



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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FHWA Approves Whitman Request to Suspend HOV Lane Temporarily

Gov. Christie Whitman today received authorization from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to temporarily suspend the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane on I-287 until construction of the lane is completed in December. The Governor ordered the suspension of the HOV lane beginning tomorrow at 6 a.m.

At the Governor's direction, Attorney General Peter Verniero today issued a directive freeing the HOV lane for general use beginning tomorrow at 6 a.m. State law gives the Attorney General the authority to "determine and control the direction of the flow" of traffic when an emergency condition exists.

"This is the right thing to do for commuters," said Whitman, who called for the temporary suspension of the lane to give immediate relief to motorists traveling the heavily used 20-mile corridor. "And, on behalf of the thousands of people who will benefit from an extra lane, I thank the FHWA for its concurrence."

"I believe very strongly in the use of HOV lanes and the clean air benefits they provide," Whitman said. "But in the short run, the benefits of opening these lanes temporarily to reduce construction-related congestion are greater."

The Governor also thanked Assemblymen DeCroce and Bucco for playing an instrumental role in having the lane temporarily suspended.

"Motorists' frustration and patience have peaked on I-287," said Transportation Commissioner John J. Haley, Jr., who asked for FHWA authorization to suspend HOV lane at the Governor's direction. "Opening an additional lanes during rush hour is going to make life easier for thousands of commuters every day until those construction cones vanish a few months from now."

As part of the HOV lane suspension, all HOV signs will be covered until construction is completed in December. At that time, the lane will be opened as a complete HOV system on I-287 and reserved, as intended,

for vehicles with two or more persons during designated morning and afternoon rush hours.

Once it is open and fully operational, the I-287 HOV system will provide clean air benefits, congestion relief and travel time savings for its users.

Gov. Whitman sought FHWA authorization to suspend the HOV lane because the federal agency has provided funding for its construction expressly as a high occupancy vehicle lane.

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