

THE 66 ALLIANCE



Media Release

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I-66 Commuters Organize to Protest VDOT Plans for HOV Rules

Carpoolers and Hybrid/Electric Vehicle Owners Unite to Preserve Current HOV Rules on I-66.

Northern Virginia, May 22, 2015 — A unique and diverse group of commuters along Interstate 66 announced today that they have united, and launched a new website, to oppose the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) plans to change the rules on the use of HOV lanes on I-66 during rush hour.

“VDOT has proposed to repeal the pro-environmental protection rules that allow carpools with 2 passengers and hybrid and electric vehicles to use I-66’s HOV lanes during rush hour,” stated Greg Scott, a community organizer, hybrid vehicle owner, and regular I-66 commuter. “I estimate that there are approximately 50,000 daily I-66 commuters that will strongly object to VDOT’s proposal once they know about it and our goal is to organize these folks into a potent political force called The 66 Alliance.”

It has been widely publicized that VDOT plans to convert much of I-66 – from the D.C. line to Haymarket, Virginia – to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes from the current mix of regular travel lanes open to all commuters and motorists and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Currently, carpoolers with two passengers (HOV-2) and hybrid

and electric vehicles with Clean Fuel plates issued before July 1, 2011 can travel in I-66's HOV lanes during rush hour. These HOV-2 and clean fuel rules were adopted in the 1990s to promote environmentally-friendly policies such as carpooling and to facilitate the rapid introduction of alternative fuel vehicles such as gasoline/electric hybrids, compressed natural gas, electric and fuel cell vehicles. VDOT's proposal will repeal the "green" Clean Fuel plate rules – thus eliminating the alternative fuel vehicle incentives in place for almost 25 years -- and change HOV-2 to HOV-3 – forcing a change in commuting habits for tens of thousands of current carpoolers.

"VDOT estimates that there are 19,000 alternative fuel vehicles with qualifying Clean Fuel vehicles eligible to use I-66's HOV lanes during rush hour; there must be at least three times that number of HOV-2 carpoolers that commute on I-66 each day," Scott continued. "That means that VDOT plans to repeal the commuting rules under which tens of thousands of Northern Virginians have made major life decisions – where to live, where to work, where to send their kids to school, and what vehicles to drive – without so much as a public hearing, notice or comment period."

The 66 Alliance does not oppose VDOT's plans to address the rampant congestion on I-66, whether through lane expansions, tolls, extension of Metro or light rail. All options for congestion mitigation should be considered, explored through analysis, and subject to public input and debate. However, The 66 Alliance does oppose the unilateral, non-public decision by VDOT to rescind the promises made to tens of thousands of Northern Virginia I-66 commuters.

"I have estimated that it will cost me about \$10,000 a year in tolls to continue my current commute to D.C. – from Haymarket to the D.C. line -- if VDOT's plans are implemented," stated Scott. "Multiply that amount by the tens of thousands of commuters in a similar situation in Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Fauquier and Warren Counties, as well as Fairfax and Falls Church cities, and you are talking hundreds of millions of dollars annually being taken from average working people."

"Organized Virginia citizens stopped the implementation of the Virginia hybrid vehicle tax in 2014." Scott continued, "The 66 Alliance aims to achieve that same goal – forcing state government to step back and reconsider their misguided plans. I urge my fellow Northern Virginia commuters to join The 66 Alliance at www.66alliance.org."

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