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Houston TranStar Adds Sensor Coverage

Side-fire Radar Covers Widespread Region

HOUSTON (October 15, 2007) – New real-time traffic speed sensors, some more than 100 miles from downtown Houston, give area travelers vital information to monitor day-to-day traffic conditions while traveling to San Antonio, Dallas, Louisiana and other locations.



This system relies on “side fire” radar which emits a beam across the roadway. The information translates into a “spot speed,” which is shown as a bar of color on Houston TranStar’s Real Time Regional Traffic Map. The maps can be accessed from a desktop computer at <http://traffic.houstontranstar.org/> using the “More Maps” menu, or on an Internet-connected mobile device at <http://traffic.houstontranstar.org/mobile/maps.aspx> under the section entitled “More Maps.”

This new method supplements the existing technique that calculates speeds using toll tags issued by the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA).

The side-fire radar method, used by sensors far from Houston’s urban area, offers a quick idea of how traffic is flowing in remote destinations. The sensors give southeast Texas travelers a quick gauge of conditions, with colors changing based on traffic speeds. They were initially installed to measure speeds during mass evacuations. The sensor information is supplemented with cameras that offer snapshots.

This “dashboard to traffic” is available to the public either by using a mobile device to access <http://mobile.houstontranstar.org> or by going to Houston TranStar's web site, www.houstontranstar.org.

Sensors read traffic at these and other spots:

- Huntsville (I-45 North)
- New Waverly (I-45 North)
- Conroe (Loop 336 north and south)
- Vidor (I-10 East)
- West of Beaumont (I-10 East)
- Orange (I-10 East)
- Sealy (I-10 West)
- Columbus (I-10 West)
- Schulenberg (I-10 West)
- Hempstead (US 290 West)

Using speed sensors in conjunction with more than 600 cameras, travelers in the region can monitor traffic conditions on freeways and major roadways.

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