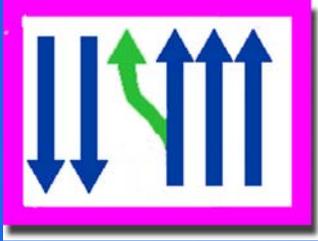


## Take-A-Lane Program



Take-a-lane programs provide high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on the existing freeway system without widening the freeway. Essentially, the HOV lane is created by changing the designation of an existing general purpose travel lane to an HOV lane by re-striping the travel lane or providing a physical barrier between it and the general purpose lanes. HOV lanes are travel lanes that allow any vehicle with multiple occupants the use of that lane (the minimum number of occupants is a policy choice made by those that operate the lane). Clean fuel or emergency vehicles may also be permitted use of HOV lanes.

Take-a-lane programs may include:

**Interim HOV Lanes:** These facilities are intended to be temporary. They are typically created on an existing freeway shoulder or by taking away a travel lane for restricted use. Such lanes are separated from other general travel lanes by a painted stripe. If the shoulder of a freeway facility is used, it can be the inside or outside shoulder. Often, the HOV lane will be changed back to a general travel lane during the off-peak period. Although not used anywhere in conjunction with high occupancy toll (HOT) operations, an interim configuration could be used for this purpose. They are referred to as interim because successful operation would be expected to lead to the construction of a managed lane meeting typical design standards.



*Interim HOV Lane*



*Contraflow HOV Lane*

**Contraflow HOV Lanes:** These lanes are used only in the peak direction of travel. They are created by taking an underused travel lane away from the non-peak direction of travel and giving it to the peak direction of travel during periods of heavy commuting. The lane is separated from other lanes by a movable barrier and when the Contraflow HOV lane is not in use, the barrier is stored against the freeway median.

**Tolling existing toll-free facilities:** Both the USDOT and NYSDOT encourage the consideration of public-private partnerships. These typically involve the sale of toll facilities to and operation by private firms. SAFETEA-LU allows consideration of the imposition of tolls on existing toll-free Interstate facilities. Nationwide, there has not been any example of imposing tolls on a previously-free Interstate facility – except in the case of

tolling lanes added to the free facility. It is quite feasible technically to add tolls (particularly if E-ZPass electronic toll only) to existing facilities such as the Northway, I-787 or “free” I-90. In theory, a twenty year program could eventually put about 100 route miles into toll operation, above and beyond the Thruway mileage. This would provide substantially proceeds not only for the maintenance of these facilities, but for use on other transportation initiatives.

A “big initiative” of this type may not be feasible. There are few locations in the Capital District that both have a considerable capacity restriction in one direction and available capacity in the other direction. Peak / off-peak directional flows on a six-lane expressway need to be greater than 2/3 to 1/3 in order to gain more by adding an additional (a fourth) lane in the peak direction than is lost by losing a lane (and leaving only two) in the off-peak direction. Per lane capacities are less because of the friction caused by contraflow traffic. An interim HOV or HOT lane may be possible as a transitional operation prior to building a managed lane, but it is not expected that an interim configuration would be a permanent design.

The concept of adding tolls on existing toll-free lanes on Interstate roads is not currently feasible politically, although attitudes could change.

*Rationale: Instituting tolls where none exist is theoretically attractive and complements the region’s principles of transportation management and provision of modal alternatives. However, it is unlikely for the region to support such an initiative until it is proven acceptable elsewhere. (Contraflow lanes can be cost effective when capacity is available. This does not appear to be the case in the Capital District. Taking a general lane for HOV use has never been publicly tolerated.*