

ATLANTA REGIONAL MANAGED LANE SYSTEM PLAN

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES

PREPARED FOR

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Technical Memorandum 14: Communications and Public Attitudes

Prepared for:

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A. Purpose

The managed lanes system under study for metro Atlanta has the potential to be bigger and bolder than any other managed lanes system in the country. As a result, the effects will be felt locally and regionally. The public must be educated on managed lanes concepts. The goals of the system need to be clearly defined to create a program identity. A solid and consistent message should be communicated about managed lanes – what they are, what they do, and how they affect the highway user in the metropolitan Atlanta region.

The concept of managed lanes and tolling are relatively new to the Atlanta region. An education campaign will be required to promote the managed lanes concept, its implication and its benefits. The vast scope of the Managed Lanes System Plan means that it affects a variety of geographic areas and touches upon an array of demographics. The “public” represents a broad spectrum of individuals with different needs. To reach these groups an assortment of public involvement techniques may be employed. This plan will develop strategy guidelines to help identify methods that are geared towards a range of the audiences. Tailored outreach efforts may help to produce active and meaningful participation from selected groups.

The education approach is regional in nature and will canvas the Atlanta metropolitan area. The potential users of the managed lanes reside throughout the region are diverse in characteristics. The purpose of education is to develop a general public understanding about the managed lanes concept. Media outlets, businesses, local governments, and civic organizations are all potential resources to use to disseminate the message. Clearly defining what managed lanes are and what they do is vital.

Lessons learned from the implementation of managed lanes elsewhere in the U.S. will help to prepare an effective public attitude assessment approach for the Atlanta region. Understanding that there will be common themes to address based on what other managed lanes systems have faced will allow for preparation to answer these important questions. Acknowledging that similar questions will arise will help gear the outreach strategy to educate the targeted audience.

Emphasis should be placed on connecting with the local groups and people that will be directly impacted by managed lanes. Gaining knowledge of the public’s potential reception to managed lanes will be an important input into the decision process. While the system is regional, the direct effects will be experienced at the local level. Identifying the groups that will bear the most direct impacts will be essential, and their involvement will be fundamental to create a project whereby the public feels ownership.

B. The Message

The goal of the public outreach effort is to provide the general public a basic understanding of managed lanes – what they do, how they work, and the benefits they provide. The purpose of managed lanes is to use the existing transportation system more efficiently in order to reduce congestion and improve air quality. Tolls help to regulate the use of the managed lanes. By pricing the managed lanes through tolls, the amount of vehicles entering the system can be managed in a way to ensure the speed of traffic is maintained at a rate that meets the operating agency's goals.

Managed lanes provide an option to avoid traffic congestion and this characteristic can be marketed as “congestion insurance”. The managed lane system does not have to be used everyday, but when the need arises to avoid congestion delay, it is in place to allow travelers to reach their destination quickly and reliably. The tolling would be fast and convenient without toll booths to interrupt travel. Managed lanes provide a travel time guaranteed, which is a premium value-added service beyond what is currently provided on corridors through tax dollars.

Education

The managed lane education campaign presents an opportunity to provide the public with important facts so they can understand how a managed lane system provides another option to address Atlanta's transportation needs. Many people are unaware of transportation facilities' costs and how they are paid for. The current state of transportation funding is not common knowledge. By setting the stage of what the funding conditions are, the costs of congestion, and the need to develop a long-term, comprehensive solution, the public is able to understand better the complex issues at hand.

Questions that can be answered include:

- What is the cost of congestion?
- Where do your tax dollars currently go?
- How did the existing system get built?
- What is the current state of transportation funding?
- How do tolls help highway system performance?

Some topics that can be used during the education campaign include:

- Explain that more “free” lanes do not solve congestion in the long run
- Explain the increased construction costs, right-of-way, cost of delay, cost of inflation
- Demonstrate how the concept fits into the regional plan
- Illuminate the benefits of tolling

Managed Lanes Characteristics and Public Perception

Managed lanes provide an opportunity to collect revenue from people who choose to utilize the managed lanes system. Pricing the lanes is a means of managing the amount of traffic in the facility allowing desirable speeds at all times of the day. There will be

people who will never use the managed lanes system. Even though these people will not pay for it, they will, in fact, receive benefits from the managed lanes as well. These benefits come from the people that leave the general purpose lanes to go to the managed lanes. The decreased congestion resulting from those who choose to leave the general purpose lanes for the managed lanes frees up capacity for those who remain. In the end, the entire system benefits through more efficient use of the system.

Funds generated by tolling will likely not cover the entire cost of construction and the ongoing maintenance and operations of the managed lanes system. The revenue collected from tolls goes to pay off the debt for construction and is used to maintain and operate the system. Some systems that have not had the burden of debt service payments have used toll revenue to help pay for transit in the managed lanes. Once decisions are made on funding sources, an understanding of where the revenue will be used will be clarified.

Enforcement of the managed lanes system is important to convey so that the public understands that violators will be fined and those that are paying for the premium service will not be negatively affected by the violators taking away capacity.

Besides the toll booths on State Route 400 (GA 400), citizens in the metro Atlanta area are not accustomed to tolling. In general, tolls may have stigmas that will need to be overcome during the education campaign. These perceptions include:

- General suspicion of tolls
- Mistrust of the tolling agency authority
- Fear that managed lanes are “anti-transit”
- Belief that the facility is already paid for

Transparent accounting and public announcements of toll collections amounts and expenditure should help to develop a public trust.

C. Past Experience

The metropolitan Atlanta region can benefit from the experience of other managed lanes systems that have been planned and implemented throughout the country. Success factors from other projects include the use of visualizations through computer simulated models that demonstrate the managed system in operation and the use of examples that demonstrate successful existing systems. Both of these methods help individuals and focus groups become more receptive of the managed lanes concept. For example, during the focus group sessions for I-394 in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, a video was shown of California’s SR 91 toll project, which made a very favorable impression to the group and was effective in generating confidence that a HOT lane concept could work.

