

Posted on Sun, Jan. 06, 2008

TIDBIT

Web site offers easy way to plan car pool
Families enter drivers, where kids need to be and create calendar

STEVE HARRISON
The Charlotte Observer

There are a number of Web sites that are like match.com for car poolers, and a new site recently debuted with a couple of twists.

This site -- www.dividetheride.com -- is for families who need relief from schlepping kids to dance practice, soccer games, etc. It's also not matching you with other people, but simply organizing a car pool you have already assembled.

"Traffic is definitely a problem here," said Monica Kozak, vice president of Divide the Ride, who recently moved to Charlotte from Connecticut. "I see a lot of it in the places I travel -- I see parents who live and work right near each other all rushing back and forth to the same places. It's true in Charlotte -- this is such a family oriented place."

If you want to use the Web site, you enter people who have agreed to be in your car pool. You then enter where your kids need to be. Divide the Ride creates a calendar that you can access from online, and it will send you text message reminders.

The Web site, which launched late last year, is currently free. As part of the Horizon Marketing Group, Kozak said the site might eventually be supported with ads. TIDBIT

Lanes closing on newest I-485 section

The state has closed two right lanes on the newest section of Interstate 485, between N.C. 16 and Rozelles Ferry Road, so it can install infrastructure near the shoulder for what the N.C. DOT calls ITS -- Intelligent Transportation Systems. ITS are enhancements such as cameras that give commuters and traffic engineers real-time photos of traffic, as well as digital signs that give motorists traffic updates.

The lanes were closed last week, and the N.C. DOT said they could be closed until Jan. 25. Only outerbelt lanes are impacted.

The state plans to eventually install four digital signs That includes two signs on the latest stretch of I-485, between N.C. 16 and N.C. 115. That stretch of the loop isn't expected to open until November.

No short ride to I-73/74

Reader Dave Thompson e-mails about the new I-73/74 in central North Carolina, and whether any part of it will touch Charlotte.

In short, the answer is no.

The new interstates -- first enacted by Congress in 1991 -- will come within 75 miles of Charlotte, at Rockingham. Currently the two interstates share about 80 miles of expressway south of Greensboro. In the future, I-73 will continue from Rockingham to Myrtle Beach. (South Carolina is considering building their portion as a toll road.) I-74 will follow U.S. 74 toward Wilmington, before possibly turning to the south just east of Whiteville, and joining U.S. 17.

CATS reviewing Rock Hill bus route

When CATS opened the Lynx Blue Line, it shuffled a number of bus routes to feed into the rail line. But one route remained the same, curiously: The express bus route from Rock Hill, 82x. That route is still chugging along Interstate 77, running parallel to light rail.

The Charlotte Area Transit System is considering tweaking the route so it feeds into the rail line at either I-485/South Boulevard station or the Sharon Road West station. The benefits would be that the shorter trip from Rock Hill to the rail line would allow CATS to either save money or offer more frequent service. (It currently offers three rush-hour buses.)

Former chief executive Ron Tober said last month he thinks the express buses could get to light rail without being stuck in the traffic jam at I-485 and I-77.

But any change would have to be approved by York County, which helps pay to operate the line. CATS plans to survey the roughly 125 people who ride the route to work uptown each weekday to see whether they want to stay on the bus or switch to rail.

Watch for falling signs

I wrote last month about the lack of signage on I-85 South, approaching the I-77 interchange. A reader complained that the only sign announcing the junction of the two expressways was only 1/4-mile from the turnoff.

Another reader called soon after. She said there was once an I-77 exit sign hanging from the Graham Street overpass, but it's now fallen off. I'll pass that on to the N.C. DOT to see when and if it's going to be repaired.