

## **Annotation: An Engineering Feasibility Study: “Value Express Lanes Feasibility Study Final Report”**

To work through this annotation, link to the report located at this URL.

[http://www.valuelanes.com/archive\\_docs/VEL\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.valuelanes.com/archive_docs/VEL_Final_Report.pdf)

The purpose of the report was to summarize the findings, conclusions, and lessons learned by a team charged with investigating the feasibility of implementing Value Express Lanes (toll lanes) on selected Denver highways. The report includes a set of recommendations based on the results the intensive two-year study. Although it is quite lengthy and complex, the report follows a format that should be familiar to the readers of Kristin Woolever’s *Writing for the Technical Professional*.

### **Title Page**

Notice that the title page includes the following elements. Compare the title page to the examples found in your textbook.

- Project title
- Date
- Principal author
- Names of other individuals, companies, and organizations that worked on the project
- Project and company logos

### **Table of Contents**

The table of contents, which extends over four pages long, includes three levels of headings. This detail enables readers zero in on the precise portion of the long report that they wish to read. The longer the report, the more detail is required in the table of contents. If your report is less than 10 pages in length, you may consider omitting the table of contents.

Notice that the report does not include a list of figures or illustrations. This might suggest to you that no illustrations are included; on the contrary, you’ll find a number of graphics, including tables, flow charts, and maps. Why would a list of illustrations be omitted from the front matter of a lengthy report such as this one?

Similarly, no references are included at the end of the report. This is probably because the project team emphasized field studies, interviews, and analyses of original, project-specific documents in conducting their research. You may find references to published reports embedded in the text of the document.

### **Section 1. Executive Summary**

The executive summary is 13 pages long—more than 10% of the length of the report. However, the length is justifiable, because the executive summary includes enough information for the reader to understand the project scope, processes, methods of analysis, and final recommendations. Notice that this lengthy and detailed executive summary has the effect of front-loading the report—providing the reader with essential information that is easy to find and is written in an accessible manner.

### **Section 2. Introduction**

Notice that the introduction includes a brief overview of all ten sections of the report, affording the reader yet another overview of the report. This is information that you might expect to find in

the executive summary of a report, but here, it is offered in its own separate section. A reader who did not wish to read the entire report would probably want to read the executive summary, skim the introduction, and then skip to the final section.

### **Sections 3 through 9. Body**

- Section 3 – Background.
- Section 4 – The results of a regional assessment.
- Section 5 – The results of an analysis of the regional traffic trouble spots.
- Section 6 – Description and comparison of alternative scenarios.
- Section 7 – The results of various public opinion surveys and evaluations.
- Section 8 – The results of an assessment of the project team’s cost and revenue analysis.
- Section 9 – An overview of operations models.

As you page through the body of the report, notice that each body section concludes with a summary of one kind or another. Although each section summary takes a slightly different form—for example, in ending Sections 4 and 5 the authors offer conclusions from these subsections of the study, while they close Section 6 by comparing several alternative implementation scenarios and Section 7 with a summary of “lessons learned” from the material covered in that chapter. These Section conclusions, diverse as they are, form a coherent thread that runs through the report. This sequence of summaries comes together in Section 10.

### **Section 10. Conclusions and Recommendations**

You’ll notice that Section 10, which is only a few pages long, includes key conclusions and a recommended course of action. Each of the key points in the section can be tied back to one of the sections of the body, so that the busy reader who only has time to review a portion of the report, can easily find out where to obtain additional information about issues that are relevant to him or her.

Although Section 10 repeats material initially presented in other parts of the book, this repetition is essential for the busy reader, who may then go back and read in more depth the sections of the book that are of interest.

### **Layout and Design**

The report has an effective and professional design, several elements of which warrant attention.

- All of the design elements, including the vertical bars and alternating left/right page layouts, can be produced with a standard word processing program.
- The report is designed for printing as an 11x17” booklet. The left- and right-hand pages are laid out differently; page numbers appear on the inner corner of each page. Blank pages have been inserted to ensure that the final page count is divisible by 4.
- Color is used sparingly but purposefully. The outside cover is printed in full color, and probably also on a heavy weight paper. Spot color is limited to the blue logo that appears in each section title, and colored highlights used for emphasis on some of the maps. The rest of the report is done with black ink, which saves on printing costs.
- White space helps guide the reader and achieve a unified appearance throughout the report.
- Tables are used to help the reader to synthesize related data and understand complex relationships.