

Chair J. Kalani English
Senate Transportation and International Affairs Committee

Chair Ron Menor
Senate Energy and Environment Committee

Wednesday, January 30, 2008
2:45pm, Rm. 224



Aloha Chairs English and Menor:

Testimony in support of SB 2365

I am requesting that you pass SB 2365 to give people in our state who own hybrids the ability to use the HOV/Zipper lanes regardless of the number of occupants in the vehicle. I live in Royal Kunia and commute to downtown/Hawaii Loa HPU campus. Some information below is submitted to support my request;

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes were built in many of American's metro areas in the 1980s and 1990s to encourage commuting by carpool and buses. Now states are selectively expanding access to these express lanes (zipper lanes) to encourage commuters to buy leaner, more fuel-efficient cars. At least 15 states have enacted legislation that would allow owners of hybrid vehicles to use HOV lanes when driving alone and thirteen states are considering such legislation.

In August 2005 President Bush signed the Federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 (SAFETEA) provides states with the option to allow hybrid vehicles to use HOV lanes if the program does not degrade the performance of HOV lanes. Already in place is a Federal Tax credit for owners of

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hybrids. In the state of Hawaii, Toyota sold 663 hybrids and as of Nov 2007, 564 units were sold. In 2007, the Toyota Prius was one of the 10 best selling cars in America.

By encouraging the use of cleaner, more energy-efficient vehicles on our roadways and providing the Hawaiian driver an incentive to use them, we will reduce our dependence on imported energy and help improve our environment.

More and more states are using a variety of strategies to begin to clear the air and drivers who make the commitment to clean air and energy efficiency should be allowed the incentive and reward of driving in our HOV/Zipper lanes.

Mahalo for taking the time to consider my request.

Gary A. Waters
Assistant Professor
Hawaii Pacific University

Senator J. Kalani English, Chair
Committee on Transportation and International Affairs

SB 2365

Wednesday, January 30

2:45 PM Conference Room 224, State Capital 415 Beretania Street

I am David Diamond, a PhD Candidate at the School of Public Policy at George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, and I am testifying in favor of SB 2365, which would allow hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) to use of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in Hawaii regardless of the number of occupants.

As part of my dissertation research, I have conducted extensive research on the impact of government incentive policies on the adoption of HEVs. I found that under specific circumstances, HOV lane incentives for hybrids have had a dramatic impact on adoption. Specifically, HOV lane incentives were extremely significant in Northern Virginia, where hybrids have been allowed unrestricted access to HOV lanes on three major highways. In Stafford County, which contains the Interstate 95/395 HOV lanes, hybrids accounted for over 6% of all new vehicles registered (based on Virginia DMV data) during Virginia fiscal year 2006¹, which was approximately twice the state average for FY06 and four times the 2006 national market share average of 1.5% (based on a RL Polk and Company press release). The impact of the incentive in Northern Virginia was significant even after correcting for income, political affiliation and average county gasoline price.

HOV incentives are most likely to be effective when the HOV lanes offer a significant time savings. In Virginia, incentives have only been effective in Northern Virginia, not in Hampton Roads, where the HOV system offers less time savings over the regular lanes. HOV incentives should also be monitored to ensure that they do not result in the HOV lanes themselves becoming congested, which could ultimately discourage carpooling and hybrid purchases. The state should also consider extending access to other types of vehicles in the future (such as clean diesels and all-electric cars) that offer the same types of fuel savings and low emissions as hybrids. Some people in Virginia have questioned whether the gas savings of hybrids on the HOV lanes justifies their use with only one occupant. However, it should be noted that the environmental benefits of purchasing a hybrid extend beyond the daily commute, since drivers use the hybrid on weekends and evenings as well.

In conclusion, I believe that SB 2365 could significantly increase HEV adoption in Hawaii. This in turn could have a positive environmental impact, provided that Hawaii is careful to re-evaluate the law periodically, to ensure that it has not discouraged people who currently carpool from continuing to do so.

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¹ Virginia fiscal year 2006 was from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006

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