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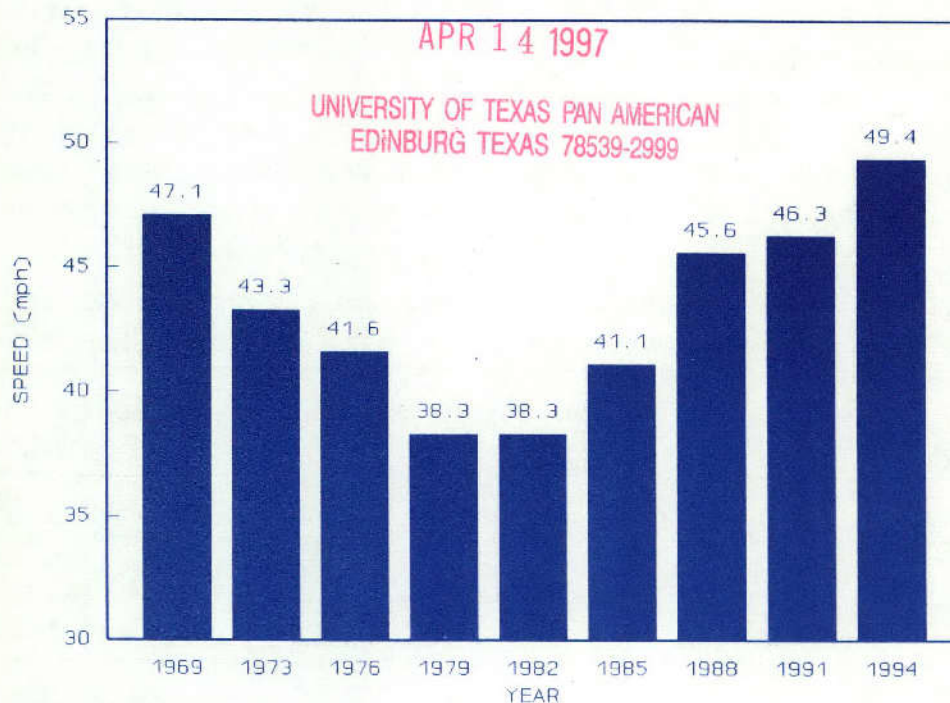
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**SYSTEM TOTALS
AVERAGE PM SPEEDS ON HARRIS COUNTY
FREEWAYS IN PEAK DIRECTIONS (1969-1994)**

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**TRAVEL TIME AND SPEED
SURVEY UPDATE**

The total freeway system average PM peak speed increased from 46 mph in 1991 to 49 mph in 1994. This increase shows continuing improvement from the low of 38 mph in 1982. The average PM peak speed subsequently climbed to above the previous high of 47 mph in 1969 as shown on the graph above. Radial freeways improved as well with an average PM peak direction speed of 50 mph in 1994.

Some comparisons of 1991 and 1994 average

PM peak speeds on individual radial freeways are as follows:

The widening of IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) from south of IH 610 (South Loop) to Airport Blvd. helped to raise the average PM peak speed on IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) from 37 mph in 1991 to 45 mph in 1994.

The average PM peak speed on US 59 (Southwest Freeway) increased dramatically from a sluggish 31 mph in 1991 to a comfortable 51 mph in 1994 due in large part to the completion of the widening projects from Shepherd Dr. to Beltway 8 in 1992.

(See Travel Time Update, Page 2)

Travel Time Update

(Continued from Page 1)

The 1994 data of peak period travel time maximum delays (peak directions) on the radial freeways in the Houston area reveal that their average maximum time delay decreased by nearly 3% in the AM peak period and by nearly 26% in the PM peak period from 1991.

Though IH 10 (Katy Freeway) continues to have the highest AM peak maximum time delay (17.9 minutes) of the major freeways, it did show a drop from the 20.5 minutes of 1991. IH 10 (Katy Freeway) also replaced IH 45 (Gulf

Freeway) as the freeway with the highest PM peak maximum time delay of 9.8 minutes.

Another effect of the previously mentioned completed projects on IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) and US 59 (Southwest Freeway) is the significant decrease in AM and PM peak maximum time delays respectively on both freeways. IH 45 (Gulf Freeway) AM peak maximum time delay dropped by 66.3% from 8.3 minutes in 1991 to 2.8 minutes in 1994 while US 59 (Southwest Freeway) had the greatest improvement of the major freeways with a 58.4% reduction in PM peak maximum time delay from 12.5 minutes in 1991 to 5.2 minutes in 1994.

The 1994 and 1991 AM and PM peak maximum accumulated time delays (peak directions of travel) compared to off-peak conditions for traveling to and from Downtown Houston (Main at McKinney) respectively along each of the eight major radial freeway corridors are listed below. Time delays associated with speeds greater than 55 mph have not been included.

AM and PM Peak Maximum Delay Comparisons Between 1994 and 1991 on Major Radial Freeway Corridors in Peak Directions of Travel

Freeway Corridor	AM Peak Maximum Delay (Minutes)			PM Peak Maximum Delay (Minutes)		
	1991	1994	% Change	1991	1994	% Change
East	5.6	4.4	-21.4	2.1	1.6	-23.8
Katy	20.5	17.9	-12.7	9.5	9.8	3.2
North	8.0	12.8	60.0	9.4	5.3	-43.6
Gulf	8.3	2.8	-66.3	13.9	7.4	-46.8
Eastex	6.7	8.3	23.9	10.4	9.9	-4.8
Southwest	10.0	8.2	-18.0	12.5	5.2	-58.4
Northwest	8.5	12.0	41.2	4.5	7.6	68.9
South	1.9	1.3	-31.6	1.5	0.6	-60.0
Maximum Delay Average	8.7	8.5	-2.3	8.0	5.9	-26.2

Preliminary 1995 travel time data indicates no significant changes on the freeway system in Harris County since 1994 except for IH 10 (Katy Freeway) and US 59 (Southwest Freeway). The average AM peak speed on IH 10 (Katy Freeway) dropped from 35.3 mph in 1994 to 30.2 mph in 1995. The major improvements to US 59 (Southwest Freeway) in 1992 helped to raise the average PM peak speed on that freeway to 51.1 mph in 1994. However increased travel demands lowered the average PM peak speed on this freeway to 44.5 mph in 1995.

