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Congestion Not Going Away, Road Building Does Not Ease Burden, But Transit and Other Choices Relieves Congestion *New Companion Index Factors in Transit Use*

At least 418,024 commuters in Texas' ten largest cities choose transit each day over driving in rush-hour traffic, easing the burden of congestion for themselves and other area residents, according to an analysis of new traffic statistics by the Surface Transportation Policy Project.

"Better transit service means less burdensome congestion. When Texans have the choice to use transit, between 5.2% and 11.3% of the urban commuters are. These commuters are getting out of their cars, opting for less stress, and easing the burden of congestion," said Sparky Anderson of Texas Community Project.

As a companion to the Texas Transportation Institute's (TTI) annual release of its Travel Rate Index (TRI) which measures rush-hour congestion, the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) developed the Congestion Burden Index (CBI) which combines TTI's measure of rush-hour congestion with other federal data to measure what portion of commuters are exposed to congestion because they have to drive to work.

"What most Texans want and what the Texas Legislature should fund is *mobility*, not just road construction. While roads may be the right answer in some instances, transportation agencies need the flexibility to invest in solutions that have proven to be relatively less costly and far more effective in reducing congestion, such as improving transit and redeveloping neighborhoods," says Glenn Gadbois of Texas Citizen Fund.

In its companion analysis of TTI's data, released in its newly-released report "*Easing the Burden*," STPP found that metropolitan areas that invested in good transit services significantly lowered their local CBI, the congestion felt by all commuters. In contrast, STPP found that investment in new lane miles offered little congestion relief. In its comparison of those cities that most aggressively added road space to those cities that have added the least, STPP found little difference in congestion.

"Despite adding highway lanes at a rate nearly double the state's population growth since 1990, Texans are still struggling with congestion. Road construction as the sole tool for congestion relief has shown itself a very poor public investment," said Anderson. Since 1990, the state's miles of roadways have grown by 35.9% while population has grown an average of 19.8%.

As recently released figures demonstrate, many Americans are increasingly turning to transit as a route out of congestion. The growth in transit over the last five years now outpaces the increase in driving nearly 2 to 1 with transit use growing by 21% over the last five years and driving 11%.

Ten urban areas in Texas were included in both TTI's national Travel Rate Index (TRI) and STPP's Congestion Burden Index (CBI). Topping the state's list, Houston was ranked 12th nationally for congestion by TTI, while ranked 8th nationally by STPP. Dallas ranked 22nd in TTI's TRI with a CBI ranking of 16th. Austin ranked 28th in both TTI's and STPP's Indexes. San Antonio ranked 34th in TTI's index, but rounded out the nation's top 30 urban areas in STPP's rankings. Identified well below its Metropex neighbor by TTI, Fort Worth was ranked 37th, but scored less favorably to Dallas with its 19th place ranking by STPP.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project is a nationwide network of hundreds of organizations, including planners, community development organizations and public interest groups, devoted to improving the nation's transportation system.

Texas Citizen Fund is a statewide organization building local alliances of people to improve transportation choices since one in every six Texans do not have reliable access to a car.

Texas Community Project is a statewide organization working for sustainable growth, cost-effective regional planning, parks and trails, responsible use of community resources, and cleaner air.

Other releasers are: League of Women Voters Dallas, Fort Worth, and [Arlington](#); FORWARD; Sierra Club Houston; Texas Bicycle Coalition; Gulf Coast Institute; and Sierra Club Austin.

A metro area fact sheet with additional data on commuting patterns, congestion rankings, and road capacity is attached. A full copy of the report can be found at STPP's website, www.transact.org.