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NEWSLETTER

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Freeway and Expressway Status Map

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Updated

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The Freeway and Expressway Status Map is published annually by the Study Office. Enclosed with this Newsletter is the updated 1997 map showing the current status of the freeway and expressway system for the eight-county Houston-Galveston Regional Transportation Study Area. Also included on the reverse side of the map is the proposed construction schedule as indicated by the 1997 Unified Transportation Plan and the 1996 Transportation Improvement Program.

1996 Completions

Major progress towards further transportation improvement in the H-GRTS area during the past year occurred with the completion of the mainlane widening on IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) from Alameda-Genoa Road to north of Dixie Farm Road in Harris County, US 59 (Eastex Freeway) from north of Aldine-Bender to south of Greens Road, and on SH 146 (formerly Loop 201), also known as Robert C. Lanier Freeway, from Spur 330 to east of North Main Street in Baytown.

(See Status Map ... Page 3)

1996 School District Map

A map showing the location of all public schools in the independent school districts (ISDs) in Harris County and neighboring ISDs is included in this Newsletter. Only the schools within the border of the map are listed on the back of the map, while Table 2 on page 4 includes the total number of schools and enrollment for each school district based upon the 1995-1996 Texas School Directory, published by the Texas Education Agency. This is the third update of earlier H-GRTS maps published in

1980, 1984, and 1987.

It can be seen from Table 2 that in the total number of schools increased from 692 to 768 (+11.0%) and the total number of students increased from 581,527 to 696,129 (+19.7%) in the past ten years for the 27 ISDs. Most of the ISDs showed an increase in the number of schools and only the Sheldon and North Forest School Districts registered a decrease in the number of students in the last 10 years.

Texas Vehicle Registrations Top 15 Million

Statistics released by the Budget and Finance Division of the Texas Department of Transportation (as presented in Table 1) reveal that over 600,000 (613,905) additional vehicles were introduced to the Texas roadway system, increasing vehicle registrations to 15,274,164 for the State of Texas in 1996, a 4.2% gain. The 4.2% gain is the largest increase in the 1990s and the largest since 1981 when state registrations increased by 5.7%. This is the first time that over 15 million vehicles have been registered in Texas.

Contrary to 1995 statistics, the 1996 registrations did not show decreases for any of the eight counties in the H-GRTS area. The greatest increase in raw numbers of vehicles occurred in Harris County (138,082) which is the largest increase since 1990. The smallest increase in registrations occurred in

Galveston County (1,138), a 0.6% growth rate.

The largest percentage increase in 1996 among H-GRTS counties occurred in Montgomery County (9.7%) with Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties experiencing 9.0 and 7.8 percent growth in registrations respectively. From 1990 through 1995 Fort Bend led H-GRTS area counties in vehicle registrations growth at 24.1% followed by Montgomery and Waller counties with 18.6% and 13.4% growth respectively. The aforementioned counties were also the leaders in population growth rates.

As of January 1, 1996, Chambers and Waller were the only counties in the H-GRTS area with the distinction of having more vehicles than population. Chambers registered 24,202 vehicles and accommodates 24,165 inhabitants; whereas Waller has 31,778 registered vehicles and 26,573 residents.

Table 1

| H-GRTS Vehicle Registrations - All Vehicles By Calendar Years | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| <i>County</i> | <i>1995</i> | <i>1996</i> | <i>Change</i> | <i>Percent Change</i> |
| Brazoria | 179,835 | 193,880 | 14,045 | 7.8 |
| Chambers | 22,877 | 24,202 | 1,325 | 5.8 |
| Fort Bend | 197,538 | 215,290 | 17,752 | 9.0 |
| Galveston | 175,398 | 176,536 | 1,138 | .6 |
| Harris | 2,298,270 | 2,436,352 | 138,082 | 6.0 |
| Liberty | 49,618 | 52,571 | 2,953 | 5.9 |
| Montgomery | 190,273 | 208,762 | 18,489 | 9.7 |
| Waller | 29,611 | 31,778 | 2,167 | 7.3 |
| H-GRTS | 3,143,420 | 3,339,371 | 195,951 | 6.2 |
| State of Texas | 14,660,259 | 15,274,164 | 613,905 | 4.2 |

Source: Budget and Finance Division, TxDOT
Texas State Data Center: 1996 Population Estimates
Bureau of Census

Tollway Opening

On March 17, 1997, the section of the Sam Houston Tollway from IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) west to SH 288 was opened for traffic; and on May 4, 1997, the section from US 59 (Southwest Freeway) to SH 288 opened. This completed a 62-mile C-shaped tollway extending clockwise from IH 10 East to IH 45 North. The construction completed by the Harris County Toll Road Authority was concluded several months ahead of schedule.

The opening of these new sections to the toll road are expected to greatly increase access to the southern

portions of Harris County, including Hobby Airport.

In March of 1969, the Texas Highway Commission adopted the beltway as part of the State Highway System. Up to just 10 years ago there was no Sam Houston Tollway. Piece by piece the toll road has opened steadily since 1988.

