

**8. FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS**

The I-40 High Occupancy Vehicle/Congestion Management Study has determined that there is enough HOV demand by the year 2025 to support a 100-mile HOV network. While it may not be realistic to believe that the cities of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill can implement an extensive HOV lane system in such a relatively short time, it is important to develop the planning framework and funding plans for this strategic congestion management effort.

Given the strong projected demand and the continuing growth in regional traffic congestion anticipated in the Triangle Region, this 100-mile network should serve as the “blue-print” for a long-range future HOV system. The plan also recognizes the needed regional components of a major highway and arterial improvement program, a TDM program and the high capacity transit investment. The study has determined a high HOV demand in some sections of I-40 for interim years 2005 and 2015. This demand exists in spite of a number of new highway projects targeted to come on line in the near future. The network needed to handle this interim HOV demand is smaller and indicates where the more immediate needs exist. These are the HOV segments that should move forward first.

The first step towards implementation is to include all or portions of the HOV network in short-, mid- and long-range transportation programs. The NCDOT along with CAMPO, DCHC, TTA and other transportation planning agencies should work together to confirm the overall congestion management “blue print,” including it in master plans and transportation improvement plans. It is imperative that each agency within the region champion the HOV “cause” now. HOV treatment has been proven itself as an appropriate tool for addressing current and forecasted congested conditions in numerous other locations across the country. This study indicates that HOV facilities are an appropriate strategy for managing congestion in this region as well.

It is very important that the first I-40 HOV project to move forward is considered a success by the public. This project has to be seen as an immediate success; otherwise future investments in extensions could be questioned for effectiveness and thus be lost as a transportation tool for some time to come.

Not surprisingly, the study determined that the highest priority segment for HOV on I-40 is in Research Triangle Park between NC 147 and I-540 and implementing this segment can generate a project success. However, the study also concluded that the need is not simply to serve RTP but to serve trips passing through RTP. Therefore, it is recommended that more detailed environmental analysis be conducted for HOV facilities between NC 86 near Chapel Hill and US 1/US 64 near Cary. The proposed study corridor limits allow for a more focused evaluation of trips destined to and through the RTP. These limits also provide for reasonable NEPA coverage that addresses logical termini and segmentation issues.

The HOV concept should not be studied in isolation. Other elements can contribute to the potential success of HOV and should be studied in conjunction with it. At a minimum, these studies should include park-and-ride lots that support the proposed HOV lanes and bus service that could take advantage of HOV lane travel-time savings.

The HOV concept can also potentially “buy time” for the NCDOT. By improving the efficiency of a facility, some transportation improvements could be delayed or eliminated



## **I-40 High Occupancy Vehicle / Congestion Management Study**

altogether.

As the saying goes, “You cannot build your way out of congestion.” It is important to look at options that better manage the transportation resources that exist. HOV is a tool that meets that objective. By moving more people in fewer cars, the overall transportation system can become more efficient. Moving forward with the next steps to implementation can make HOV lane a reality for the region.