
MIG/CALTRANS: 2009 I-80 HOT LANES SURVEY
Topline Report
October 2009

Through a sub-contract under MIG on behalf of Caltrans, Godbe Research conducted a survey of voters in Sacramento and Placer counties, living within about 4 miles of Interstate 80 (I-80), to gather feedback on the concept of “High Occupancy Toll Lanes” (HOT Lanes) on I-80 between Interstate 5 in Sacramento County and State Route 65 in Placer County.

The main objectives of the survey were to gather general knowledge and/or initial perceptions regarding:

- Traffic congestion on I-80 and other Sacramento area freeways
- HOV lanes in general, and specifically those on I-80 between Watt and Riverside
- Tolling in general (i.e. bridges)
- FasTrak or other automatic tolling systems
- Concept of HOT lanes
- Concept of dynamic (or congestion) pricing
- Use of revenues
- Pros and cons of HOT lanes
- Whether the respondent would use HOT lanes on I-80
- Perceived personal benefits or costs
- Whether HOT lanes will improve congestion on I-80

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Overall, 400 residents of Sacramento and Placer counties, living within about 4 miles of the I-80 corridor under study, completed the survey, representing a total universe of approximately 1,299,080 adult residents in both the counties (2008 US Population Estimates). The study parameters resulted in a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent. To be included in the survey, respondents needed to be licensed drivers, and have used the I-80 corridor at least three times in the last month. Interviews were conducted from October 7 through October 15, 2009, and the average interview time was approximately 15 minutes.

Once collected, the sample of respondents was compared with the actual population of adult residents in each county to examine possible differences between the demographics of the sample of respondents and the actual population universe in each county. The data were weighted to correct differences, and the results presented are representative of the adult population characteristics in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity.

In order to identify potentially different attitudes and travel behavior associated with different parts the study area, the sample of 400 respondents was divided into five groups based on their zip codes of residence.¹ Due to likely travel characteristics, Regions 4 and 5 were under-sampled, while Regions 1 to 3 were over-sampled, especially Region 1. The following table illustrates the assigned quotas for each region, and their weighted proportions in the sample.

¹ Zip code groupings:

Region 1: Zip codes 95648, 95658 and 95663

Region 2: Zip codes 95747, 95678, 95661, 95746, 95765, 95677 and 95650

Region 3: Zip codes 95843, 95660, 95841, 95621, 95610 and 95628

Region 4: Zip codes 95673, 95652, 95838, 95815, 95864, 95821, 95608, 95670 and 95825

Region 5: Zip codes 95834, 95833, 95811, 95810, 95818, 95820, 95822, 95824, 95826 and 95814

	Sample Quota	Un-weighted Percentage	Weighted Percentage
Region 1	100	25%	6%
Region 2	100	25%	23%
Region 3	100	25%	22%
Region 4	50	13%	27%
Region 5	50	13%	22%

QUESTIONNAIRE METHODOLOGY

To avoid the problem of systematic position bias, where the order in which a series of questions is asked systematically influences the answers, several questions in the survey were randomized such that the respondents were not consistently asked the questions in the same order. The series of items in Questions 1, 14, 15 and 16 were randomized to avoid such position bias. Furthermore, Question 15 and 16 were rotated so that the sample was balanced in whether they first heard potential benefits or concerns of the HOT Lanes.

MEAN SCORES AND ROUNDING

In addition to the percentage breakdown of responses to each question, results for the questions relating to the relative importance of issues (Q1) and the influence on support for HOT Lanes upon hearing potential benefits and concerns (Q15 and Q16) include a mean score column. For example, to derive respondents' overall rating of importance to a particular issue, a number value is first assigned to each response category (in this case, "Extremely Important" = 3, "Very Important" = 2, "Somewhat Important" = 1 and "Not Important" = 0). The individual answer of each respondent is then assigned the corresponding number – from 3 to 0 in this example. Finally, all respondents' answers are averaged to produce a final score that reflects overall importance of that issue. The resulting mean score makes the interpretation of the data considerably easier. Responses of "Don't Know" (DK/NA) were not included in the calculations of the means for any questions.

