

An accident waiting to happen

Reports blame collisions on haphazard drivers, congested roadways

By ROBERT SMITH
Senior staff writer

More accidents occur on Briarcrest Drive than on any other street in Bryan, according to reports by the Bryan Police Department.

The BPD reported that 71 automobile accidents have occurred this year on Briarcrest as of Nov. 30, not including Briarcrest intersections.

Four of the top five high collision areas in Bryan are on Briarcrest addresses.

Sgt. Choya Walling of the BPD said Briarcrest Drive is consistently heavily congested in traffic.

"There is a high volume of traffic on Briarcrest," Walling said. "It is the largest east-west street in Bryan."

Walling said the opening of Blinn College last year increased the traffic on Briarcrest.

The BPD have reported 1,760 auto collisions this year, through Nov. 30.

The intersection at E. Frontage SSH 6 Road and Briarcrest has been the scene of 20 auto collisions this year, more than any other intersection.

Walling said that some of the accidents on Briarcrest occur when drivers illegally use the middle lane.

"More and more people are using that middle left turn lane as an acceleration lane," Walling said. "The more that people use it that way, the more opportunity there is for an accident."

Nineteen auto collisions have occurred this year at North Texas Avenue and East William J. Bryan Parkway.

The College Station Police Department has reported more accidents this year than the Bryan Police Department.

As of Nov. 30, the CSPD has reported 2,060 auto collisions in 1997. CSPD has reported 242 major accidents and 1,269 minor accidents this year.

The CSPD does not keep records of specific collision locations, but Lt. Scott McCollum said a majority of the accidents occur on or near Texas Avenue.

"The sheer volume of vehicles traveling through that area presents numerous opportunities for accidents to occur," he said.

McCollum said the CSPD have "tracer," or heavily patrolled areas at four different intersections along Texas Avenue.

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Lt. Scott McCollum
College Station Police Dept.



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

The intersection of University Drive and Texas Avenue is a "tracer" area, which is heavily patrolled by the College Station Police Department. It is one of four intersections targeted by the CSPD to prevent motorists from breaking the speed limits.

FINALS

Friday

EST TIME	CLASS TIME
9:30 - 9:30 a.m.	MW 5:45 - 7 p.m.
11:30 - noon	MWF 8 - 8:50 a.m.
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.	TR 9:35 - 10:50 a.m.
5 - 5 p.m.	TR 11:10 - 12:25 p.m.

Monday

EST TIME	CLASS TIME
10 a.m.	MWF 9:10 - 10 a.m.
1:30 - 12:30 p.m.	MWF 12:40 - 1:30 p.m.
3 - 3 p.m.	TR 8 - 9:15 a.m.
5:30 - 5:30 p.m.	MW 4:10 - 5:25 p.m.

Tuesday

EST TIME	CLASS TIME
10 a.m.	MWF 10:20 - 11:10 a.m.
1:30 - 12:30 p.m.	MWF 3 - 3:50 p.m.
3 - 3 p.m.	TR 3:55 - 5:10 p.m.
5:30 - 5:30 p.m.	MWF 1:50 - 2:40 p.m.

Wednesday

EST TIME	CLASS TIME
10 a.m.	TR 12:45 - 2 p.m.
1:30 - 12:30 p.m.	MWF 11:30 - 12:20 p.m.
3 - 3 p.m.	TR 2:20 - 3:35 p.m.
5:30 - 5:30 p.m.	TR 5:30 - 6:45 p.m.

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http://battalion.tamu.edu
Look up with state and national news through The Wire, AP's 24-hour online news service.

Texas Avenue project confounds motorists

TxDot aims to preserve access during expansion

By AMANDA SMITH
Staff writer

Construction is a part of life for people who work and travel along South Texas Avenue in College Station. Expanding Texas Avenue from two to three lanes has been one of the construction projects by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in the Bryan-College Station area.

Catherine Hejl, an assistant engineer for TxDOT in the Brazos Valley, said TxDOT is responsible for managing projects but the construction firm is responsible for the completion and construction of the project.

"Our main responsibility at TxDOT is that we oversee a project," Hejl said. "We really do not control the construction. The construction company operates on their schedule."

However, TxDOT may charge the construction company liquidated damages for the time taken that extends beyond the expected completion date of a project.

Hejl said TxDOT has remained on schedule with the construction on Texas Avenue, which is expected to be

completed in the Spring 1998.

She said TxDOT has tried to keep as many lanes open as possible during the construction, which began in February 1996.

"We try to pinpoint times to work on some construction," Hejl said. "But much of the construction work is temperature and moisture controlled. We cannot do much of the construction when the roads are wet. But we have to keep lanes open and to maintain access to businesses."

Diana Worden, a sophomore general studies major, said the construction on Texas Avenue has improved since she came to A&M in Fall 1996.

"The construction has definitely gotten better, because they have made the road better," Worden said. "They have widened lanes. It is going to give us more room [once the construction is complete]."

Businesses on Texas Avenue began to meet in late September and early October to discuss solutions to the construction that had reduced traffic flow on Texas Avenue.

Anthony Abraham, a general manager of Ladies & Lords Bridal & Tux-

edo, said the shop has been affected by the Texas Avenue construction.

"Our location and visibility is very important to us," Abraham said. "We use our windows to display our products to potential customers. The construction on Texas Avenue has been a great inconvenience for the customers. Our parking lot was torn up from May to September (1997) as a result of the construction."

