

§ 20-146.2. Rush hour traffic lanes authorized.

(a) HOV Lanes. – The Department of Transportation may designate one or more travel lanes as high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on streets and highways on the State Highway System and cities may designate one or more travel lanes as high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on streets on the Municipal Street System. HOV lanes shall be reserved for vehicles with a specified number of passengers as determined by the Department of Transportation or the city having jurisdiction over the street or highway. When HOV lanes have been designated, and have been appropriately marked with signs or other markers, they shall be reserved for privately or publicly operated buses, and automobiles or other vehicles containing the specified number of persons. Where access restrictions are applied on HOV lanes through designated signing and pavement markings, vehicles shall only cross into or out of an HOV lane at designated openings. A motor vehicle shall not travel in a designated HOV lane if the motor vehicle has more than three axles, regardless of the number of occupants. HOV lane restrictions shall not apply to any of the following:

- (1) Motorcycles.
- (2) Vehicles designed to transport 15 or more passengers, regardless of the actual number of occupants.
- (3) Emergency vehicles. As used in this subdivision, the term "emergency vehicle" means any law enforcement, fire, police, or other government vehicle, and any public and privately owned ambulance or emergency service vehicle, when responding to an emergency.
- (4) Plug-in electric vehicles as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(28b), regardless of the number of passengers in the vehicle. These vehicles must be able to travel at the posted speed limit while operating in the HOV lane.
- (5) Dedicated natural gas vehicles as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(5a), regardless of the number of passengers in the vehicle. These vehicles must be able to travel at the posted speed limit while operating in the HOV lane.
- (6) Fuel cell electric vehicles as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(12a), regardless of the number of passengers in the vehicle. These vehicles must be able to travel at the posted speed limit while operating in the HOV lane.

(a1) Transitway Lanes. – The Department of Transportation may designate one or more travel lanes as a transitway on streets and highways on the State Highway System and cities may designate one or more travel lanes as a transitway on streets on the Municipal Street System. Transitways shall be reserved for public transportation vehicles as determined by the Department of Transportation or the city having jurisdiction over the street or highway. When transitways have been designated, and they have been appropriately marked with signs or other markers, they shall be reserved for privately or publicly operated transportation vehicles as determined by the Department or the city having jurisdiction.

(b) Temporary Peak Traffic Shoulder Lanes. – The Department of Transportation may modify, upgrade, and designate shoulders of controlled access facilities and partially controlled access facilities as temporary travel lanes during peak traffic periods. When these shoulders have been appropriately marked, it shall be unlawful to use these shoulders for stopping or emergency parking. Emergency parking areas shall be designated at other appropriate areas, off these shoulders, when available.

(c) Directional Flow Peak Traffic Lanes. – The Department of Transportation may designate travel lanes for the directional flow of peak traffic on streets and highways on the State Highway System and cities may designate travel lanes for the directional flow of peak traffic on streets on the Municipal Street System. These travel lanes may be designated for time periods by the agency controlling the streets and highways. (1987, c. 547, s. 1; 1999-350, s. 1; 2003-184, s. 5; 2011-95, s. 2; 2011-206, s. 2; 2012-194, s. 10; 2020-73, s. 4.)