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I-35 in Austin Tops Year’s Annual Ranking of State’s Most Congested Roads

Study identifies traffic on the Top 100 most congested road segments

The ranking of Texas’ most congested roadways illustrates a familiar theme – growth-induced traffic gridlock is getting worse every year.

Interstate 35 in Austin tops this year’s rankings, one place ahead of the I-610 West Loop in Houston (last year’s No. 1). The Eastex (US-59) and Southwest Freeways (US-59) in Houston and Stemmons Freeway (I-35E) in Dallas round out the top five.

“Carefully monitoring our mobility conditions is the first step toward developing solutions – whether we mean system additions, operations improvements or multimodal solutions,” says TTI Research Fellow Tim Lomax. “Whether for planners or policy makers, it’s really important to have a strong grasp of the problem, because that understanding will lead to more informed decisions.”

“Year after year we see one theme that continues to resonate,” said Marc Williams, TxDOT’s Interim Deputy Director. “Our growing communities and worsening traffic congestion in Texas are, in fact, very real, and they call for a variety of solutions.”

The Texas Transportation Commission is focused on addressing congestion with stakeholders statewide.

“Should voters approve Proposition 7 on November 3, over time Texas could benefit from an additional \$4 billion a year for roads, including a greater focus on congestion relief projects, without additional new taxes, tolls, fees or debt,” said Transportation Commissioner J. Bruce Bugg. “If these new funding streams become available in the coming years, we look forward to working with local transportation leaders to come up with the best ways forward to focus on congestion relief for their individual communities,”

Nearly all of last year's top 20 road segments also made this year's top 20, though there were some changes in those rankings. This year's list of the top 100 most congested roadways includes 29 roads not on last year's list.

This year's analysis used a new traffic data monitoring system that provided greater accuracy of traffic volume counts and traffic speeds. That improved system also helped TxDOT refine its data gathering process over previous years.

The state's worsening traffic gridlock is driven largely by a rapid growth in population without a corresponding growth in roadway space. The number of registered vehicles in Texas has nearly tripled – up 172 percent in the past 40 years, while highway space has grown by only 19 percent during the same time. Limited transit use adds to the challenge.

The analysis also puts a focus on freight-related congestion. I-35 in Austin holds the top spot in that category, followed by Woodall Rogers Freeway (Spur 366) in Dallas, LBJ Freeway (I-635) in Dallas, the North Freeway (I-35W) in Fort Worth and Houston's Eastex Freeway.

Planners can use the information to help them examine problem areas, consider possible solutions, and prioritize needs and projects in the face of limited available roadway funding. Those funding challenges, researchers say, make it all the more important to have a clear understanding of urban congestion problems.

The complete list of Texas' 100 most congested roadways can be found [here](#).

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