The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) published a study (Compilation of Public Opinion Data on Tolls: A Synthesis of Highway Practice, 2008) that summarizes and analyzes public opinion on tolling and road pricing across the United States and internationally. The following is an excerpt from the report:

“Although there are many potential sources of error, surveys that are done according to sound scientific methods can provide highly accurate insights into public opinions. Data in this synthesis were analyzed qualitatively to extract eight broad themes in public opinion results. These eight themes were consistent regardless of the public polled, the type of road pricing project, region of the United States, or other potentially discriminating factors.

1. The public wants to see the value. When a concrete benefit is linked to the idea of tolling or charging for road usage (e.g., reducing congestion on a specific highly congested facility) as opposed to tolling in the abstract, public support is higher. It is important to articulate benefits as they pertain to individuals, to communities, and to society as a whole.

2. The public wants to react to tangible and specific examples. When public opinion is measured in the context of a specific project as opposed to a general principle, the level of support is higher. In the former context, road pricing is perceived of as a “choice” rather than as punishment. This is the likely reason that low-income individuals generally support tolling and road pricing. Regardless of their economic circumstances, they appreciate having the choice of paying to use uncongested lanes or roadways.

3. The public cares about the use of revenues. Use of tolling revenues is a key determinant to the acceptance or rejection of tolling and road pricing. Revenues should be linked to specific uses not to specific agencies. Support tends to be higher when revenues are used for highway infrastructure, public transit improvements, or more rapidly completing necessary construction.

4. The public learns from experience. Support from a majority of citizens often cannot be expected from the outset. When the opportunity to use a tolled facility already exists, public support is higher than when it is simply a possibility for the future. Building support is a long-term, continuous process that should not stop after implementation. The public uses knowledge and available information. When opinion is informed by objective explanation of the conditions and mechanics of tolling and its pros and cons, public support is higher than when there is no context for how tolling works. This factor may explain why members of the public may express negative opinions about tolling or road pricing as theoretical constructs but will use a priced facility when it opens.

6. The public believes in equity but wants fairness. Public opposition of tolling is higher where there is perceived unfairness. This aspect relates to why having an alternative cost-free route is so important or why support is generally higher for tolling new facilities than for tolling existing facilities. The public needs to be reassured that the government is not treating them unfairly. In terms of equity, there is general agreement that decisions to use or not use a priced facility revolve around people’s needs and preferences. Everyone, regardless of who they are or where they live, benefits from having a choice.

7. The public wants simplicity. When the mechanics of tolling or other user fee programs are simple and clear and therefore easy to understand, public support is higher than in situations where there is a high level of complexity in how pricing should be applied. Opposition is generally lower for the simplest proposals and increases as proposals become more complex.

8. The public favors tolls over taxes. Although there are isolated instances of groups preferring tax increases over tolling, most individuals prefer tolling over taxes. With toll revenues, the public is more assured of getting their fair share, because revenues are generated and applied locally. Also, tolling represents freedom of choice; only users pay.

These themes can be thought of as lessons learned in garnering support for or raising opposition to tolling and road pricing initiatives.”

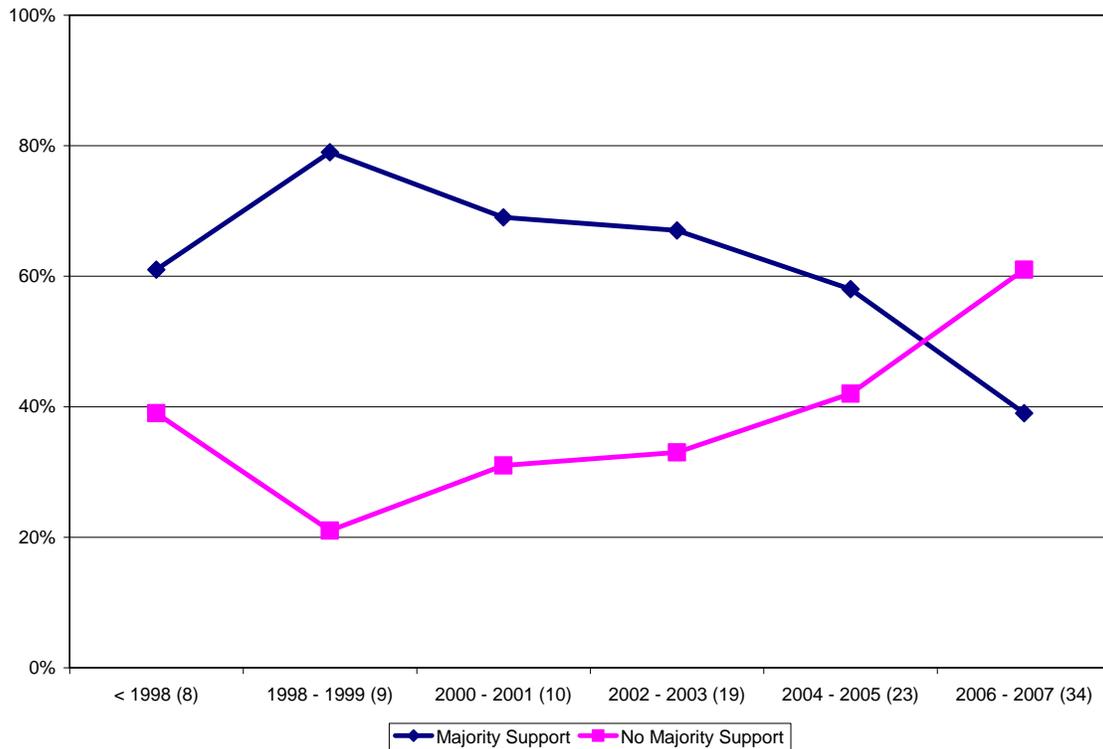
The NCHRP review indicates that in the aggregate there is majority support for tolling and road pricing. Among all the surveys presented, “56% indicated support for tolling or road pricing concepts (see Table 1). Opposition was encountered in 31% of cases, and mixed results (i.e., no majority support or opposition) occurred in 13% of cases. The level of aggregate support for road pricing contrasts sharply with that found for tax-related initiatives. The aggregate level of support for tax-related initiatives was 27%, with 60% opposed and 13% mixed.”

