

Item 20-11 Request for approval of proposed temporary overhead sign and 2) Request for approval of proposed sign

Recommendation: Grant approval for:

- 1) Temporary overhead sign panel for Alameda County I-880 Express Lanes
- 2) HOV 2 Discount sign panel for Alameda County I-880 Express Lanes

Requesting Agency / Sponsor: Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Caltrans District 4 / Monica Kress-Wooster, CTCDC Voting member

Background:

The Interstate 880 (I-880 Express Lanes) Project in Alameda County will be completed in the Fall of 2020. This project will convert existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-880 to high-occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes, which will make the lanes open to vehicles that do not meet occupancy requirements if they pay a toll. HOT lanes improve mobility and enhance travel options by:

- Making use of available space in existing HOV lanes to move more people;
- Improving operations in existing HOV lanes through better enforcement and strategies to prevent lane slowdowns;
- Giving everyone the choice to carpool for free or pay for a more reliable trip when it really matters; and
- Filling gaps in the HOV lane system to encourage more carpools, vanpools and buses.

As part of the conversion to HOT lanes, several operational changes will be made to the I-880 HOV lanes.

- The minimum occupancy requirements to qualify as an HOV will be increased from 2 persons to 3. These vehicles will be able to use the lane without paying a toll.
- The toll to use the lanes will be posted on overhead signs as required in Section 2G.17 of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD).
- Vehicles with 1 or 2 occupants will pay a toll. Vehicles with 1 occupant will pay the toll displayed on the signs. Vehicles with 2 occupants will pay half of that toll.
- Everyone who uses the lane, regardless of the number of occupants, will be required to have a FasTrak pre-paid electronic toll collection account and transponder. Overhead signs and signs in the median will convey this requirement.
- Vehicles with 2 or more occupants will need to have a special FasTrak transponder, called FasTrak Flex, in order to pay a discounted toll or (in the case of a vehicle with 3 or more occupants), travel toll-free. This special transponder has a switch on it that can be set to indicate how many occupants there are in the vehicle. This setting is detected by overhead equipment on the HOT lanes and the appropriate toll amount is deducted from the owner's FasTrak account. Barrier mounted signs are used to convey the FasTrak Flex requirement for toll-free travel.

The HOT lanes will be signed as "Express Lanes" in accordance with the provisions of Section 2G.16 of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

The proposed recommendations are intended to introduce and inform motorists of the operational changes.

(1) Temporary Overhead Sign Panel:

In addition to other Public Outreach platforms, the overhead signs conveying the FasTrak transponder requirements will be covered with temporary panels until the HOT lane operations begin. The 8 temporary panels will inform the public of the upcoming operational changes and will remain for approximately 1-month prior to the conversion to a HOT lane. MTC's 511.org website has more detailed information about this project and will be updated as the Express Lanes are getting set to open; thus, the need to display the website.

Shown below is a new Express Lane overhead sign and the proposed temporary sign, recommended by Caltrans District 4 and MTC:

New Express Lane Sign Panel



Temporary Sign Panel



(2) HOV 2 Discount Sign Panel:

The Bay Area Infrastructure Financing Authority (BAIFA), an assignee of the MTC, has the authority to charge a toll for vehicles that do not meet occupancy requirements to use the HOT lanes and to set the rules for using the lanes, in cooperation with Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). This authority was granted to MTC through the California Transportation Commission in 2011 under the provisions of Streets and Highways Code Section 149.7. BAIFA has developed an ordinance that outlines how tolls will be charged for the HOT lanes. In the latest version of the ordinance dated January 22, 2020, specifies that vehicles with 3 or more occupants can travel toll-free, vehicles with one occupant will pay the posted toll, and vehicles with 2 occupants will pay half of the posted toll. This two-tiered HOV pricing methodology is new to California and is the first of its kind in the United States. In order to be charged the proper HOV pricing, each vehicle has to have a FastTrak Flex transponder set to the number of persons in the vehicle.

Signs have been developed to convey the requirements that all users must have a FasTrak transponder to use the lane and that the FasTrak Flex transponder must be used for toll-free travel. An example of this sign is provided below (this example is for toll-free travel for vehicles with 3 or more occupants).



30"x 66"

Without this signage, the CHP is not able to cite a vehicle with single occupant that has a Fastrak Flex tag that is improperly set to show 3 occupants instead of 1. This driver is evading the toll.

The CHP has requested that signs be developed for the discounted tolling for vehicles with two occupants in order to enforce the HOV 2 provisions. Without signage, the CHP is not able to cite a driver that is driving alone but has the Fastrak Flex transponder set at 2 instead of 1. This driver is paying a toll with a transponder, but getting a discount not intended for a single occupant vehicle.

In order to address the FasTrak Flex requirements for both toll-free and discounted travel, a sign and two plaques have been proposed. The first sign would convey that vehicles with at least 3 or more occupants can use the lane toll free; this would be followed by a plaque indicating that there is a discount for vehicles with two occupants, and then a plaque indicating that FasTrak Flex is required in these cases.



The “HOV 3+ NO TOLL” sign and the “FASTRAK FLEX REQUIRED” plaque could be used as a package on any HOT lane which may allow toll free travel using the FasTrak Flex transponder but not offer a discount to vehicles with 2 occupants. It could also be modified to read “HOV 2+ NO TOLL” if toll-free travel is offered to vehicles with 2 or more occupants. Examples of these modified packages are shown below.



The sign package will be placed on the median barrier adjacent to signs that display the toll rates for the HOT lanes.

