

Metropolitan Transit Authority

Harris County



Texas Department of Transportation

City of Houston

Greater Houston Transportation and Emergency Management Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 2004

Contact: Artee T. Jones – Executive Public Information Officer
713-881-3244 or email: ajones3@houstontranstar.org

**HOUSTON TRANSTAR WINS TOP NATIONAL
TRANSPORTATION HONORS FOR ITS INNOVATIVE AND USER
FRIENDLY WEBSITE THREE OUT OF THE LAST FOUR YEARS**

“Partnership preparing to introduce new features on website in November 2004”

(Houston, Texas --- Today, Houston TranStar, the Transportation and Emergency Management Center for the Greater Houston Region, proudly announced that the United States Department of Transportation- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has again selected its website as one of top three best internet destinations providing travelers with real-time information in the nation.

The website located at www.houstontranstar.org was chosen by the United States Department of Transportation-Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) based on its user friendliness, comprehensiveness of information and real-time reporting capabilities. Houston TranStar has won this nationally recognized award three times (2001, 2002 and 2004) since its inception in 2001. Other recipients of the 2004 top website award are Maryland’s Chart (www.chart.state.md.us) and San Antonio’s TransGuide (www.transguide.dot.state.tx.us).

Each year for the past four years, the Federal Highway Administration has identified three websites from around the nation they feel provides the best traveler information available to the motoring public.

According to Mary E. Peters, Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration, “We want to give drivers the tools they need to avoid traffic jams and get to where they want to go safely and quickly”.

-more-

2-2-2-2-2

Developed by the Texas Department of Transportation working in conjunction with the Texas Transportation Institute, the website was first made available in 1994 and continues to incorporate new tools that meet the public's need and desire for real-time traveler information. Some recent additions to the website include the ability to view traveler information messages on the dynamic message signs (DMS), wait times for the Galveston – Port Bolivar Ferry system and day of the week travel times.

In addition to these capability upgrades, the members of the Houston TranStar partnership have also expanded the bandwidth connection to accommodate the increased usage during major traffic incidents, freeway construction closures and severe weather related events.

Jack Whaley, Director of Houston TranStar stated, "The members of the Houston TranStar partnership are thankful to the Federal Highway Administration for recognizing us again for our website. Our goal with this site has always been to provide the most up to date and accurate information to travelers in a very user-friendly fashion."

The Texas Department of Transportation is planning to expand and increase the capabilities of the website to better serve the public by implementing an improved speed map with additional features. Scheduled for release in November 2004, the new layered speed map allows users to display accidents, construction lane closures, DMS messages and freeway cameras all on a single map.

The new map will have zoom feature capabilities for certain quadrants of the Houston TranStar service jurisdiction and allow users better access to traffic information using portable internet devices, such as PDA's, mobile phones and pagers, in addition to using desktop computers. Making this vital information available on portable internet devices provides motorists with valuable traffic information whenever and wherever they need it.

For more information on Houston TranStar's national award or the new layered map, please feel free to contact Artee T. Jones, Executive Public Information Officer for the Houston TranStar partnership at 713-881-3244 or email: ajones3@houstontranstar.org.