Table 1: Public Opinion on Pricing Versus Tax-related Initiatives

	Tolling or Road Pricing	Tax-Related Initiative
Majority Support	57%	27%
Majority Opposition	31%	60%
Neither Majority	13%	13%
Total Percent	100%	100%
Total Cases	103	15

Source: National Cooperative Highway Research Program

Additionally, the study analyzed trends in support and opposition. While the sample size in any given year was “quite small, the results show a rise in support for pricing in the mid-1990s and a drop-off in support starting in 2002. Support averaged 70 percent of those cases before 2002 and subsequent to 2002, support averaged 49 percent of cases. In addition, public opinion was much more polarized before 2003.”

Figure 1: Trends in support versus opposition to pricing

Source: National Cooperative Highway Research Program

The NCHRP created a graph that shows the number of case in parenthesis on the horizontal axis and their analysis illustrates that the number of case before and after 2002 “differ significantly...with 27 public opinion polls or surveys before 2002 and 76 afterward.” The NCHRP attributes the increase in the number of surveys to “the growing interest in tolling and road pricing as solutions for financing or congestion challenges.” To explain the decreasing support levels, they explain that “the drop-off in support may be associated with the type of pricing that was referenced in the public opinion research” and that surveys in the mid-1990s to 2002 were associated with traditional toll roads, express toll lanes, and HOT lanes” whereas “in more recent years, cordon tolling and PPP projects have been brought into the public sphere.” In summary, there are more studies being conducted and these studies are examining a variety of potential strategies that may not have the public’s favor.

In order to analyze public support, NCHRP researched trends across individual projects under the caveats that the “surveys [were] conducted by different polling or survey agencies of different survey populations, representing different sample sizes and sampling approaches and the manner in which the questions were asked was not always the same across the surveys.” Table 2 demonstrates this collection of individual project’s public opinion. Their research provides interesting findings. “For a toll road that had yet to be built—the Foothill South Extension—public opinion was generally very stable across years—with support ranging from 54% to 59%. Clear majority support for the express toll lanes and HOT lanes projects continued after the roads began operation (SR 91, I-15, I-394). In Utah, where HOT lanes had not yet been built, support increased nearly 5 percentage points to the level of the support for the operating HOT

lane projects.” It is important to note the stable public opinion after operation of the managed lanes begins.

The experiences of other managed lanes systems across the country and internationally show the importance of a lasting and consistent education outreach effort in absence of operating managed lanes. “In London, support for area charging increased after the project was implemented. In New York City without area charging in operation, support decreased over time, presumably as the issue has been discussed more and more in the public sphere. Without the actual experience with congestion charging as in London, public opinion is formed based on information (even misinformation) that is shared and gained in the public sphere.” Providing evidence from the experience of existing managed lanes is important to provide accurate information to the public sphere.

Table 2: Public Opinion Trends for Individual Projects

Project	Majority Support	Majority Opposition	No Majority
Orange County California — Foothill South Extension			
1999—Transportation corridor agencies	75%	-	-
2001 ^a —Transportation corridor agencies	54%	-	39%
2001—Public Policy Institute of California	59%	26%	15%
2002 ^a —Transportation corridor agencies	58%	36%	5%
2003 ^a —Transportation corridor agencies	53%	-	-
2004 ^a —Transportation corridor agencies	57%	37%	-
2005 ¹ —Transportation corridor agencies	57%	37%	6%
Orange and Los Angeles Counties—SR 91 ETL			
1995—California Polytechnic State University	62% - 68%	-	-
1996—California Polytechnic State University	60% - 82%	-	-
1996–1997—California Polytechnic State University	60% - 81%	-	-
1999—California Polytechnic State University	50% - 75%	-	-
San Diego, California — I-15 HOT Lanes			
1996—SANDAG	66%	-	-
1997—Wave 1: San Diego State University Foundation for SANDAG	56% - 95%	-	-
1998—Wave 2: San Diego State University Foundation for SANDAG	64% - 94%	-	-
1999—Wave 4: San Diego State University Foundation for SANDAG	58% - 88%	-	-
1999—Wave 5: San Diego State University Foundation for SANDAG	70% - 88%	-	-
2001—SANDAG	66%	28%	-
2005— SANDAG	58%	14%	-
Minneapolis, Minnesota — I-394 MnPASS HOT Lanes			
2004—Humphrey Institute Univ. of MN	63%	27%	10%
2005—Humphrey Institute Univ. of MN	59%	29%	12%
2006—Humphrey Institute Univ. of MN	65%	22%	13%

Project	Majority Support	Majority Opposition	No Majority
Salt Lake City, Utah — HOT Lanes			
2005—Utah Department of Transportation	56%	-	-
2006—Utah Department of Transportation	61%	-	-
London, England — Area Charging			
1999—Government Office for London	53%	36%	11%
2006—Transport for London	60%	-	-
New York City — Area Charging			
2006—Tri-State Transportation Campaign	44%	45%	12%
2007—Quinnipiac University Poll (January)	31%	62%	7%
2007—Quinnipiac University Poll (June)	31%	52%	17%
Statewide New Jersey — Lease to Private Interests			
2007—AAA Mid-Atlantic Chapter (February)	20%	56%	24%
2007—Rutgers–Eagleton Poll (August)	-	61%	-
Statewide Pennsylvania — Lease to Private Interests			
2007—Quinnipiac University Poll (May)	44%	42%	14%
2007—Quinnipiac University Poll (August)	40%	47%	13%

^a Public opinion after pro/con arguments for extending the highway have been presented to respondents as part of the interview. SANDAG = San Diego Association of Governments; ETL = express toll lane, meaning all vehicles in the managed lanes pay a toll. Trucks are not permitted in the managed lanes.

Source: National Cooperative Highway Research Program

D. Metro Atlanta Public Opinion Data

The NCHRP review contains research specific to the metropolitan Atlanta region. The following summarizes their research.

Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority (2004)

High Occupancy Toll Lanes and Truck Only Facilities: Potential for Implementation in the Atlanta Region

In 2004, the Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority used eight focus groups, with a total of 113 individuals, to assess the feasibility for HOT lanes and Truck Only Toll facilities. The participants were commuters and express bus riders on major Atlanta area highways. The study found that “participants did not believe that it would be possible to guarantee travel time in a HOT lane, even through the use of dynamic tolls. They are skeptical regarding the travel-time guarantee, but most would use the lane in a time of need. A number of individuals believed that HOT lanes did nothing to address the real problem of congestion on the region’s highways. To relieve the problem, it was necessary to take cars off the road through transit improvements. They also believed HOT lane conversions would discourage carpooling. Conversion from HOV-2 to HOV-3 was not supported—individuals believed it was simply too difficult to find an additional person to carpool and therefore HOT lanes penalized HOV users. Individuals believed that HOT lanes should only be considered if they pay for themselves. Most participants cited transit expansion and/ or operation as a potential use for HOT lane-generated tolls.”

Georgia Department of Transportation (2006)

Value Pricing on the I-75 HOV/ BRT Project

In 2006, the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) survey included individuals 18 years of age or older, residing in Cherokee and Cobb Counties, with telephone service in home, and travel target road segment at least once per week. The sample size was 1,500 with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

“In May, a survey conducted for the Georgia DOT to assess the opinions of individuals in Cherokee and Cobb counties who drove the I-75 corridor between I-285 and I-575 found that respondents were equally divided on whether the HOT concept (i.e., charging vehicles with only one occupant to use the new lanes) was a “good idea” or a “bad idea” (49% each). Reasons mentioned for believing it was a good idea were: “people in carpools should be rewarded” (41%) and “it will reduce the flow of traffic” (34%). Individuals tended to believe it was a bad idea because “it was not fair” (43%) and “they were just opposed to tolls” (31%). When asked about HOT3+; that is, charging vehicles with one or two individuals, support decreased and opposition increased significantly (37% and 61%, respectively). When asked about HOT4+ (i.e., charging vehicles with one, two, or three individuals), support decreased again to 29% and opposition increased to 69%. Finally, respondents were asked their opinions about express toll lanes (i.e., regardless of how many occupants, all vehicles tolled). Support for express toll lanes was higher than for HOT3+ and HOT4+ and opposition was less (38% and 59%, respectively). Respondents were asked “if you decided to pay the toll, what is the one reason that would most often influence you.” The top reason selected among a provided list was “to reduce overall travel time” (49%), followed by “to reduce the amount of time in heavy traffic” (19%). Thirteen percent said they would never decide to use the lanes.”

Georgia DOT (2006)

SR 400 Managed Lanes Study

In 2006, the Georgia DOT survey included adults in Cherokee, Cobb, DeKalb, Forsyth, Fulton, and Gwinnett counties with telephone in home and using target road segment at least once per week. The sample size was 1,800 and the margin of error was 2.5 percentage points.

“In July, a survey was commissioned by the Georgia DOT to assess the opinions of individuals who drive the SR 400 corridor between SR 20 and downtown Atlanta regarding proposed managed lane scenarios. Respondents were divided on their opinions of the HOT lane concept (i.e., single drivers using the HOV lane for a fee), with 48% saying it was a “good idea” and 49% saying it was a “bad idea.” Reasons individuals supported the concept were “it will help reduce traffic” (42%) and “encourages carpooling” (31%). Reasons individuals were opposed were “it is not fair” (39%) and “in general opposed tolling” (26%). When respondents were subsequently asked their opinions of HOT3+, support decreased and opposition rose (36% and 60%, respectively). When respondents were queried about HOT4+, support decreased and opposition increased even more (24% and 72%, respectively). Finally, respondents were asked for their opinions about express toll lanes (i.e., regardless of how many occupants, all vehicles tolled). Support for express toll lanes was higher than for HOT3+ and HOT4+ and opposition was less (37% and 57%, respectively).”

Applied Research Center at Georgia State University (2002)

In 2002, the Applied Research Center at Georgia State University surveyed residents of the 13-county metro area. The study had a sample size of 502.

“In the fall, an Applied Research Center Regional Issues Poll found that only one-third (32%) of metro Atlantans would support an increase in Georgia’s motor fuel tax to fund roadway projects. Sixty-three percent would not support an increase and 5% did not know. The poll is conducted quarterly by the Applied Research Center at Georgia State University. The article noted that even though the state’s gas tax was the lowest in the nation (at 7.5 cents per gallon vs. the national average of 20 cents), there was little support for an increase. Of those who supported an increase, most (65%) said that it should be increased by 10 cents—rather than 15 cents, 20 cents, or something else. Few respondents (17%) believed the fuel tax should be decreased; most (80%) believed it should be kept the same. Georgia’s constitution limits the gas tax to roads and roadway improvements; however, 59% of respondents said they would support a constitutional change to allow the money to be used for mass transit.”

**Additional Metro Atlanta Public Opinion Data
Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority (2007)**

I-75 South Managed Lanes

A total of 1,210 valid interviews were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. The I-75 South Managed Lanes Study was intended to evaluate the proper combination and configuration of managed lanes along the I-75 South corridor from I-285 south to SR 16 in Butts County. Managed lanes are proposed to accommodate the expected increase in travel demand, provide a corridor with guaranteed mobility referred to also as “congestion insurance”, and provide a guideway for the increasingly popular commuter express bus services operating in the corridor. The assessment of potential managed lanes users’ willingness to pay tolls in exchange for improved transportation services was accomplished through stated preference (SP) research. Telephone-based stated preference surveys were conducted to obtain feedback from the public. The SP analysis was designed to provide behavioral values for use in modeling traffic and revenue impacts of alternative strategies in the proposed managed lanes. SP surveying was conducted from April to June of 2007. The results of the SP analysis were applied within ARC’s travel demand model calibrated along the I-75 South Corridor between I-285 and SR 16. Based on the combined assessment of traffic and toll revenue, system analysis, toll technology, and capital costs, Alternative A-3 Express Toll Lanes (Cars Only) was selected as the preferred alternative for the corridor and is considered to be the alternative that provides the most efficient use of public funds, due to its revenue potential versus its estimated costs.

E. Example Strategies to Promote Understanding

The following presents key issues and concerns common to managed lanes systems as outlined in case studies catalogued by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), *Marketing the Managed Lanes Concept*, from April 2002.