CLEAN AIR -- WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Little wonder if you feel as confused as Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz when she awoke in Kansas with Auntie Em hovering over her. It's a challenge to keep up with the frequent changes regarding the ETR program and emissions testing.

Long before "ETR" and "emissions testing" became household terms, we were concerned about pollution in the Houston area. The ozone problem made us determined to make the world a cleaner place for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

For awhile, it looked as though the ETR program would fine businesses if their employees did not present a "good faith effort" by participating in rideshare programs. We formed carpools, vanpools, and checked on METRO's bus schedules. We boned up on HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes.

Tejas Testing Technology set up check stations to determine which vehicles were polluting the air. In the midst of all this frenzy over emissions testing and much controversy, a 90-day moratorium was issued by the state House committee. We breathed a sigh of relief--more time to determine how to approach the problem of air pollution!

The ETR program also stalled a little when several of the carpooling partners and vanpools disbanded. We returned to our old habits.

Now, it's like the eye of the hurricane has passed over. We are in the second part of this storm. We are awaiting Governor George W. Bush's plan for emissions testing. Governor Bush is supposed to pick a plan soon to present to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Three plans were outlined in the Houston Chronicle (July 21, 1995 issue). These three plans are:

1) "Decentralized," the least effective air-cleaner, uses a \$10-\$12 tailpipe test called BAR 90 in conjunction with annual safety inspections. Vehicles between two and 24 years old need to pass the test but can get a waiver if \$450 in repairs cannot cure the problem.

2) "Motorist's Choice" gives the decentralized option plus the opportunity to go to a centralized "test only" facility that the EPA likes better. To entice motorists to test-only sites--which would include a Tejas-style roller-accelerator with the tailpipe probe--they would be cheaper and only required every two years. This plan, which also has the \$450 waiver, also requires tests before any used-car sale.

3) "Low impact" includes the remote infrared scanning from a fleet of vans that would roam the city and test about 20 percent of all vehicles per year. Motorists would only notice the program when their emissions raised a red flag; then they'd have to go to a more accurate, central test-only facility. Used-car sales would also require the test; the \$450 waiver also applies in this plan.

Conversations will soon be buzzing about the new emissions testing plan and the latest ETR program. The ETR program is currently on hold because the governor granted an extension until November 22, 1995. METRO, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC), and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are working on a voluntary regional rideshare program. Several areas within the planning region are starting Transportation Management Organizations to assist in the regional rideshare program and work with area employers to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

INCREASE IN 1994 VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS

Statistics released by the Budget and Finance Division of the Texas Department of Transportation show that nearly 200,000 (197,846) vehicles were introduced to the Texas roadway system to increase vehicle registrations statewide for 1994 by 1.4 percent. This increase is down from the 2.9 statewide increase which occurred in 1993. One reason for this lower statewide increase was the drop in Harris County registrations by 6,690 (-0.3 percent) automobiles. This is the second largest decrease in Harris County vehicle registrations during this decade. The largest decrease occurred in 1992 (-15,190 vehicles).

The remaining counties in the H-GRTS area increased at a fairly consistent rate. However, due to the decrease in Harris County registrations the H-GRTS area has accommodated 20,198 more vehicles, down from 86,708 in 1993. The 1994 increase is comparable to the 1992 increase of 18,931. Fort Bend County repeated as the leader in percentage increase and in raw numbers; Waller County experienced the smallest increase in raw numbers of vehicle registrations with 639.

H-GRTS Vehicle Registration - All Vehicles
Calendar Years

County	1993	1994	Change	% Change
Brazoria	179,734	183,654	3,920	2.2
Chambers	21,949	22,845	896	4.1
Ft. Bend	183,296	194,954	11,658	6.4
Galveston	179,829	181,224	1,395	0.8
Harris	2,269,397	2,262,707	-6,690	-0.3
Liberty	48,131	49,874	1,743	3.6
Montgomery	180,864	187,501	6,637	3.7
Waller	27,908	28,547	639	2.3
H-GRTS	3,091,108	3,111,306	20,198	0.7
State of Texas	14,262,705	14,460,551	197,846	1.4

Source: Budget & Finance Division, TxDOT

FREEWAY AND EXPRESSWAY STATUS MAP UPDATED

The Status of Freeway and Expressway System Map is published annually by the Study Office. Enclosed with this Newsletter is the updated 1995 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 freeway construction schedule as indicated by the Ten-Year Project Development Plan of the Texas Department of Transportation.

The major progress during the past year was on SH 99 (Grand Parkway). A new divided highway with ultimate freeway/expressway designation was opened to traffic in mid 1994 connecting IH 10 (Katy Freeway) with US 59 (Southwest Freeway) more than twenty miles west of the Houston CBD.

A new US 290 freeway segment from SH 6 north of Hempstead to the new FM 359 north of the existing US 290 was completed in 1994 providing a bypass around Hempstead.

For progress on other freeways and expressways please refer to the status map.



HOUSTON-GALVESTON Regional Transportation Study

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