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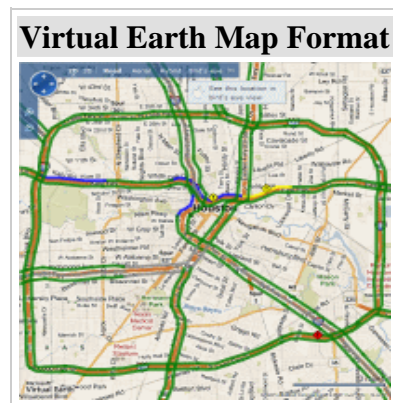
Houston TranStar Unveils New Travel Tool

Virtual Earth Map offers features, flexibility for area residents

HOUSTON (March 6, 2008) Houston TranStar introduces a new format for viewing its traveler information using the Microsoft Virtual Earth map platform. The system merges Houston TranStar's extensive traveler information system with the up-to-date map detail and imagery of the Virtual Earth platform.

The new tool gives users additional mapping options for viewing traffic information, but will not replace the existing Real Time Traffic Map.

The Virtual Earth map allows Houston TranStar to combine information onto one detailed map, with options such as viewing street level data on either road or photographic aerial maps.



“The new Virtual Earth Map gives users even more choices: With this tool, they can customize views of events and devices that have been mapped by the Houston TranStar System on the high-resolution imagery that Virtual Earth provides,” said John R. Whaley, director of Houston TranStar. “With just a mouse click, visitors can see on which roadway an incident has occurred, where planned or existing construction is located, view messages from freeway signs, and view traffic speeds.”

Like the existing Real Time Traffic Map, the system allows users to zoom in or out of specific areas in the Houston region. But the new Virtual Earth map provides enhanced panning and zooming capabilities and lets the user access links to travel and traffic information in other Texas cities by zooming out to the statewide view.

“Keeping our drivers informed and safe is important to Houston TranStar, and this enhanced map is one example that lets them know that their concerns are our concerns,” Whaley added.

The new map can be accessed on the Houston TranStar web site at <http://traffic.houstontranstar.org/ve/>. The original map is still available at <http://traffic.houstontranstar.org>.

Houston TranStar is the 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.