Conventional rounding rules apply to the percentages shown in this report, with .5 or above rounded up to the next number, and .4 or below is rounded down to the previous number. As a result, the percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

Relative Importance of Issues

1. I am going to read you a list of issues in the community. For each one, please tell me how important this issue is to you.

Here is the [first/next] one [READ FROM THE RANDOMIZED LIST BELOW]:

_____. Is this issue extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you?

	Mean Score	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	DK/NA
1A. Reducing traffic congestion on local streets	1.6	19%	35%	36%	10%	0%
1B. Reducing traffic on freeways in the area	1.8	23%	39%	34%	4%	<1%
1C. Reducing crime	2.4	53%	31%	14%	<1%	<1%
1D. Improving the local economy	2.3	44%	46%	8%	1%	<1%
1E. Maintaining the quality of public education	2.5	57%	35%	6%	2%	<1%
1F. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	1.6	22%	30%	30%	17%	2%

Computation of Mean Score: "Extremely Important" = 3, "Very Important" = 2, "Somewhat Important" = 1, and "Not Important" = 0.

Traffic Congestion on I-80

2. In your opinion, over the last few years, has I-80 become more crowded, less crowded, or has it stayed about the same?

Less Crowded	4%
About the Same	28%
More Crowded	62%
DK/NA	6%

FasTrak/Bridge Toll Experience

3. Have you heard of FasTrak?

Yes	82%
No	18%

4. [IF AWARE OF FASTRAK; n = 329] Do you currently have a FasTrak account?

Yes	7%
No	93%

5. [IF FASTRAK USER; n = 23] Have you used it in the past 3 months?

Yes	67%
No	33%

6. [IF FASTRAK USER; n = 23] Compared to paying cash, how would you rate using FasTrak with regard to how fast it enables a driver to cross a bridge? Is it...

Somewhat faster than paying cash	10%
Significantly faster than paying cash	87%
DK/NA	3%

7. [IF FASTRAK NON-USER; n = 377] In the past 3 months, have you used a bridge or highway for which you paid a toll?

Yes	60%
No	40%

HOV Lanes

8. Have you heard of carpool lanes?

Yes	99%
No	1%
DK/NA	<1%

9. Have you ever used carpool lanes?

Yes	89%
No	11%
DK/NA	<1%

10. Have you ever used carpool lanes on I-80 between Watt Avenue and Riverside Avenue in Roseville?

Yes	63%
No	37%
DK/NA	1%

11. In general, do you support or oppose carpool lanes? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that strongly [support/oppose] or somewhat [support/oppose]?

Strongly Support	68%
Somewhat Support	23%
Somewhat Oppose	3%
Strongly Oppose	6%
DK/NA	1%

Next, let me tell you about a concept for managing traffic on I-80. When carpool lanes are extended on I-80, between I-5 and State Route 65, transportation officials are studying the idea of allowing drivers traveling alone to use these lanes if they are willing to pay a toll. This concept is called "High Occupancy Toll Lanes" or "HOT [PRONOUNCED AS THE WORD "HOT"] lanes." During peak traffic times, HOT lanes would be less congested than the regular lanes, and traffic in all lanes would move faster. Tolls would be collected electronically, with an automatic payment system that does not require toll gates. Aside from paying for the costs of the tolling system, the toll money could be used to fund public transit and/or other road improvements to the I-80 corridor.

12. Given what you heard, do you support or oppose this concept of high occupancy toll lanes or HOT lanes? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that strongly [support/oppose] or somewhat [support/oppose]?

Strongly Support	26%
Somewhat Support	31%
Somewhat Oppose	9%
Strongly Oppose	30%
DK/NA	3%

13. One reason to charge tolls is to manage the number of solo drivers who use these HOT lanes. When the number of cars in the lane goes up, the toll goes up. When the number of cars in the lane goes down, the toll goes down. The idea is to keep traffic moving at 45 miles per hour or more for all of users of the lane. Hearing about this variable toll to keep traffic flowing, do you support or oppose this HOT lane idea? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that strongly [support/oppose] or somewhat [support/oppose]?

