



**DATE:** June 1, 2017

**TO:** Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

**FROM:** Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director  
Dan Cherrier, Principal Project Delivery Manager

**SUBJECT:** Approve Letter to MTC on HOV Hours of Operation, (Action), Agenda Item 8

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Recommend approval of the attached letter to be sent to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) on High Occupant Vehicle (HOV) hours of operation.

## **BACKGROUND**

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes began operation in Marin in 1976 with an occupancy requirement of three + people. In 1988 the occupancy requirement was reduced to two+ persons. The hours of operation in July 1998 were changed to 5 to 9 am and 3 to 7 pm Monday through Friday. After much community pressure the Highway 101 HOV hours were returned to 6:30 to 8:30 am in the southbound direction and 4:30 to 7:00 in the northbound direction. Since that time, the existing gaps in the carpool lanes have been closed by constructing new HOV Lanes resulting in continuous HOV lanes through much of Marin.

The MTC Managed Lanes Implementation Plan (MLIP) was conducted in 2016 to identify projects that can be easily implemented to better manage the freeways in the region. The MLIP recommendations included potential locations for new HOV Lanes, HOV Lane conversion to Express Lanes, Express Buses, Park & Ride Lot Improvements, and extended or regionally consistent HOV hours.

As part of the MLIP recommendation for Marin, MTC is proposing revised HOV hours of 6:30 to 10:00 am and 3:00 to 7:00 in the afternoon. These changes would be implemented in two six-month Pilots. The first would change the hours in the Southbound direction this summer. After evaluating the impacts of this change the Northbound direction hours are proposed to be changed in early 2018.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

Highway 101 in Marin acts in several locations as a local arterial due to the lack of parallel routes. As such, much of the traffic only travels a short distance before exiting and is not able to utilize the HOV Lanes. Longer HOV hours would reduce the capacity of the highway for residents during those longer hours. A reduction of the available capacity, except during the peak of the commute, could be detrimental to the Marin traveling public. Caltrans acknowledged these local impacts and returned the HOV Lanes to the previous hours of use.

TAM remains committed to moving people through Marin as efficiently and effectively as possible. With over 50 percent of our local sales tax dedicated to transit options, with our Safe Routes and

Employer/Employee support programs, all supported through public votes of approval, TAM is supporting options to driving, and particularly, options to single-occupancy driving.

MTC presented their recommendation to adjust hours at the April 27 TAM Board Meeting. It was presented that Golden Gate buses are unable to make a run from Santa Rosa to San Francisco and travel in HOV Lanes in both counties. MTC in response to concerns previously raised by TAM staff and others are intending to implement the new hours in phases with before and after studies to look at total person throughput and Express Bus travel times. TAM staff feel that before and after studies of the congestion in the mixed flow lanes should be added to the data collected. Both of TAM's Executive Committees supported this approach.

TAM is in the process of working with Caltrans and MTC to locate funding to complete the Highway 101 ramp metering project and have been seeking approval from Caltrans to pilot a bus on shoulder concept. Staff feel that these additional traffic management strategies should ideally be implemented simultaneously with the change in HOV Lane hours.

The response from Marin highway users during the last attempt to change HOV hours was negative and lead Caltrans to a swift reversal. The potential negative impact associated with a change, now, that would reduce available lane-miles in Marin for solo drivers must be considered. The California Highway Patrol has stated that the changes may lead to increased congestion in the mixed flow lanes and a greater number of incidents.

The process of changing the HOV lane hours of operation is made by a Committee consisting of representatives from Caltrans, MTC and the California Highway Patrol. MTC requested the Committee meet and consider the change to HOV lane hours of operation. The initial meeting was held on May 8 and concluded with Caltrans requesting additional information. In addition, Caltrans was not supportive of the pilot approach and thought complete studies should be performed with implementation based on those studies. The next meeting is scheduled for June 6.

Travelers in Marin would also be well served by an informational campaign on the change in hours. Our residents, employers, employees, and recreational visitors should all be afforded an opportunity to plan their trips knowing these restrictions on Highway 101 are going to occur.

## **FISCAL CONSIDERATION**

None

## **NEXT STEPS**

Review the attached letter to MTC and recommend changes. Alternatively, provide additional direction to staff.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Letter to Steve Heminger dated June 2, 2017