



## High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes could help alleviate traffic woes

October 7, 2008 eConnecting

Initially a Chamber proposal to reduce traffic congestion, City Council is investigating the expansion of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes beyond Centre St. HOV lanes are traffic lanes specifically dedicated to vehicles carrying more than one passenger. The Chamber proposed HOV lanes as part of the *Renaissance Calgary* strategy released during the municipal election last October.

"Calgarians want new solutions to our transportation and environmental challenges," says Geoff Pradella, Vice-President of Public & Government Affairs for the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. "Our preliminary research indicates that HOV lanes are widely viewed as a cost-effective transportation demand management tool to reduce congestion and associated tail-pipe emissions."

HOV lanes are intended to encourage a shift to multi-occupancy vehicles, increasing the capacity of highways or major arterial roads. According to Transport Canada, a typical highway lane can accommodate 1,500 to 2,200 vehicles per hour, whereas an HOV lane can move, on average, 1.5 times more people

After opening HOV lanes on highways in Toronto, former Ontario Transportation Minister Donna Cansfield reported a year later that: "HOV lanes work. Carpoolers and public transit users on the Highway 403 and 404 HOV lanes are saving 14 to 17 minutes per trip compared to their previous travel times. People get to where they're going faster, and we improve air quality by getting cars off the road."

The Government of Ontario is currently expanding the network of HOV lanes due to the positive response from commuters.

HOV lanes are usually created through the conversion of an existing lane and separated from other lanes through distinctive markings. They can be structured as a dedicated 24-hour lane or reserved during peak travel times only. While generally requiring two occupants, HOV lanes can also mandate three or more. Transit buses are often allowed on HOV lanes, while some configurations allow motorcycles and taxis.

"The Calgary Chamber is encouraged by City Council's intent to develop a HOV strategy and implementation plan by January 2009," says Pradella. "We look forward to more discussion leading up to, and after the City of Calgary's report."