Strongly Support	20%
Somewhat Support	25%
Somewhat Oppose	16%
Strongly Oppose	35%
DK/NA	5%

14. Do you support or oppose the HOT lane idea, if the toll would [READ FROM BELOW]: _____? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that strongly [support/oppose] or somewhat [support/oppose]?

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/NA
14A. Range from \$1 dollar in off-peak times to \$5 dollars or more during rush hour	19%	22%	15%	40%	3%
14B. Be as high as \$10 dollars, if the freeway is very congested	10%	13%	16%	57%	4%

ROTATE Q15 AND Q16

15. I'm going to read to you some potential benefits of HOT lanes. For each, please tell me whether it would make you more likely to support the HOT lanes idea.

Here's the [first/next]: _____. Does hearing this make you more likely to support the HOT lanes idea, or does it have no effect on you? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that much more or somewhat more likely?

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
15A. The HOT lane gives drivers who drive alone the option of paying a toll to drive in a less congested lane during peak traffic times.	0.6	22%	21%	56%	1%
15B. Tolls will be collected electronically, using an automatic system with a transponder mounted on a car's windshield, such as FasTrak. There would be no toll booths and no stopping to pay tolls to slow down traffic.	0.8	31%	15%	54%	<1%
15C. Since carpool lanes are generally not full, allowing solo drivers who are willing to pay to use these lanes also makes better use of them.	0.6	18%	28%	54%	<1%
15D. Carpools of two or more people, buses, motorcycles, and hybrid vehicles would continue to use the carpool lane for free.	0.8	32%	15%	52%	1%
15E. Solo drivers who choose to pay to use the toll lane would be able to drive at 45 miles per hour.	0.4	12%	19%	67%	3%
15F. Air pollution would be reduced because drivers would spend less time on the road getting to their destinations.	0.7	25%	24%	51%	<1%
15G. Revenue from the toll lane would be used to pay for improvements to the I-80 corridor, including public transit.	0.9	31%	24%	43%	1%
15H. Before entering the HOT lane, signs would tell drivers what it would cost them to use the lane.	0.7	24%	23%	53%	1%
15I. Only users of the HOT lane will pay for it, while making the regular lanes less congested for all other drivers. This would improve overall traffic flow and travel time for all users of the I-80 corridor, not just the HOT lane users.	0.7	28%	18%	54%	<1%

Computation of Mean Score: "Much More Likely" = 2, "Somewhat More Likely" = 1, and "No Effect" = 0.

16. I'm going to read to you some potential concerns about HOT lanes. For each, please tell me whether it would make you more likely to oppose the HOT lanes idea.

Here's the [first/next]: _____. Does hearing this make you more likely to oppose the idea, or does it have no effect on you? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that much more or somewhat more likely?

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	DK/NA
16A. The HOT lane creates a two-class system that discriminates against people who can't afford to pay a toll. This is a lane for the rich.	0.8	32%	11%	56%	1%
16B. The toll lane should not be operated 24 hours a day. Anyone should be allowed to drive for free during the off-peak when traffic is light.	0.5	19%	13%	66%	2%
16C. To use the lane, you have to open a FasTrak account, and get a transponder device to mount on your windshield.	0.6	24%	12%	63%	1%
16D. If you have a FasTrak device, but want to use the carpool lane without paying because you have a passenger with you, you would have to remove the device from your windshield, or cover it to avoid being charged the toll.	0.9	33%	19%	46%	1%
16E. People cut in and out of carpool lanes. It will be too hard to enforce the toll lane against cheaters.	0.7	26%	18%	55%	1%
16F. If the goal is to reduce traffic, the government should build another regular lane, not convert a carpool lane funded by taxpayers into a toll lane to benefit those who want to pay for their convenience.	0.7	23%	20%	55%	2%
16G. The whole point of having a carpool lane is to discourage driving alone and reduce the number of cars during peak traffic times. HOT lanes encourage solo driving, and would increase, not decrease, traffic.	0.7	22%	21%	54%	3%

Computation of Mean Score: "Much More Likely" = 2, "Somewhat More Likely" = 1, and "No Effect" = 0.

