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County's HOV Lanes Experience 60 Percent Growth

(Nov. 30, 2001) In the past four years, Los Angeles County's carpool lanes have experienced a 60 percent growth – with a peak hour use that is above the statewide standard on 87 percent of the area's HOV lanes.

While carpooling nationwide declined, ridesharing has increased in Los Angeles with HOV lanes now carrying some 250,000 vehicles each day, Countywide Planning chief Jim de la Loza reported to the Board at Thursday's meeting.

"We currently have 388 miles of HOV lanes on 13 major freeways," de la Loza said. "It's the most extensive HOV program in the country and represents a significant investment for the county and the MTA."

HOV lane data gathered by Caltrans show that motorists can save up to 30 minutes of drive time in the HOV lanes where speeds average 53 to 55 mph, compared with mixed-flow lanes where speeds average 36 to 41 mph.

In a telephone survey of 3,273 residents concluded earlier this year, 88 percent indicated support for HOV lanes, while 89 percent felt they should be expanded to "almost every freeway." Seventy-four percent believe HOV lanes are a strong incentive for people to carpool, although 42 percent thought they were underused.

Countywide Planning now will prepare a final report on HOV effectiveness for presentation to the Board next spring. With this information in hand, the Board is expected to develop HOV policies to guide MTA future investments in HOV lanes.

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