With this combination of sign and plaques, the CHP will be able to cite the driver of a vehicle that has set the FasTrak Flex transponder incorrectly under either CVC 23302(a)(1) for Toll Evasion and/or with CVC 21655.5(b) for Preferential/ Managed Lane Violation regarding the applicable vehicle occupancy level.

From CVC:

"23302 (a)(1) It is unlawful for a driver to fail to pay tolls or other charges on any vehicular crossing or toll highway. Except as otherwise provided in subdivision (b), (c), or (d), it is prima facie evidence of a violation of this section for a person to drive a vehicle onto any vehicular crossing or toll highway without either lawful money of the United States in the driver's immediate possession in an amount sufficient to pay the prescribed tolls or other charges due from that driver or a transponder or other electronic toll payment device associated with a valid Automatic Vehicle Identification account with a balance sufficient to pay those tolls.

21655.5(b) The Department of Transportation and local authorities, with respect to highways under their respective jurisdictions, shall place and maintain, or cause to be placed and maintained, signs and other official traffic control devices to designate the exclusive or preferential lanes, to advise motorists of the applicable vehicle occupancy levels, and, except where ramp metering and bypass lanes are regulated with the activation of traffic signals, to advise motorists of the hours of high-occupancy vehicle usage."

In addition to the CVC codes above, Section 2G.17 Regulatory Signs for Priced Managed Lanes of the CAMUTCD supports the development of these signs:

"Where registration in a local program or ETC account is required for HOV traffic to travel in a priced managed lane without being charged a toll or by being charged a discounted toll, such information may be displayed on a separate sign within the sequence of the required regulatory and guide signs."

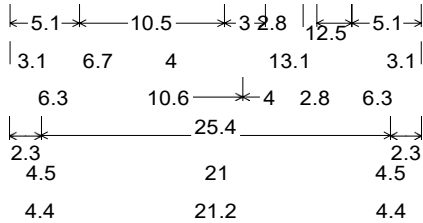
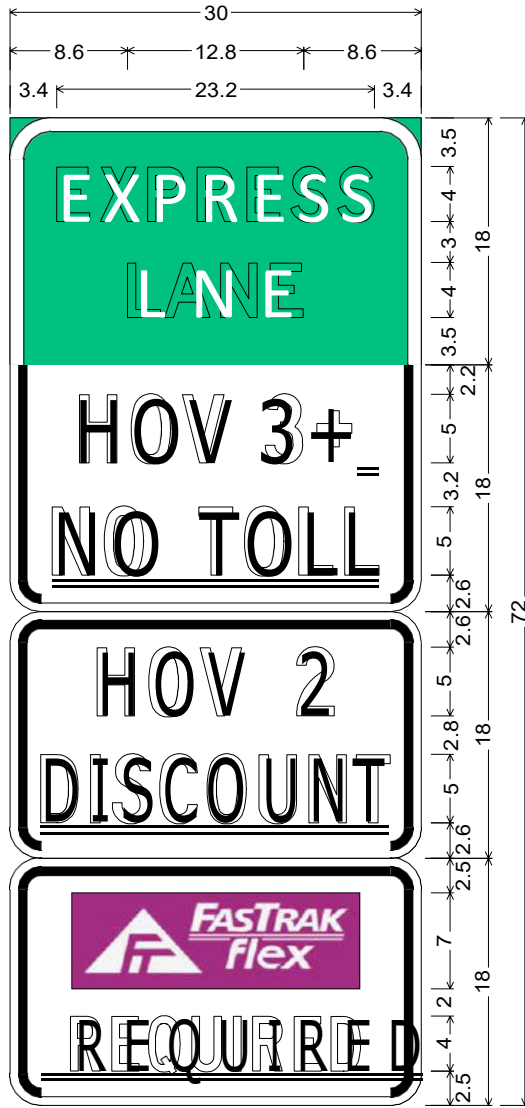
MTC's 511.org website has more detailed information about this project and will also provide information regarding the HOV 2 discount for Express Lane users.

We request the approval of both the Temporary Overhead Sign and the signs and plaques used to convey the FasTrak Flex requirements for toll-free and discounted travel.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lourdes David
Caltrans District 4 Traffic Signing
(510) 286 - 5843



- 3.0" Radius, 1.0" Border, White on Green;
- "EXPRESS" D; "LANE" D;
- 2.3" Radius, 0.6" Border, 0.6" Indent, Black on White;
- "HOV 3 +" C; "NO TOLL" C;
- 2.3" Radius, 0.6" Border, 0.6" Indent, Black on White;
- "HOV 2" C;
- "DISCOUNT" C 85% spacing;
- 2.3" Radius, 0.6" Border, 0.6" Indent, Black on White;
- "REQUIRED" C;



3.0" Radius, 1.0" Border, White on Green;

"EXPRESS" D; "LANE" D;

2.3" Radius, 0.6" Border, 0.6" Indent, Black on White;

"HOV 3 +" C; "NO TOLL" C;

2.3" Radius, 0.6" Border, 0.6" Indent, Black on White;

"REQUIRED" C;

EXPRESS LANES FALL 2020



ONLY

HOV 3+ NO TOLL

HOV 2 DISCOUNT

511.org



12.0" Radius, 2.0" Border, 0.8" Indent, Black on Orange;

"EXPRESS LANES FALL 2020" D; "ONLY" D; "HOV 3 +" D; "NO TOLL" D; "HOV 2 DISCOUNT" D; "511 . org" D;



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