17. Now that you have heard more about HOT lanes, do you support or oppose this concept? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK]: Is that strongly [support/oppose] or somewhat [support/oppose]?

Strongly Support	25%
Somewhat Support	25%
Somewhat Oppose	15%
Strongly Oppose	32%
DK/NA	3%

18. [IF SUPPORT HOT LANES; n = 199] If such a HOT lane were in operation in the I-80 corridor today, how often would you use it? Would it be...

A few times a month	49%
Once or twice a week	10%
Three or four times a week	15%
Every work day	15%
Would not use	10%
Other	2%
DK/NA	1%

Use of Toll Revenue

19. Beyond paying for the tolling operations, what do you think should be the top priority for using the toll revenue from the HOT lanes? Should the top priority be to pay for...

Other physical freeway improvements	42%
Capital costs of adding the lane to the freeway	25%
Public transit	24%
Other	3%
DK/NA	7%

Naming

20. In your opinion, what name would best capture and communicate the concept of toll lane we have been discussing on this call? Would it be [FROM RANDOMIZED ANSWER CHOICES] or would you call it by some other name?

HOT lane	24%
Carpool and Fastrak lane	24%
Express lane	19%
Carpool and Express lane	13%
Toll lane	1%
Other	9%
DK/NA	11%

Additional Respondent Information

A. Do you typically use this stretch of I-80 for the purposes of commuting to and from work or school?

Yes	38%
No	62%
DK/NA	<1%

B. What is your work zip code?

95670	7%	95822	2%	95610	1%	95746	1%
95814	7%	95841	2%	95603	1%	95816	1%
95678	4%	95826	2%	95834	1%	95673	1%
95838	4%	95621	2%	95843	1%	94585	1%
95820	4%	95811	2%	95833	1%	95823	1%
95648	3%	95630	2%	95660	1%	95650	1%
95661	3%	95818	2%	95652	1%	95817	1%
95747	3%	95819	1%	95608	1%	95824	1%
95825	2%	95821	1%	95864	1%	Other	7%
95765	2%	95628	1%	95677	1%	DK/NA	19%

C. What ethnic group do you consider yourself a part of or feel closest to?

Caucasian/White	56%
Latino[a]/Hispanic	18%
Asian	12%
African-American/Black	6%
Pacific Islander	2%
Mixed	1%
Other	1%
DK/NA	5%

D. To wrap things up, please stop me when I reach the category that best describes your total household income before taxes in 2008.

Less than \$25,000	10%
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	27%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	17%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	18%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	13%
\$150,000 or more	6%
DK/NA	10%

E. Sex:

Male	49%
Female	51%

F. Age:

18 to 24	12%
25 to 34	21%
35 to 44	19%
45 to 54	19%
55 to 64	13%
65 and over	16%

G. Year of Voter Registration:

2007 to present	45%
2005 to 2006	12%
2001 to 2004	21%
1997 to 2000	8%
1993 to 1996	5%
1992 and before	10%

H. City of Residence:

Sacramento	38%
Roseville	13%
Citrus Heights	8%
Rocklin	7%
Lincoln	6%
Carmichael	5%
Antelope	4%
Fair Oaks	4%
Gold River	3%
Rancho Cordova	3%
North Highlands	3%
Rio Linda	3%
Granite Bay	2%
Loomis	2%
Newcastle	1%
Penryn	<1%

I. Zip Code of Residence:

95670	7%	95660	3%
95648	5%	95677	3%
95747	5%	95838	3%
95834	5%	95864	3%
95608	5%	95821	3%
95843	4%	95673	3%
95678	4%	95824	3%
95610	4%	95841	3%
95628	4%	95833	3%
95621	4%	95746	2%
95825	4%	95650	2%
95765	4%	95818	1%
95820	3%	95811	1%
95661	3%	95658	1%
95822	3%	95815	<1%
95826	3%	95663	<1%