

Texas ranks second for busiest highways

Posted Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2013

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Texas ranks second in the nation for having the busiest highways, according to a report released Monday by the Federal Highway Administration.

Texas is second to California for having the most heavily traveled highways in the country with vehicles traveling 55.7 billion miles on Texas interstates. In California, people drove 84.7 billion miles, according to the highway administration.

The figures come from data collected in 2011 — the most recent data available — collected by transportation departments throughout the country.

"Analysis of the nation's traffic patterns and areas of changing traffic volume will lead to safer, less congested roads and greater mobility for all Americans," said Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez.

Bill Eisele, a senior engineer with the Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University, said the report is pretty consistent with what he has seen nationwide and in some Texas cities. It is a good indicator for planning future road projects.

"Texas is a large state with lots of miles. What is really important is that Texas is an economic engine with a lot of roadways and a lot of goods," said Eisele, who co-authors an urban mobility report every two years showing patterns in highway use.

In 2010, the institute's report indicated that drivers spent 44 hours delayed in traffic which increased slightly to 45 hours in 2012.

Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Texas Council of Governments, said the report serves as a reminder that the country's interstate system is heavily traveled.

"We basically take our transportation system for granted to a large extent," he said.

Many of the miles traveled are in urban areas. Morris said that on the local and state level, officials, including the Legislature, understand the importance of funding transportation projects such as the Chisholm Trail Parkway and the DFW Connector.

However, Morris said he is concerned that Congress is not focusing enough on future transportation needs.

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