



NEWS

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LOS ANGELES IN FIRST PLACE WITH MORE FREEWAY CARPOOL LANES THAN ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

Los Angeles County now boasts the largest freeway carpool system in the world.

With over 130 miles of carpool lanes currently in use, and several hundred more planned by the year 2015, commuters can save one minute a mile during rush hours.

High Occupancy Vehicle lanes are those lanes marked with a "diamond" symbol and are especially dedicated for use by carpools, vanpools and buses. Vehicles in carpool lanes travel faster because carpool lanes move more people in fewer cars. They also improve congestion in regular freeway lanes since each vehicle using the carpool lanes removes two or more vehicles from regular freeway lanes. Carpool lane users also reduce the cost of their commute and can save as much as \$300 per month by ridesharing or taking transit.

"A typical freeway lane moves between 2,100 to 2,500 people per hour when traffic is flowing," said Jim de la Loza, MTA executive officer of regional transportation planning and development. "The carpool lane on the San Bernadino Freeway (I-10), or El Monte Busway as it is also called, moves more than 7,000 in peak hours. That's the equivalent of three regular freeway lanes."

Carpool lanes had their inception during the 1970's and experienced an explosive growth during the last decade thanks to the planning and funding efforts of the MTA and the construction efforts of Caltrans.

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Currently, Los Angeles has an extensive network of more than 500 miles of freeways.

"Since environmental costs and space considerations make it unlikely that there will be any significant additions to the highway system, carpool lanes offer a convenient travel alternative to moving more people faster in the same amount of space, at the lowest possible cost," de la Loza added.

Over the next 20 years the population in Los Angeles County is projected to increase by 35 percent.

"Carpooling is undoubtedly one of the most convenient and innovative solutions to freeway congestion," said de la Loza. "When you realize commuters can save one minute per mile or more, during peak periods, that's 40 minutes a day to and from work, for example. Not only are you saving time, but also parking fees, gasoline and maintenance costs for your car. As if that weren't enough, ridesharing can be a much friendlier and less stressful way to travel."

Over the next two years the MTA and Caltrans have plans to complete 10 more carpool lane projects in Los Angeles County. First on the list is a 7.6 mile stretch along the 405 Freeway from the Orange County Line to the intersection of the 710/Long Beach Freeway. The projected inauguration date is February 1998. In July, another 6.1 mile stretch also along the 405 will be opened, this one between the intersection of the 710/Long Beach freeway and the intersection of the 110/Harbor freeway.

"By the year 2015, Los Angeles County's HOV lane system is projected to serve more than a million person trips each day," said de la Loza. "It will support an infrastructure that includes HOV access ramps, park-and-ride lots, and transit stations where commuters can connect with buses, shuttles and trains. It will continue to be a key component in a congestion management strategy that addresses all options for moving people, goods and services in the most cost-effective manner possible."