



KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

An A&M study reveals decreases in nationwide traffic congestion. Texas and University avenues (above) get crowded at 5 p.m. The

study cites Los Angeles as the city with the most congested traffic, while Houston is the worst in Texas.

By MACK HARRISON  
Of The Battalion Staff

Traffic congestion in seven Texas cities either decreased or remained the same from 1986 to 1988, while traffic increased throughout the rest of the country, according to a Texas A&M study.

The study, conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute, found that congestion has increased in most urban areas since 1982, but Texas cities, particularly Houston, decreased in congestion.

Tim Lomax, associate research engineer for TTI, says the roadway congestion index value for Houston has decreased 2 percent since 1982, and 8 percent since 1984.

"Cities in Texas as an aggregate are doing pretty well," he says.

Since 1986, other cities in the study had about a 4 percent increase in congestion, Lomax says.

He says the group contains 39 large and medium-to-large urban areas throughout the nation. Seven cities in Texas — Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio — were studied.

The congestion index value is calculated from the number of cars

per mile of road, and a value greater than 1.0 represents a congested system.

The report stated Los Angeles has the country's highest congestion value at 1.52. This means the city has 52 percent more traffic on its roadways than is considered desirable, Lomax says.

San Francisco was the second most congested city, followed by Washington, D.C., Chicago, Miami, and Seattle.

Houston was ranked the seventh most congested city nationwide with a congestion index of 1.15. San

Diego, Boston, and New York City rounded out the top 10.

Dallas was ranked 17th, Austin, 23rd; Fort Worth, 30th and San Antonio, 32nd. Corpus Christi was the least congested of the 39 cities.

Lomax and co-author Jim Hanks obtained their basic data from the Federal Highway Administration.

They supplemented data with that supplied by various state highway departments, Lomax says. Then they contacted local experts to obtain as much information as possible.

The Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation

commissioned the study.

"It's something they've had us looking at since the early '80s, back when Houston was one of the top two or three cities in the country in terms of congestion levels," Lomax says.

Lomax says the improvement on Texas roadways is not only due to people moving because of the economy. Texas has had an increase in traffic volume, but a decrease in traffic congestion, he says.

One of the good things about the slowdown in the economy was that Houston had time to build more freeways and arterial streets, Lomax says.

There are several reasons congestion is becoming worse in some cities, he says.

"It's getting more expensive and difficult to build added capacity," Lomax says.

The spread of outlying communities also plays a factor in congestion, he says.

"The tremendous proliferation of development in suburban areas has led to a lot of trips from one suburb to another that aren't readily served by public transit," Lomax says.

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## TRAFFIC WOES

## Sniffling, sneezing season Health center offers flu vaccination shot as outbreak starts

By TWILA WADDY  
Of The Battalion Staff

Along with January's record rainfall and the advent of cold weather comes the first signs of the flu at Texas A&M, says Dr. John Quarles of the Department of Microbiology in the College of Medicine.

"What we are seeing right now is little flu activity, although in the last few days it looks like it may be ready to start," Quarles says.

Flu season usually starts in the middle of January and continues through March.

Students often bring flu viruses back from Christmas break and pass them to each other, he says.

"This year has been slow," Quarles says. "We have not had much for the first week or so."

Students can help prevent catching the flu by getting a \$5 vaccine shot at the A.P. Beutel Health Center.

"It helps to take care of yourself,

to get enough rest, and to sleep and eat properly," he says. "The only way to avoid it is to get a vaccine in the late fall."

Quarles says vaccine shots should be taken before the first flu outbreak in the fall because the vaccine needs about a month to build up antibodies for effectiveness.

Flus are different than colds because a cold develops slower than the flu and does not affect the whole body, he says. The flu causes a fever and usually takes longer to recover from.

"When you get the flu, you get sick almost all at once," Quarles says.

The worst flu outbreak at A&M in the last 10 to 12 years was in the winter of 1984. Typically, flu outbreaks last three to four weeks, Quarles says.

In a normal year, 4,000 students go to the health center with flu symptoms, but maybe three or four times that many are sick but do not go to the center, he says.

## Houston firms will help NASA develop project

HOUSTON (AP) — Two Houston companies are among three firms that will help NASA develop the United States' first unmanned orbiting space system, a project that will house commercial and scientific experiments.

Space Industries and Space Services, both of Houston, and Westinghouse Electric Co. of Millersville, Md., were selected from among 14 bidders Tuesday to be involved in the launching and operating of the

system, a \$50 million project known as Comet, Commercial Experiment Transporter.

"We're taking the initial step toward establishing an entirely new U.S. industry," said Joe Pawlick, Comet program manager at the University of Tennessee's Center for Advanced Space Propulsion, which is managing the Comet program for the National Aeronautics and Space

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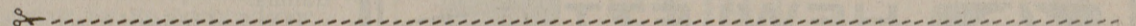
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