I-10, Katy Freeway – Houston

The Katy Freeway project came about due to the presence of surplus unused capacity after the HOV2+ system was converted into an HOV3+ system. Under this system, HOV2 vehicles would be able to ride in the HOV lanes for a set price, increasing efficiency of the HOV system. A series of focus groups were established to receive public opinion on the idea. One group was composed of the general public while the other was designed to be a socioeconomic and demographic cross section of the people that use the Katy Freeway.

Since Houston has several toll roads in place already, most of the Katy Freeway user's member groups felt that tolling to maximize utilization of capacity was acceptable. In general, the group members thought that pricing should be established by distance traveled as opposed to a flat rate, similar to the toll road systems in the region. This group also did not foresee social equity as a problem. Paying to utilize the HOV lanes was seen as a premium service the roadway would offer and not as state induced double taxation. This group desired to see revenues from the tollway placed into transit programs along the corridor. In the end, the members of this focus group decided that the implementation of a HOT program would not be as beneficial to the corridor as the enhancement of bus service and other HOV improvements.

The general public group came to some varying conclusions. The concept of double taxation was a major concern. For this group, the project did not benefit everyone, since HOV3+ users would have to struggle with more congestion in the HOV lane. This group also did not feel that implementing a pricing project on the corridor would be worthwhile. They recommended that the money be used to improve the general purpose lanes or transit systems in the corridor.

The results from these focus groups were instrumental in the development of a public outreach program for the eventual implementation of the Katy Freeway HOT system in 1998.

Portland, Oregon

The issue of tolls was considered to be a controversial issue in the Portland area. A citizen committee was established as a decision making body to provide a creditable and independent voice to the community.

The Oregon Department of Transportation and Metro Regional Services, an elected governmental body, joined together to conduct a pre-project study of pricing in the Portland metropolitan area. The three-year study period ended in June 1999, resulting in several recommendations. The purpose of the study was to determine whether peak-period pricing was an appropriate tool to manage congestion in the Portland metropolitan area. A technical advisory committee and a citizens' task force were formed to assist with the study. Together these two groups established goals for the study that included:

- undertaking a technical evaluation of peak-period pricing as a tool to manage transportation demand and congestion,

- developing a process for increasing public and political understanding of the concept,
- determining whether peak-period pricing is a desirable traffic management tool to reduce peak-period congestion in the context of existing or proposed traffic management programs, and
- determining whether support can be generated for a demonstration project and, if so, the parameters of a pilot project.

The study considered all pricing options that were time-of-day or location-specific options rather than focusing on a particular project. The study eventually concluded that peak-period pricing is a desirable tool that can be used to manage congestion and raise revenues. The citizens' task force recommended that peak-period pricing be considered whenever new capacity is added to a highway. The concept was subsequently added to the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan.

The study recognized the need to increase public awareness and political understanding of the concept and therefore initiated the most extensive public outreach program of any national pilot project.

The Traffic Relief Options study was somewhat unique. First, the name that was chosen for the study was different. Choosing the terminology "relief options" was a way of presenting the concept in a positive light, rather the negative connotation of "congestion pricing." Second, the study was supported by groups of people rather than a set study team. The project utilized the following groups:

- a visionary citizens' task force with an interest in the topic, but no preconceived bias;
- a project management group (PMG) that discussed policy issues before they moved forward in the decision-making process;
- a technical advisory committee (TAC) of technical staff representing local governmental jurisdictions and key agencies, public and private environmental groups, and the trucking industry, that provided input and reviewed all reports prior to submission to the task force;
- the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) that serves as the policy board for the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Portland area;
- the Metro Council; and
- the Oregon Transportation Commission.

The citizens' task force was the group vested with decision making. It also controlled information flow on the project. The task force was designed as a citizen committee because pricing is a controversial issue, and the study leaders at the Metro Council felt that a citizen committee would provide an independent and credible voice to the community resulting in a greater understanding of the concept.

In the first year, public education was focused on small, targeted audiences such as the trucking industry, business leaders, elected officials, and media representatives. Later efforts reached out more to the general public through workshops, media, speakers' bureau, and newsletters.

Each stage of the public involvement effort provided results and direction to the study. Since the study began with a broad range of pricing schemes for several corridors, the public input process was also used to narrow down options. The concept was described as one tool to be used in congestion management for the region. Later during the study, funding became an issue, and pricing was also presented as a way to generate revenue.

To determine the range of attitudes related to pricing and to determine how well the message was being communicated, the study used:

- Two interview sessions - stakeholders included business leaders; elected officials; local government staff; and community, transportation, and other interest group representatives.
- Two sets of focus groups - One group in each year represented the general public and the other group was comprised of people that were users of major corridors during the peak period.
- Five study workshops - Representatives of many of the same stakeholders that were interviewed and the workshops were used to provide information about the pricing concept, gather opinion about possible specific projects, and glean a sense of direction for the project based on public opinion.

The study successfully piggy-backed with other events to promote the project. For example, six regional workshops were conducted in conjunction with presentation of the Regional Transportation Plan. Participants watched a slide show, engaged in small group discussions, and answered a questionnaire. The participants were asked to select three possible options to be further examined in the study. They assessed the advantages and disadvantages, in their own opinions, of each alternative option and suggested possible uses for toll revenues.

Questionnaires were also handed out at public workshops, speakers' bureau events, in conjunction with the traveling exhibit, and were available on the project website.

A freight workshop opened dialogue between the study staff and the trucking industry. The workshop included a slide presentation, discussion session, and a questionnaire. This workshop proved extremely valuable by including a segment of the business community that typically does not participate in transportation decision making, yet has significant interest in the outcome.

Several key findings emerged:

- Pricing needs to be presented as a premium service choice.
- Naming a project is important, as mentioned earlier.
- Relating a specific project is more effective than promoting a broad-based concept.
- Forming a quick response team to be "on call" and act as a credible spokesperson for the study is effective.
- Identifying project champions is necessary.
- Constructive in-depth dialogue leads to more support than superficial exposure such as television polls or questionnaires without explanation.

