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Study Says LA's Traffic is Nation's Worst, But has Moderated

(Sept. 8, 2004) An annual study of traffic gridlock, issued Tuesday by the respected Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), shows that traffic in the Los Angeles area remains the nation's worst – but that congestion has moderated somewhat despite a 7.4 percent increase in the region's population.

TTI's study shows the LA-Long Beach-Santa Ana area experienced a decline in annual hours of delay per traveler from 114 in 1992 to 94 hours in 2001 and then to 93 hours in 2002, the latest year surveyed. No other very large metropolitan area showed a decline.

The Los Angeles metropolitan area's gridlock ranked ahead of San Francisco with 73 hours' delay; Washington, D.C. with 67 hours; Chicago with 56 hours and Boston with 54 hours' delay.

TTI's "travel time index," a comparison of peak-period travel times with travel during off-peak hours, indicates that the LA metropolitan area remained steady at 1.77 from 2001 to 2002. That means a 20-minute trip in off-peak hours would take about 35 minutes in peak period.

Two other areas remained steady

The Boston and Philadelphia metropolitan areas were the only others of similar size where the travel time index rating remained steady.

The TTI study shows that roadway congestion cost each person in the LA metropolitan area \$879 in 2002, down from \$896 in 2000. On the other hand, public transportation in the LA area saved peak-period travelers 19 hours in 2002, up from 11 hours in 2000.

Carpool lanes added in the LA metropolitan area over the past 10 years, along with increases in the bus fleet and the Freeway Service Patrol, are credited with helping moderate traffic congestion.

Metro's Short Range Transportation Plan for the next six years also expects to reduce automobile emissions by 50 percent from the 2001 levels.

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