop a plan to operate up to two high occupancy toll lanes in each direction on Interstate 405.

For the facility listed in (a) of this subsection, the department must:

- i. Confer with the mayors and city councils of jurisdictions in the vicinity of the project regarding the implementation of high occupancy toll lanes and the impacts that the implementation of these high occupancy toll lanes might have on the operation of the corridor and adjacent local streets;
- ii. Conduct public work sessions and open houses to provide information to citizens regarding implementation of high occupancy toll lanes and to solicit citizen views;
- iii. Regularly report to the Washington transportation commission regarding the progress of the study for the purpose of guiding the commission’s toll setting on the facility; and
- iv. **Provide a report to the governor and the legislature by January 2010.”**

To confer with mayors and city councils, WSDOT organized two committees, similar to the 2002 I-405 master planning process. We held four meetings with a city staff-level Interagency Working Group, and four with corridor mayors through an Executive Advisory Group. These groups helped WSDOT narrow the study to five options for evaluation.

The five options evaluate substantially different levels of managed lanes in the Eastside Corridor. While these project options improve traffic operations and work towards the managed lane vision, the complete Master Plan construction is still necessary to meet the traffic and mobility needs of the corridor.

Since May, we have engaged thousands of people in discussions about the managed lane concept through open houses, summer festivals, community briefings, a phone survey, online survey, and focus groups.