- Educating planning professionals about pricing as a tool for land-use planning is desirable.
- Pricing would only be acceptable on added or new capacity facilities; pricing on current facilities was seen as double taxation.
- Assuring that the public understand early on that tolling will be fast and convenient, (i.e. electronic toll collection) is important.
- Communicating an enforcement plan is helpful.
- Making sure that adjacent neighborhoods will not be affected with diversion traffic is required.
- Researching equity issues must be accomplished as soon as possible in the study process.
- Approaching all potential allies or opponents must be done early in the process.
- Developing a clear, concise message that is easy to understand is important.
- Explaining how revenues resulting from the pricing project will be used is important.
- Selecting, developing, and training project or concept champions that are not from governmental agencies creates acceptance and credibility with the public.
- Cultivating meaningful media relations through scheduled briefings that deliver current and concise information is required.
- Using focus groups and stakeholder interviews to help with message development and definition is helpful.
- Making sure that pricing is viewed as one option in congestion management is effective.

Colorado Value Express Lane Feasibility Study (2001)

This report sought to determine possible public reaction to the conversion of HOV to HOT lanes in the Denver area along US 36 and I-25. A telephone survey of 446 licensed drivers found that approximately 50 percent of respondents support the idea that you can pay to avoid traffic delay. They place value on the travel time reliability and avoidance of irritating traffic when in a rush.

Additionally, the study sought stakeholder opinions on the implementation of a HOV to HOT conversion. Employers, municipalities, law enforcement officials, interest groups, and others with a value in the corridor were sought out for their opinion on this issue. These interviews resulted in marginal support for value express lanes, fearing the reduction in funding from long-term solutions with greater impact. Issues of social equity were common complaints, with the concern of double taxation an issue. Respondents also were worried the HOV to HOT conversion would reduce carpools and slow transit along the corridor. Support for the value express lanes was found to increase in the situation that the lane conversion was a piece of a greater long-term comprehensive plan. Despite these arguments, many of the focus group participants that opposed the implementation of value express lanes stated that if they were implemented they would probably utilize them at least occasionally.

F. Summary of Managed Lanes Experience

The past experience of other system reveals typical citizen and policy maker questions and concerns, these include issues related to:

- Double taxation, the idea that the roads have been already paid for with public funds
- Effect on transit system utilization
- Effect on carpoolers
- Fairness of charging tolls on public roads
- Issues relating to where the revenue stream from tolls goes
- Confusion about how toll rates are calculated and adjusted in dynamic tolling systems
- Concern that people will cheat the system
- Temporary fix to the larger scale congestion problems

Outreach and education strategies used by past studies include:

- Interview sessions of stakeholders that include business leaders; elected officials; local government staff; and community, transportation, and other interest group representatives.
- Focus groups that represent the general public and others people that use the major corridors during the peak period.
- Study workshops that include stakeholders that were interviewed and others to provide information about the pricing concept, gather opinion about possible specific projects, and glean a sense of direction for the project based on public opinion.
- Speaker bureau events
- Freight workshops

G. Public Attitude Assessment Plan

While there has been some research conducted in the metro Atlanta related to managed lanes concepts, there is additional need to assess public opinion for the Managed Lanes System Plan. Focus groups and surveys are methods to assess public opinion. The focus groups may be comprised of the general public as one group and a cross section of regular users of the highway corridor proposed for managed lanes as another group. Additionally, individual stakeholder interviews may provide details on public opinions of managed lanes.

To breakdown the managed lanes system into manageable parts for public attitude assessment, the managed lanes system may be separated into segments. These segments may be geographically focused and may consist of individuals from a variety of socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds. There may be subsets of these segments that are composed of individuals with similar economic, educational, and social backgrounds. Specific strategies may be identified and utilized to reach the various groups along each corridor. Multiple avenues for participation may be

undertaken so that individuals can choose how to give and receive information about managed lanes.

Common themes that may be hashed out at focus groups and stakeholder individual interviews are anticipated to revolve around:

- Tolling
- Social equity
- Transit benefits
- Impacts to property
- Pollution concerns including noise, dust, and air

The public stakeholders and individual interviews may include:

- Elected officials and staff of local government
- Freight transportation community
- Civic/community groups and neighborhood associations
- Unique demographics such as senior persons and the alternative commuter advocacy groups
- Businesses and Chambers of Commerce
- Users of transportation facilities
- Users of transit
- Local transportation agencies
- Media representatives
- Law enforcement and emergency response agencies

A segment based outreach effort will help to generate a list of needs and issues by managed lane corridor and highlight the common themes to be addressed by the overall system. Existing frameworks and pathways of communication should be utilized to their fullest potential to disseminate the managed lanes concept. An initial list of key agencies and organizations are identified by corridor in Appendix A. These agencies are broken down into city, county and community managed groups.

Work Commute

Managed lanes are likely to be used primarily during peak periods, when people are commuting to work. Business outreach efforts may include large employment centers and companies that are already partnering with transportation agencies to combat congestion and to develop commuter alternatives. The number of employees, demographics of employees, and transportation needs and concerns that surface during outreach efforts may be documented to gather information on the public's attitude toward the managed lane concept.

Social Equity

To address social equity concerns, an understanding of the perspectives of low-income and minority communities is crucial. Past federal decisions may have negatively or positively impacted the people living in the managed lanes system corridors. Based on the history and context of previous federal agency decisions that have impacted these neighborhoods, there may be trust issues to overcome. During the public outreach effort, there may be groups that fear government interaction in any form. Capitalizing on existing community portals that have established trust with the minority or ethnic

community may be used as an approach to break down communication barriers and help to deliver the message. Civic organizations, churches, and community centers are possible candidates to be included into the message delivery strategy.

The Environmental Justice analysis conducted as a part of the Managed Lanes System Plan defines locations of targeted community outreach. These low-income and minority neighborhoods and businesses should be given special attention to educate these communities about the concept of managed lanes and how it potentially affects them. Direct access ramps in these areas have the potential to provide increased carpooling and transit opportunities through new and enhanced park-and-ride lot locations.

H. Plan for Communicating Study Results to the Public

The public education campaign, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups will establish a relationship with organizations throughout the metropolitan Atlanta region to gather input on their attitudes towards the Managed Lanes System Plan. The Managed Lanes System Plan team may return to some of these groups to communicate the results of the study.

The reporting of study results should identify opportunities to maximize the returns on public meeting efforts and resources to capitalize on public turnout such as combining the smaller groups in geographical proximity in order to reach a larger audience. The presentation should deliver a consistent message and can be geared towards the audience by addressing the issues most important to the area, which may vary from other locations in the region. The presentation may incorporate the findings from the first round of meetings, showing the needs and issues and how they were addressed in the plan.

