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Busiest Freeways in Texas Retaining Gridlock Distinction

December 1, 2020 (College Station, TX) — The top spot in Texas’ annual ranking of its most congested roadways again belongs to a familiar contender: Interstate 35 (I-35) in Austin. In moving to number one on the list, I-35 displaces the West Loop (I-610) in Houston, which held that distinction for the previous two years. Houston’s Southwest Freeway (I-69), Dallas’ Woodall Rodgers Freeway (SS-366), and the Eastex Freeway (I-69) in Houston round out the five most gridlocked stretches in the state.

The rankings are based on an analysis performed by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI). The numbers illustrate conditions through 2019, before COVID-19-related shutdowns sharply reduced roadway congestion levels in early 2020 and continues to impact congestion in many locations around the state.

TTI uses traffic volumes and speed data to measure traffic congestion. The primary measure (delay per mile) gauges how much more time it takes for motorists to travel on a congested road than it does to make the same trip in uncongested conditions.

A complete roster and multi-year comparisons of the rankings of 1,860 road sections can be found at <https://mobility.tamu.edu/texas-most-congested-roadways/>.

The Texas Department of Transportation is actively seeking solutions to many of these problem areas, and the Texas Transportation Commission has fast-tracked those fixes for several road sections through the [Texas Clear Lanes](#) program, now in its fifth year. To date, 6 Texas Clear Lanes projects have been completed, 19 more are under construction and 18 are in the planning stages.

“Unfortunately, for drivers in central Texas, congestion on I-35 in Austin is now the worst choke point in the state. But relief is on the way since the Texas Transportation Commission recently included the I-35 Capital Express Project in TxDOT’s 10-year plan, that will advance project development and construction,” said Texas Transportation Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg, Jr. “The I-35 Capital Express Project, which is a statewide strategic priority, underscores the need for continued investment in transportation so we can keep up with the continued growth that makes Texas one of the top places to live and do business.”

The top gridlock rankings change little from year to year. The 52 most congested roads on the list are concentrated in the state’s five most populated TxDOT districts: Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. Ninety-five of the top 100 are in those same five areas.

Although the specific reasons for congestion on each roadway vary, TTI notes that the causes are generally consistent, with economic growth being the most common contributor. As measures of employment and commerce rise and fall, so does traffic congestion. Solutions must include a range of strategies, including adding road and transit capacity, rapidly clearing crashes and stalled vehicles,



efficiently timing traffic signals, managing work zones and — as we have seen in recent months — telework options.

The analysis again this year examines freight as a component of roadway congestion, with Austin's I-35 claiming the top spot on the truck traffic congestion list, along with its overall number-one ranking. Austin I-35 truck congestion was the state's worst last year, as well.

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About TTI:

TTI develops solutions to the problems and challenges facing all modes of transportation. The Institute conducts over 700 research projects annually with over 200 sponsors at all levels of government and the private sector. Recognized as one of the premier higher education-affiliated transportation research agencies in the world, TTI's research and development program has resulted in significant breakthroughs across all facets of the transportation system. For more information, visit tti.tamu.edu.