There are no immediate plans in the future to open a toll facility from IH 45 North to IH 10 East. The section between US 59 and IH 10 East will remain as frontage roads until further plans are developed.

Status Map

(Continued from Page 1)

There were also several other improvement projects completed in 1996 including: IH 45 (North Freeway) at Cypresswood, US 59 (Southwest Freeway) from the Fort Bend County Line to northeast of Hillcroft, SH 146 (formerly Loop 201) from east of North Main Street to Spur 330, SH 225 (La Porte Freeway) from east of SH 134 to west of SH 146, and on US 290 from west of FM 359 in Waller County to the Harris County Line. These projects cost approximately \$108 million.

On BW 8 (South Sam Houston Parkway) there were also completions from Telephone Road to west of Mykawa and from east of Hillcroft Avenue to Hiram Clarke Road. On the east side of the BW 8 (East Sam Houston Parkway) there was also a section completed from SH 225 to west of SH 3 (Old Galveston Road).

An HOV flyover bridge was completed at US 59 (Eastex Freeway) from north of Kelly Street to south of Bennington. This flyover bridge cost approximately \$2.8 million.

The South Sam Houston Toll Road from IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) to SH 288 opened for traffic in March of 1997, and the toll road section from SH 288 to US 59 (Southwest Freeway) opened for traffic on May 4, 1997. These final openings completed a 62 mile

stretch of toll road facility from IH 10 East clockwise to IH 45 North.

1996 Construction Starts

In 1996, four major construction projects were let to contract in Harris County. On SH 35 from IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) to Old Spanish Trail mainlane capability will be provided. The number of mainlanes on US 59 (Eastex Freeway) from Franklin Street to south of Lyons Street will be increased to 10. SH 146 will also have mainlanes constructed from north of West Barbours Cut to south of Spencer/West Main. Construction to increase mainlanes on SH 225 from 0.640 miles west of Strang Road to 0.082 miles west of Strang Road and to build a tie-in to SH 146, also began in 1996.

There were also two major freeway construction projects let to contract in Montgomery County. Construction of new frontage roads on SH 249 from FM 1774 to west of Rollingwood Road and from Cripple Creek Road to the Harris County Line has begun. Widening of mainlanes on IH 45 (North Freeway) from south of Tamina Road to north of Rayford-Sawdust Road also began in 1996.

In Brazoria County an overpass project was let to contract on SH 288 at Oyster Creek Drive.

Table 2

| HOUSTON AREA SCHOOLS AND ENROLLMENT | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| (1986/87 vs. 1995/96) | | | | |
| School District | Number of Schools | | Enrollment | |
| | <i>1986-1987</i> | <i>1995-1996</i> | <i>1986-1987</i> | <i>1995-1996</i> |
| Pearland | 6 | 10 | 5,714 | 8,035 |
| Fort Bend/Stafford | 32 | 46 | 28,074 | 45,371 |
| Clear Creek | 21 | 28 | 19,079 | 25,322 |
| Friendswood | 4 | 5 | 3,198 | 4,203 |
| Aldine | 36 | 44 | 37,115 | 43,872 |
| Alief | 25 | 27 | 23,754 | 34,741 |
| Channelview | 8 | 7 | 5,056 | 5,538 |
| Crosby | 6 | 6 | 3,144 | 3,735 |
| Cypress-Fairbanks | 33 | 45 | 31,953 | 49,509 |
| Deer Park | 13 | 12 | 8,717 | 11,132 |
| Galena Park | 17 | 17 | 13,702 | 16,992 |
| Goose Creek | 23 | 21 | 16,611 | 17,844 |
| Houston | 225 | 243 | 194,889 | 202,363 |
| Huffman | 5 | 4 | 2,141 | 2,150 |
| Humble | 19 | 26 | 16,298 | 21,684 |
| Katy | 19 | 22 | 15,695 | 23,921 |
| Klein | 23 | 27 | 23,586 | 29,100 |
| La Porte | 11 | 10 | 6,970 | 7,427 |
| North Forest | 16 | 16 | 15,336 | 13,187 |
| Pasadena | 45 | 47 | 35,085 | 39,189 |
| Sheldon | 8 | 6 | 4,113 | 3,898 |
| Spring Branch | 35 | 35 | 25,496 | 28,501 |
| Spring | 20 | 19 | 15,547 | 19,755 |
| Tomball | 5 | 7 | 4,168 | 5,733 |
| Conroe | 30 | 32 | 20,987 | 27,555 |
| New Caney | 7 | 6 | 5,099 | 5,372 |
| Total | 692 | 768 | 581,527 | 696,129 |
| Change 1986-1987 | +11.0% | | +19.7% | |

HOUSTON-GALVESTON
Regional Transportation Study

The H-GRTS NEWSLETTER is published periodically by the Houston-Galveston Regional Transportation Study Office at 7721 Washington Ave.: Hans C. Olavson, Study Director; Lankford Bolling Jr., Editor, P.O. Box 1386, Houston, Texas 77251-1386. Tel(713)802-5314.

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