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Houston freeways take top spots on annual gridlock list

Two Houston roadways – the West Loop and Southwest Freeway – claim first and second place in this year’s ranking of Texas’ most congested roadways. IH 35 in Austin takes the third spot, followed by the Woodall Rodgers Freeway in Dallas and the Eastex Freeway in Houston.

Although specific ranks on the list change marginally from year to year, most of the road segments are perennial. All but 15 of the Top 100 this year also made the 2017 list. All but six of this year’s top 50 made that cut last year. Though the worst stretches are concentrated in Texas’ biggest urban areas, the full assessment by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute includes 1,829 segments across the state. That complete list is available at <https://mobility.tamu.edu/texas-most-congested-roadways/>.

TTI researchers use traffic volume and speed data to get a measure of traffic delay and then quantify how much more time it takes to travel a mile on a congested road than it does to travel that same distance in uncongested conditions.

The Texas Department of Transportation has increased efforts to mitigate gridlock in recent years, boosted by two voter-approved actions to direct more funding to the State Highway Fund as part of Texas Clear Lanes. Details on that initiative can be found at www.texasclearlanes.com.

TTI’s annual listing offers no surprises – just a reaffirmation of a familiar theme. Worsening gridlock statewide is driven largely by population expansion that outpaces growth in roadway capacity. The inescapable result is amplified by a thriving economy riding high on the energy industry.

The analysis also puts a focus on freight-related congestion. I-35 in Austin holds the top spot in truck delay, followed by the Bob Bullock Loop in Laredo, Houston’s Eastex Freeway and West Loop, and the North Freeway in Fort Worth.

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