

Ontario's Carpool Lot Program and Rideshare Experience

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ABSTRACT

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has constructed and operated a network of carpool lots across Ontario since 1979. There are currently 58 official Ministry carpool lots containing about 4,000 spaces operated by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. Overall Province-wide carpool demand has grown at an annual rate of 3.7% over the last 10 years.

It was important for the Ministry of Transportation to take a fresh look at its existing carpool lot program, in the context of the Ministry's broader goals for ridesharing and HOV. Although successful in many ways, the Ministry's carpool lot program has developed on an ad hoc basis, in reaction to local problems and needs.

As a result, the Ministry of Transportation initiated the Carpool Lot Study in 1997 to confirm whether there is a business case for the Province of Ontario to continue to build, operate, and maintain carpool lots and, if so, what are the policy directions for the Ministry.

The first phase of the study evaluated the effectiveness of the existing carpool lot program - its benefits and costs, its success, how effectively it works, how it fits in with overall MTO goals and objectives, and the strength of the business case for the program. The study concluded that the Province of Ontario should continue to have a major role in the province-wide planning of carpool lots.

The second phase of the study identified and evaluated options that will enable the carpool program to better support overall Ministry goals and objectives, and, specifically, support the larger HOV program. The study developed policy recommendations on: the planning process for carpool lots; ownership and use of carpool lots; design standards; construction; revenue generation; operation and maintenance; program evaluation; and marketing.

In summary, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation has reaffirmed and strengthened its commitment to the Provincial carpool lot program in the context of overall Provincial travel demand management objectives involving carpooling, ridesharing, and HOV lanes.