

I-85 EXPRESS LANES: OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENTS

The existing I-85 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes allow two or more person carpools to use the lane, with single drivers restricted from using this lane. The use of the I-85 HOV lanes by carpools has steadily increased since they were built. In fact the number of carpools in the HOV lane has grown to the point where the lanes have started to become congested during rush hour. In 2005-06, travel speeds in the morning heading to downtown Atlanta averaged 36 mph, making this 13-mile trip take an average of 25 minutes (see table below). Although travel times and speeds on I-85 improved in 2009 due to gas shortages, spikes in gas prices, a slowing economy, and improvements to SR 316, congestion is predicted to continue to worsen in the long run as the economy recovers and growth in the region continues.

Based on travel forecast information for 2015, peak morning travel times on the I-85 HOV lanes are estimated to climb to 35 minutes, with an average speed of 26 mph. Thus, carpools and transit buses using the I-85 HOV lanes will need to plan for 10 more minutes, or about 30 percent more time for this leg of their trip. To preserve travel times and speeds on the I-85 HOV lanes two options were considered.

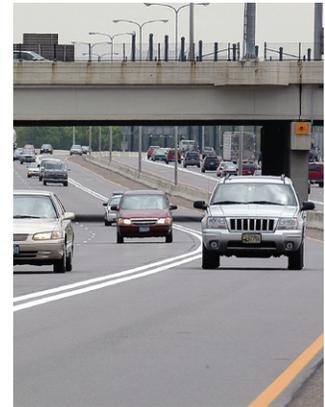
- **HOV3+:** Increase the occupancy requirement to three or more per vehicle. Two person vehicles or less would not be permitted to use the lane. This change would affect about 70 percent of current carpools and would result in the lanes being vastly underutilized.
- **HOT3+:** Increase the occupancy requirement to three or more and allow two-person carpools and single drivers to use the lane for a fee. The toll would be adjusted for two-person carpools and single drivers based on demand in order to maintain reliable trip times.

Travel Time and Speeds during the Morning Peak Period ⁽¹⁾

| Occupancy Requirement | Year | I-85 HOV Lane Travel Time (min) | I-85 HOV Lane Travel Speeds (mph) |
|-----------------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| HOV2+ | 2005/6 | 25 | 36 |
| HOV2+ | 2009 | 20 | 45 |
| HOV2+ | 2015 | 35 | 26 |
| HOV3+ or HOT3+ | 2015 | 18 | 50 |

On April 16, 2009, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) State Transportation Board approved a resolution authorizing the use of HOT3+ in the I-85 corridor. By implementing a High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane with the three person carpool requirement (i.e., HOT3+), the lanes will be managed to ensure optimal use and reliability of the travel times. In addition, the Clean Air Campaign will continue to provide resources to encourage carpooling, including assistance in matching carpools with one another through RideSmart.

(1) Based on corridor travel time runs for 2005, 2006 and 2009; and based on 2015 forecast modeling.



Source: U. S. Department of Transportation

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There are two operational HOT lanes in the U.S. that currently have a three or more person occupancy requirement.

SR 91 Express Lanes

Orange County, CA

- All motorists, including HOV3+ carpools, must register to use the lanes.
- Single occupant vehicles (SOVs) can use the lane by paying the posted toll.
- HOV2 carpools can use the lane by paying the posted toll. The primary incentive for two-person carpools is the ability to share the cost of the toll.
- HOV3+ carpools can use the lane without paying a toll during non-peak travel times and receive a 50 percent discount on posted tolls during peak travel times.

I-95 Express Lanes

Miami, FL

- All motorists, including HOV3+ carpools, must register to use the lanes.
- Single occupant vehicle can use the lane for a fee.
- HOV2 carpools do not receive a discount on posted tolls. The primary incentive for two-person carpools is the ability to share the cost of the toll.
- HOV3+ carpools can use the lane without paying a toll.

