

# Carpool lanes delight bureaucrats

Whenever I drive by the new I-405 carpool lane construction, I often ask myself: to what purpose? Anyone who has sat through a 55 Freeway traffic jam, in one of three completely stacked lanes, and watched the carpool lane to the left, can testify that it isn't resolving any traffic problems. To the contrary, three traffic problems are occurring instead:

- Gross mismanagement of limited highway resources. The carpool lane, if it were a regular lane, would increase the 55 Freeway's traffic handling capabilities by 33.3 percent.

- A much-increased risk of ac-

idents. As carpool lane drivers fly by the jammed autos in the regular lanes, they do so at anywhere from twice to 10 times the "flow" of traffic. And, as studies have demonstrated many times, the range of differing speeds on a highway has a much greater effect on the accident rate than the average speed at which traffic is traveling — and the wider the difference, the greater the effect.

- Widespread law-breaking. On many occasions, I have observed that anywhere from 25-50 percent of the carpool lane's occupants are single-user autos.

No, bureaucrats cannot be pushing

carpool lanes onto the populace because they are concerned with safe and smooth rush-hour traffic flow. What, then, is the motive at work?

In an attempt to answer this question, observe that:

- 1) The single-user automobile represents the ultimate triumph of individualism over transportation. No need to wait for a bus or a train, just hop into your car and go where you want, with no need to stop on the way.

- 2) Carpool lanes, by granting preferred status to the multi-user automobile, discriminate against those occupied by a single individual.

These points would seem to suggest that the bureaucrats are seeking to

regulate our ability to act on our own. Do you want to use the freeway to go to the mall? You'd better ask Joe next door if he wants to go too — otherwise, you will be penalized, in terms of traveling time, for acting on your desire to travel alone.

When looked at in this manner, carpool lanes can be seen for what they really are: yet another form of social engineering. And if there is anything worse than this about the carpool debacle, it can only be that these meddling bureaucrats are receiving paychecks, funded by myself and other taxpayers, whether we like the idea or not. In a nation allegedly dedicated to the principles of liberty, this is hardly what I would refer to as an adequate state of affairs.

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