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Houston TranStar goes Twitter

New Web-based communication mode offers flexibility and instant information

Area Web users now can get live incident reports from Houston TranStar using the latest Web sensation: Twitter.

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool that's fast becoming a major source for information updates. It's a free service that lets users keep in touch through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing? Or in TranStar's case: What's traffic doing?

Twitter allows users to send updates (otherwise known as tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. Houston TranStar's constantly-updated notices about incidents on the area's freeway system can be viewed on TranStar's Twitter sites on desktop computers or mobile devices.

Houston TranStar currently offers a main Twitter site that displays reported incidents for all roadways in addition to sites for individual freeways. For a list of all Houston TranStar's Twitter sites, visit <http://traffic.houstontranstar.org/twitter/>.

"Twitter is a great way to give travelers the quickest, simplest news about what's going on with the roads they travel most often," said Jack Whaley, Director of Houston TranStar. "When it's rush hour, getting through an entire traffic update on the radio may be more information than the person wants; Twitter cuts through the irrelevant and unnecessary and focuses on what's important to that person."

Houston TranStar is a collaboration between four government agencies that coordinate and enhance transportation and emergency management services, responding to incidents and emergency in Harris County and beyond. Sharing their resources to serve area residents their agencies are the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Harris County, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) and the City of Houston.