Abraham said safety along Texas Avenue was a concern of the businesses.

"Safety has been a major issue," he said. "We have seen accidents occur because of people's uncertainty. There had been a lack of proper markings. The lanes change daily."

Hejl said TxDOT has made accommodations to inform businesses of weekly changes in construction. Each Friday, TxDOT sends faxes to businesses about the construction projects for the next week.

Hejl said another restraint that TxDOT faces is the availability of materials and crews for construction. She said that working at night presents greater danger for the construction

crews.

"It is not safe," Hejl said. "A lot of people were wanting night work in earlier stages of construction. Some materials and work crews are not available to work at night."

Additional projects include the construction on George Bush Drive that involves widening the road to include four lanes and adding a median, curb and gutter. The project costs \$4.5 million, comparable to the \$5 million construction project on Texas Avenue.

TxDOT is working to repair the pavement and complete additional surface treatment on Texas Avenue.

Hejl said repavement projects are generally routine and must be completed to keep the roads safe. She said heavy traffic on roads such as Texas Avenue increases the need for construction.

Additional work along Texas Avenue (Highway 6) includes adding street lights, traffic signals and landscaping. Along Highway 21, TxDOT is resurfacing the pavements in two construction projects that cost \$2.2 million.

"Safety has been a major issue. We have seen accidents occur because of people's uncertainty."

Anthony Abraham
local shop manager

When it comes to safe driving, prevention is the key

By JAMES FRANCIS
Staff writer

From head-on collisions to hit-and-run accidents to the smallest fender bender, Texas drivers have endured a wide variety of traffic incidents this year.

Although these incidents may occur unexpectedly, traffic officials say there are different ways to prevent accidents and safeguard driving on Texas highways.

Paul Sturrock, public information officer for the Department of Transportation Bryan District, said that people rushing to get somewhere causes unnecessary accidents.

"One thing that really helps is giving yourself enough time to get to your destination without having to be in a hurry," he said.

Sturrock said that another factor in traffic accidents involves speed limits. After coordinated traffic studies of highways are complete, usually the speed limit for a highway or road is set at the 85th percentile of the study.

He said this depends on elements of roads, such as curves, the number of driveways and crash histories at given locations.

"A lot of the counties are complaining about the new speed limits, complaining that 70 mph is too fast for farm roads," he said.

Sturrock said legislation that was recently passed states that, "speed limits can be reduced on farm market and ranch market roads with pavement widths of 20 feet or less, when the

Police use speed monitors to detour potential wrecks on state highways

county commissioners court and a public hearing is held."

Sturrock said electronic speed monitors, Speed Monitoring Awareness Radar Trailer (S.M.A.R.T.), have been placed on the sides of roads to help control speeding. He said the cost for utilizing the monitors was about \$15,000, and it was funded by Bryan and College Station.

The monitors are used in communities when members of the neighborhood request speed enforcement, Sturrock said. The monitors take the place of police officers.

Since the implementation in April 1997, Sturrock said the monitors have saved 13,000 hours in police work and \$27,000 in personal costs.

He said other aspects that contribute to traffic accidents involve darkness, when drivers become sleepy and do not see other drivers in oncoming lanes; motorists who go off the shoulder, attempt to get back onto the highway and overcorrect instead of gradually easing back onto the road or stopping.

Sturrock said that despite the factors of traffic incidents, people never lose the "It can't happen to me" mentality.

"Perhaps one of the reasons is they've been lucky so far and haven't had an incident to teach them the value of these precautions," he said. "If

you look at statistics, there are tens of thousands of accidents a year; you're only a couple of feet away from disaster, whether it's going off the road or someone swerving into your lane."

With the holiday season approaching, Sturrock said people should be especially careful when driving on Texas highways.

"There will be more traffic probably between cities," he said. "Days preceding and following holidays are usually some of the worst traffic seen all year, but if you stay calm and courteous, you should make it ok."

Tom Williams, director of Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services, said people driving on campus have some of the same traffic problems as those who travel on major highways.

"The main concern is we're not a major highway, so the speed limit is slower," he said. "Drivers must watch for buses, pedestrians and bicyclists."

As with driving on Texas highways, Williams said speed is a primary concern, but drivers should try to be alert, aware and follow the rules of the road.

Williams said that with a campus enrollment as large as Texas A&M's, one large difficulty in driving on campus involves pedestrians.

"Pedestrians tend to not be aware that there

Traffic Safety Tips

- Drive friendly and be aware of other motorists
- Let faster traffic go around slower cars
- Be a defensive driver
- Do not drink and drive
- Stop and stretch every two hours when driving long distances
- Tailor driving to the weather conditions
- Wear seat belts
- Put infants in child safety seats in the backseat

Source: Paul Sturrock, Public Information Officer for Texas DOT, Bryan District

are vehicles on the street," he said. "They should try to get the driver's eye contact before crossing, because some drivers don't stop."

Although accidents on campus may not compare to 10-car pileups on interstate highways, Williams said A&M has its share of incidents.

"We have a lot of accidents in our parking lots," he said. "University Police deal with the accidents on campus, but normally they are just fender benders."

In preventing traffic accidents, Sturrock said people always should be ready for the unexpected.

"You could be the best driver in the world, but assume the worst is going to happen, be ready for it and you might live longer."