

# Managed Lanes: What They Are and Why We Need Them



## OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES - KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Dynamic Pricing** – Fee adjusts in real-time to mitigate congestion in the lane
- **Express Lane** – lane for through traffic, with fewer exits
- **High-Occupancy Tolled Lane (HOT)** – high-occupancy vehicles travel free or at discounted rates depending on demand, other vehicles pay a fee
- **High-Occupancy Vehicle Lane (HOV)** – access restricted to high-occupancy vehicles
- **Lane or Time-of-Day Restrictions** – allow access to managed lanes only at certain times of day or to certain vehicle types (e.g., trucks)
- **Multifaceted Managed Lane Facilities** – incorporate multiple lane management strategies
- **Restricted Lanes** – lanes that declare whether no trucks or only trucks are allowed
- **Reversible Lane** – lane where traffic direction can be altered in response to conditions
- **Time-of-Day Pricing** – Fees increase or decrease at certain times of day
- **Transit Lanes** – dedicated lanes and rights of way for public transit vehicles such as trains or buses
- **Variable Pricing** – Fee-based congestion management solution; can be dynamic or based on time of day

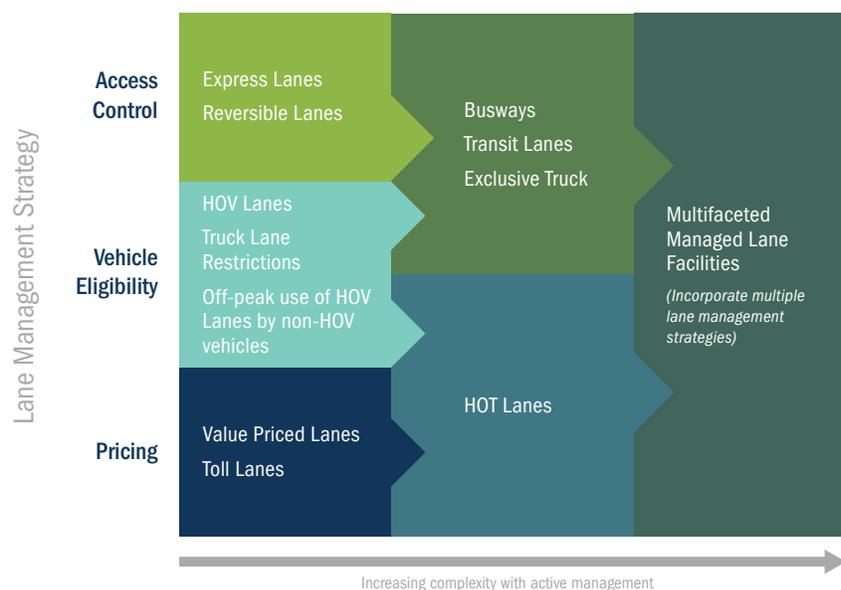
## THE SITUATION

Transportation and the words/terms used to explain highway operations are often challenging to understand. Often the definitions and differences among various highway terms such as managed lanes, express lanes, tolled-managed lanes and HOV/HOT lanes, among others are very discreet. The terms are often assumed to be interchangeable and are frequently misunderstood. In particular, there is a growing assumption that any form of a managed lane is synonymous with a tolling operation. While this is sometimes true, it is not a given.

## WHAT ARE MANAGED LANES?

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), managed lanes are highway lanes where *operational strategies* (see sidebar) are proactively implemented and managed in response to changing conditions.

This diagram captures the potential lane management applications that fall under the broad definition of “managed lanes.” On the left of the diagram are the applications of a single operational strategy. As you move to the right on the diagram, you get into more complex managed lane facilities that blend more than one of the strategies.



Source: *Managed Lanes: A Primer* – FHWA Office of Operations  
[https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/managelanes\\_primer/](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/managelanes_primer/)