

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 162 (Cervantes)

As Amended May 8, 2018

Majority vote

ASSEMBLY:

SENATE:

Original Committee Reference: **REV & TAX**

SUMMARY: Eliminates the use of double parallel solid lines on high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in Riverside County.

The Senate amendments delete the Assembly version of the bill and instead:

- 1) Prohibit the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) from using double parallel solid lines to restrict access into or out of HOV lanes in Riverside County.
- 2) Require Caltrans to remove any existing double parallel solid lines related to HOV lanes in Riverside County and instead to signify these lanes with the appropriate markings and signage as specified in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Assigns Caltrans the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways.
- 2) Authorizes Caltrans to designate certain highway lanes for the exclusive or preferential use of HOVs.
- 3) With respect to HOV lanes, requires Caltrans or a local agency responsible for the lanes to place and maintain the appropriate signage and/or traffic control devices to properly identify designated HOV lanes and further advise motorists of the applicable vehicle occupancy levels and hours of enforcement.
- 4) Prohibits a vehicle from crossing over double parallel solid lines to enter or exit an HOV lane and further specifies that a vehicle may enter or exit in designated segments only where a single broken line is in place.
- 5) Authorizes a regional transportation agency, in cooperation with Caltrans, to apply to the California Transportation Commission to develop and operate high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, as specified.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, no new costs as a result of this bill. Staff notes that only one limited-access HOV lane remains in Riverside County, and \$825,000 in funding has already been programmed for that project. See staff comments. (State Highway Account, Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account)

AS PASSED BY THE ASSEMBLY, this bill defined, under the California Competes Tax Credit Program, a "small business" as one having no more than 50 full-time employees in the current and preceding two years.

COMMENTS: HOV lanes, also known as carpool lanes, are a traffic management strategy to promote and encourage ridesharing which, in turn, aims to alleviate vehicle congestion and maximize the people-carrying capacity of the state's highways. Motorcycles, transit vehicles (i.e. public transit buses) and passenger vehicles with two or more occupants are allowed to access HOV lanes during their operational hours. Furthermore, an "occupant" is considered any person who occupies a safety restraint device, i.e. seat-belt. The most recent data from Caltrans notes that the state highway system now has over 1,700 miles of HOV lanes in California.

The primary purpose of an HOV lane is to increase the total number of people moved through a congested corridor by offering two kinds of incentives: a savings in travel time and a reliable and predictable travel time. Because HOV lanes carry vehicles with a higher number of occupants, they may move significantly more people during congested periods, even when the number of vehicles that use the HOV lane is lower than on the adjoining general-purpose lanes.

HOV lanes work best where significant roadway congestion during peak periods occurs. Optimum HOV lane usage is generally considered to be about 1,650 vehicles per hour. In contrast, mixed-flow lanes are generally expected optimally to carry between 1,800 and 2,000 vehicles per hour. Experience with HOV lanes from around the country has shown a positive relationship between ridership and travel time savings, suggesting that, as congestion grows, the travelers' willingness to carpool or ride on a bus that uses an HOV lane also grows.

This bill directs Caltrans to convert any limited access HOV lane in Riverside County that is not a HOT lane into a continuous access lane. According to the author, "Allowing vehicles to enter and exit carpool lanes at any point would be a win-win situation for Riverside County commuters. In other parts of our state, this has led to better safety for commuters, better traffic flow, and cleaner air. It is time for Riverside County to also make this change through the enactment of Assembly Bill 162."

Committee Comment: Research studying the effectiveness of continuous access versus limited access HOV lanes has produced mixed results. For example, a 2012 Caltrans study on HOV lanes in Southern California found that continuous access HOV lanes under certain conditions provided higher average travel speed, while limited access HOV lanes provide higher maximum throughput. This study also found that when an HOV lane was converted from limited to continuous for study purposes, HOV lane violation rates considerably increased.

Traffic engineers use engineering techniques to achieve the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on roadways. It is the responsibility of Caltrans' traffic engineers to determine the safest and most efficient highway designs for the state of California. Given these engineers' expertise and experience, it is unclear why the Legislature should be involved in determining the best highway design decisions through legislation instead of leaving it to the experts to design the state's roadways.