Depending on the audiences, meeting planners may utilize different approaches. Neighborhood meetings may have a different focus than meetings presented to businesses in the region.

The topics covered in neighborhood meetings may include:

- Benefits of managed lanes to all citizens
- Acquisitions and displacement procedures
- Potential pollution mitigation efforts
- Managed lanes system access points
- How managed lanes operate
- How to register with the operating agency

The topics for the business community may include:

- Business impacts
- Managed lanes access points and exits
- Congestion avoidance benefits for employees and operations
- Traffic on local roads adjacent to the highway
- Economic development benefits through congestion relief

I. Strategies for Communication

Multiple avenues of communication are needed to reach the general public. Formal meetings can be used including presentations on the concept schematics, points of interest about the managed lane system relevant to the audience, and visual simulations to demonstrate the concept. Supplying organizations with information that they can send to their constituents and members utilizes established communication networks and is a way to spread the message about managed lanes. Information provided to these groups may include answers to frequently asked questions and maps of the project area.

Existing Networks

Public organizations identified in the public attitude assessment may be revisited and the managed lanes concept meetings may piggy back on the organizations regularly scheduled meetings. The stakeholders may be called upon to continue to meet until the managed lanes concept crosses public hurdles and becomes closer to implementation. Elected Officials will be crucial in gaining public “buy-in” on the concept. The business community may be reached through regular Chamber of Commerce meetings and brochures may be left at these locations for continued message delivery throughout the planning process. By presenting managed lanes concepts during Chamber of Commerce meetings, there is an opportunity to engage the active business leaders in the region and those who have the power to support initiatives that benefit the area. Neighborhoods which meet regularly and have strong networks may be called upon to send information via email groups or mailers to their membership. These and other established lines of community engagement and communication networks should be explored to find the most effective and efficient method of conveying the managed lanes concept.

Citizen’s Task Forces and Political Champions

While established organizations can be used to disseminate the message, another strategy is to form a citizen’s task force that is able to act as an extension of the managed lanes outreach team. Citizen’s task forces may be comprised of local representatives from each managed lane corridor. Acting as a liaison between the community and the project team, these volunteers add a credible and independent voice. The volunteers should be provided adequate information to be able to answer the frequently asked questions and concerns in the community. The individuals who demonstrate strong support and understanding of the concepts may rise to the role of local political champion. Political project champions may empathize with the community as a member of it and may understand the politics and “hot-buttons” of the area. The local political champion’s role has been demonstrated as a success factor in other studies, providing local insight to the project team.

Freight Community Workshop

The freight community is a specific type of potential managed lanes user. Their needs are driven from a business standpoint and it is important to hear their perspectives on the impact of managed lanes. Rising fuel consumption costs may be reason enough for businesses to encourage drivers to utilize the managed lanes system in order to

increase fuel efficiency and improve delivery times. The economic development implications should be explored with the freight community as it would potentially impact the draw for new businesses and the potential to retain the existing ones. These effects may influence the location and amount of jobs in the region.

J. Media Outlets

The media has a powerful role to play in the development of public support for the managed lanes concept. Issues such as “Lexus lanes” and double taxation may become the marching beat of those opposed to managed lanes. It is important to understand that other systems have been through this gauntlet of public attacks – some have proceeded on to be built, others have been dropped due to limited political support. The citizens of the metropolitan Atlanta region are all bound by a common thread – traffic congestion. They all face traffic congestion to varying degrees if using the interstate system. Managed lanes offer a mobility option paid for by a toll. Managed lanes are an alternative that is regionally comprehensive and serve as a long-term solution for sustained mobility. It has been demonstrated that building more general purpose lanes does not relieve congestion in the long-run. Managed lanes are a potential strategy that uses the highway network more efficiently. The media needs to consistently and accurately deliver this message.

Newspaper Advertising – Newspaper advertising can be used to inform the public about upcoming meetings and to market the concept.

Press Kit – A press release kit should be produced to be given to the media and should be translated into the Spanish language as well. News releases will be used throughout the study. Local and regional papers may write articles and publish editorials. There is likely to be a mix of reviews on the managed lanes concept.

Radio Advertising – Radio advertising should be employed as another medium to broadcast the managed lanes concept. Identifying radio stations favored by Latino and Hispanic listeners is important to reach this demographic. Translation of reports into Spanish will be necessary to reach a wider spectrum of people potentially affected by managed lanes.

Mailing Lists – At every meeting mailing lists should be on display for attendees to provide information if they would like to be included for mailers as the project progresses.

Brochure/Pamphlets – Brochures and pamphlets should also be created that highlight the managed lanes concept concisely characterizing its attributes. One strategy may be to have the operators of GA 400 toll booths hand out flyers when people go to pay tolls.

Electronic Message Boards and Freeway Signs – the existing overhead gantry electronic message boards located in the Atlanta region may be employed to advertise about meetings. Additionally, putting up signs at strategic points along the managed lanes corridors is a viable means to target the potential users and the existing highway audience.

Internet – Creating a website for the project will provide a clearinghouse for managed lanes information. Official websites governed by transportation agencies such as GDOT, the Atlanta Regional Commission, and the State Roadway and Toll Authority as well as cities and counties in the managed lanes study area should be utilized to provide public information.

Social Networking – Younger drivers also will be using this new system and it is important to educate the next generation of managed lanes users. To reach this group, several nontraditional approaches may be considered. This generation is electronically adept and accustomed to electronic mail and websites. Additionally, this generation often identifies with organizations and causes that impact their daily lives. Creating a website and linking it to new media concepts such as social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Myspace, etc.) may be a way to draw out their opinion and spin the managed lanes concept through their web of connections. As this medium has become more popular, it is expanding to a broader age groups and demographics.

Video Presentation – Video presentations that may be used in the formal public meetings and may also be uploaded to websites. The understanding of managed lanes concepts are facilitated by video and computer simulations to show how the system will work.

