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Houston TranStar Wins Two National Awards for Anonymous Travel Time Information System

Intelligent Transportation Society of America recognizes collaboration for travel updates

Houston TranStar swept the Intelligent Transportation Society of America's annual awards for its innovative Anonymous Wireless Address Matching (AWAM) system of sensing and publishing real-time travel information.

In one application, the City of Houston Department of Public Works and Engineering, Traffic Operations Division (one of Houston TranStar's four member agencies) deployed AWAM sensors along a network of roads in west Houston to build the first traffic data system for an arterial network in the United States. The sensor system, which reads encrypted signals from Bluetooth-enabled mobile devices, garnered the award for "Best New Innovative Products, Services, or Applications."

Fifty sensors were installed along a 62-square mile section of west Houston, an area whose arterials serve about 260,000 people and four major employment centers: Uptown Houston, Westchase, Memorial City and the Energy Corridor. System installation cost less than \$50,000 as opposed to \$4.5 Million for a traditional toll tag system.

"The City of Houston has developed one of the best, most innovative technological advances in traffic monitoring to help Houstonians get around our busy city," said Houston Mayor Annise Parker. "This award is much deserved. This technology will be mirrored in other cities, once again making Houston a model for others to emulate."

In a separate application, the Texas Department of Transportation (another TranStar member agency) deployed AWAM sensors northward from The Woodlands more than 200 miles along the I-45 North corridor to Dallas, allowing Houston TranStar to monitor and manage traffic conditions on this major hurricane evacuation route. TxDOT provided research efforts, equipment and installation for this effort, for which TranStar received the "Best Innovative Practice for a Rural ITS Project."

"Houston TranStar's monitoring system along I-45 North lets us display travel information both during evacuations and for day-to-day use at about 10% of the cost of other technologies," said Michael Alford, District Engineer, TxDOT-Houston District. "The AWAM system saved taxpayers \$1.5 Million for a system that could save lives during hurricanes."

Travel time information is accessible 24 hours a day/7 days a week on Houston TranStar's website at www.houstontranstar.org. The AWAM sensors collect anonymous data that cannot be used to gather personal information: All data are encrypted upon receipt before being processed. More information about the system and protection of travelers' privacy can be found at http://traffic.houstontranstar.org/bluetooth/transtar_bluetooth.html.

In May, Houston TranStar's AWAM system won 'Best of Texas,' and in September garnered a nationwide 'Best Innovation Government to Government,' from The Center for Digital Government.

Houston TranStar is a consortium of four government agencies that coordinate and enhance transportation and emergency management services in Southeast Texas. The agencies include Harris County, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO), City of Houston the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Check us out on the Houston TranStar Facebook and Twitter pages.