

OAKLAND

Survey finds drivers like carpool-toll lanes

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A survey commissioned by the agency building combination carpool-toll lanes over the Sunol Grade on Interstate 680 found that commuters like the idea of the new lanes.

The Alameda County Congestion Management Agency released the results of the poll Friday. According to agency officials, the poll found that 64 percent of the 466 commuters surveyed supported the project, compared with 33 percent who opposed the lanes - often called hot lanes or express lanes.

"The poll indicates that this lane will attract enough users to be financially successful, but not so many that the lane will be too crowded," said Jean Hart, executive director of the I-680 Smart Lane Project.

The project, which is being designed, will add a southbound carpool/toll lane between Pleasanton and Milpitas across the Sunol Grade. It is expected to open to drivers in 2010. A northbound lane would be built later.

Carpools, buses and motorcycles would be able to use the lane for free, but solo drivers could buy their way in by paying a variable toll that would rise and fall with traffic congestion.

The poll found that 12 percent of commuters would use a toll lane daily, 9 percent three or four times a week, 15 percent once or twice a week, 23 percent a few times a month, and 42 percent would not use the lane.

Similar lanes are already in operation in Southern California.

SA Opinion Research of San Francisco conducted the poll, surveying commuters who use highways in the area - 117 who commute on I-680, 282 who drive Interstate 580 and 67 who use both highways. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

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