K. Summary of Communications and Public Attitude Assessment

Utilizing a multitude of media outlets ensures the managed lanes concept will reach a broad spectrum of the Atlanta metropolitan region. Accurate information needs to be circulated in the public sphere through the general public education campaign. It is important that a consistent message reaches the general public and that the current transportation issues frame the need for alternative strategies to traffic congestion. In addition, a public attitude assessment plan that incorporates focus groups, stated preference surveys, and stakeholder interviews will establish an understanding of the public's opinion of managed lanes. The experience of other managed lanes indicate that the public holds favorable opinion of systems that are easy to understand, provide value, define where the revenue goes, and are considered to be fair and equitable.

L. Next Steps

Develop a Schedule - The next steps are to identify a timeline for the public education campaign and public attitude assessment study. The public education campaign may continue throughout the life of managed lanes system to some degree. The public attitude assessment may identify issues that may be highlighted in general public education efforts.

Design survey – The survey should be designed to provide an accurate measure of the public's attitude towards managed lanes. Stated preference surveys may be used. Focus groups and stakeholders interviews may have questions aimed at revealing the public attitude towards managed lanes and the potential issues to overcome.

Identify Focus Group and Stakeholders - The stakeholders would need to be identified and local and regional government agencies may be called upon to provide input into the stakeholder group membership.

Focus groups member criteria would need to be identified. Two distinct groups may be formed for each corridor – one a general public group and one a frequent user of the highway corridor.

To address equity issues, the efforts may begin early in the process to establish partnerships with entities that are in contact with low-income and minority groups to help identify study participants and to distribute materials to communicate the managed lanes concept.

Businesses that may want to take part in the focus groups and/or stakeholder interviews would need to be identified. A range of business types and sizes with diverse locations may be included in the approach to identify businesses for study participation.

Identify Freight Industry Membership - The freight industry members may be included early on in the process to allow advanced planning for transportation activities.

Create Website - A website may be established early on as a way to provide information to the public. Video simulations, pictures, schematics and other means to clearly communicate how the system would work may be posted to the website.

Establish a Brand - The managed lanes system may want to create a brand name and logo to identify the managed lanes service.

Appendix A
Key City, County, and Community Agencies
and Organizations by Corridor

Table 1: Key City, County, and Community Agencies and Organizations by Corridor

Locale	County	City	Community
I-75 North			
Cobb County	X		
Cherokee County	X		
Bartow County	X		
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Cumberland community Improvement District (CID)			X
City of Marietta		X	
City Kennesaw		X	
Town Center CID			X
City of Acworth		X	
City of Smyrna		X	
City of Emerson		X	
City of Cartersville		X	
SR 400			
Homeowners Associations			X
Fulton County	X		
Forsyth County	X		
City of Atlanta		X	
Buckhead CID			X
City of Sandy Springs		X	
Perimeter CID			X
City of Roswell		X	
North Fulton			X
City of Alpharetta		X	
City of John's Creek		X	
City of Cumming		X	
I-85 North			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
DeKalb County	X		
Gwinnett County	X		
City of Doraville		X	
City of Chamblee		X	
City of Tucker			X
Gwinnett Village CID			X
Gwinnett Place CID			X

Locale	County	City	Community
City of Norcross		X	
City of Lilburn		X	
City of Lawrenceville		X	
City of Buford		X	
City of Suwanee		X	
City of Duluth		X	
Buford Hwy Hispanic & Asian Communities			X
I-20 East			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
City of Decatur		X	
DeKalb County	X		
Rockdale County	X		
City of Lithonia		X	
City of Conyers			
I-75 South			
Clayton County	X		
Henry County	X		
Spalding County	X		
Hartsfield – Jackson Airport			X
City of Forest Park		X	
City of Riverdale		X	
City of Morrow		X	
Lake City		X	
City of Jonesboro		X	
City of Stockbridge		X	
City of McDonough		X	
City of Locust Grove		X	
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
I-85 South			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Fulton County	X		
Coweta County	X		
City of College Park		X	
Union City		X	
City of Fairburn		X	
South Fulton CID			X
City of Palmetto		X	
City of Newnan		X	

Locale	County	City	Community
I-20 West			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Fulton County	X		
Cobb County	X		
Douglas County	X		
City of Atlanta		X	
City of Lithia Springs			X
City of Douglasville		X	
City of Villa Rica		X	
I-575			
Cobb County	X		
Cherokee County	X		
Town Center CID			X
City of Kennesaw		X	
City of Woodstock		X	
City of Holly Springs		X	
City of Canton		X	
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
I-285 North			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Cobb County	X		
Fulton County	X		
DeKalb County	X		
Homeowners Associations			X
Cumberland CID			X
City of Sandy Springs		X	
City of Doraville		X	
City of Chamblee		X	
Perimeter CID			X
I-285 East			
DeKalb County	X		
City of Doraville		X	
City of Chamblee		X	
City of Clarkston		X	
City of Tucker			X
City of Avondale Estates		X	
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
I-285 South			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Clayton County	X		
Fulton County	X		

Locale	County	City	Community
DeKalb County	X		
Hartsfield-Jackson Airport			X
City of Forest Park		X	
City of Atlanta		X	
College Park		X	
I-285 West			
Fulton County	X		
Cobb County	X		
Cumberland CID			X
Homeowners Associations			X
City of Smyrna		X	
City of Atlanta		X	
City of East Point		X	
City of College Park		X	
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Downtown Connector (I-75/I-85)			
Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations			X
Fulton County	X		
Cobb County	X		
Midtown CID			X
Neighborhoods			X
DeKalb County			X
Downtown CID			X
Central Atlanta Progress			X
City of Atlanta		X	
Region-Wide			
Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities			X
State of Georgia: Aging Services Division			X
Senior Citizen Services of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc.			X
Center for Positive Aging			X
Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)			X
Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA)			X
Latin American Association			X
National Association of Asian American Professionals - Atlanta			X
Atlanta Indian-American Cultural Association			X
Asian American Resource Center			X
Atlanta Transit Rider's Union			X
Georgia EPD			X
Clean Air Campaign (and sponsors/partners)			X
Georgia Power			X
- Georgia Pacific			X

Locale	County	City	Community
- Coca Cola			X
- UPS			X
- TBS			X
- AGL			X
- Cox			X
- Home Depot			X
- Other interested business			X