

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 2023-2024 EDUCATIONAL SERIES SAFETY AND TRAVEL INFORMATION



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TxDOT RESOURCE LINKS

Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or click on the resource link to direct you to additional resources and more details on the information provided in this document.



Texas Department of Transportation
TxDOT's public website for agency information and resources focused on meeting the needs of drivers, businesses, government officials, and those who want to learn more about TxDOT.



TxDOT 2023-2024 Educational Series
TxDOT's complete 2023-2024 Educational Series that focuses on a range of transportation issues affecting TxDOT and the State of Texas.



OVERVIEW

Promoting safety and protecting the lives of the traveling public is a top priority for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) employees. TxDOT's primary objective is to lower the state's traffic fatality rate and the total number of traffic fatalities and injuries. TxDOT seeks to accomplish this through improved designs, the continuous development of a safety culture within and outside of TxDOT, the expanded use of safety construction methods, the improvement of work zone safety, the advancement of an innovative behavioral Traffic Safety Program, and increased coordination with law enforcement. By incorporating safety planning into every aspect of construction and maintenance and working closely with a wide range of transportation safety stakeholders, TxDOT strives to protect the lives of those traveling our roadways and our hardworking employees and contractors.

Texas' traffic fatalities have increased from 2019 to 2021, along with an increase in the Texas population and miles driven on Texas roadways. In 2020, Texas had 3,897 - traffic-related fatalities, compared with 4,495 in 2021.

Certain factors continue to contribute to traffic crashes. In 2021, of the 19,834 fatal and serious injury crashes, 6,459 were intersection-related, representing 33 percent. Single-vehicle drivers

running off the road accounted for 6,599 fatal and serious injury crashes and driving under the influence accounted for 3,336 fatal and serious injury crashes. Of those who lost their lives in 2021, more than 46 percent of those who had the option to wear a safety belt were not wearing one when the crash occurred (cyclists, pedestrians, and motorcyclists not included in this statistic). Although Texas has made notable progress in highway transportation safety, even a single traffic death in the state is one too many. As part of our efforts to reach zero traffic fatalities, TxDOT manages various programs that focus principally on improving transportation safety.



TxDOT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

ROAD TO ZERO

In May 2019, the Texas Transportation Commission established the Road to Zero goal. The Road to Zero goal is to reduce the number of deaths on Texas roadways by half by the year 2035 and to zero by the year 2050. When establishing this goal, the Texas Transportation Commission acknowledged that most motor vehicle crashes are preventable and directed TxDOT to develop and implement strategies to achieve the Road to Zero goal.

The Texas Transportation Commission has initially supported the Road to Zero goal by allocating an additional \$600 million in Category 8 (Safety Programs) in the 2020 10-year Unified Transportation Program (UTP) in the first two years of the program. TxDOT evaluates candidate Road to Zero projects by considering roadway safety factors, crash reduction factors, and project completion times. TxDOT is dedicating this Road to Zero funding to targeting and reducing fatalities and suspected serious injuries in crashes with contributing factors such as lane departure, intersection safety, and pedestrian safety. However, it is important to note that all TxDOT projects have a safety component.

#ENDTHESTREAKTX

At the time of publication of this document, November 7, 2000, was the last deathless day on Texas roadways. That means that for more than 22 years straight, at least one person has died every single day from vehicle crashes on Texas roadways. That adds up to more than 80,000 motor vehicle fatalities since November 7, 2000. To raise awareness of the need to #EndTheStreakTX, in 2019, TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Commission promoted the #EndTheStreakTX campaign to encourage drivers to make safer choices while on the road. While TxDOT continues making improvements to the highway system, all Texans must work toward ending crashes involving distracted driving, speeding, and drunk driving. These crashes are all preventable. Everyone can help by spreading the word and telling loved ones to buckle up, pay attention while driving, get a sober ride home, and drive to conditions.





TEXAS TRAFFIC SAFETY PROGRAM

The Texas Traffic Safety Program is a federally funded effort to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities through education, training, and enforcement. The program provides grants to state agencies, non-profit organizations, and local jurisdictions for projects focusing on fourteen program areas including, but not limited to, occupant protection, police, traffic services, impaired driving, distracted driving, and pedestrian/ and bicycle safety. The program's goal is to modify driver and passenger behavior, and the program is a critical component in TxDOT's effort to improve transportation safety. The Traffic Safety Program's extensive public information and enforcement efforts helped increase safety belt usage to 90 percent in 2021. For 2022, the Texas Traffic Safety Program has budgeted approximately \$85 million for 359 traffic safety projects statewide.

HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Highway Safety Improvement Program is a federal safety construction program to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes. This program allows states to target funds for their most critical safety needs. TxDOT districts submit projects for funding through the Highway Safety Improvement Program.

STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN

The Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan is the state's response to the federal safety program and is a requirement to obligate federal safety construction funding. The plan identifies the most critical transportation safety issues facing Texas and recommends countermeasures to improve

transportation safety. The Texas plan reflects consultation from a variety of stakeholders:

- TxDOT traffic safety personnel who act as the governor's highway safety representative;
- Representatives of regional and metropolitan transportation planning organizations;
- Representatives from major modes of travel;
- TxDOT personnel responsible for administering the federally-funded program to improve safety at railway-highway at-grade crossings;
- State and local law enforcement officials, including the Texas Department of Public Safety;
- The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles;
- University and research organization representatives;
- Representatives from the state Operation Lifesaver Highway-Rail Crossing Safety Program;
- Officials representing motor carrier safety interests; and
- Other state and local safety stakeholders.

The Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan 2022-2027 has the following safety emphasis areas:

- Decreasing the number of crashes related to distracted driving;



- Decreasing the number of intersection-related crashes;
- Improving safety for Vulnerable Road Users (Pedestrian & Pedalcyclists);
- Decreasing the incidence of driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol;
- Decreasing the number of speed-related crashes;
- Decreasing the number of lane-departure and roadway-departure crashes;
- Decreasing the number of unrestrained injuries and fatalities; and
- Increasing safety through improved post-crash care

The following are examples of TxDOT’s work to improve highway safety in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan emphasis areas:

- Install improvements at intersections, such as designated left and right turn lanes, protected left turn signals, additional signal heads, and pavement markings;
- Install edgeline, centerline, and transverse rumble strips (transverse rumble strips warn drivers of upcoming unexpected changes, such as traffic signals, changes in alignment, or the need to change lanes);
- Install and maintain cable and concrete median barriers;
- Continue strong driver behavior outreach, education, and enforcement campaigns to discourage distracted driving, speeding, and driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol;
- Emphasize driver behavior improvement to increase safety for high-risk transportation users such as pedestrians and older drivers; and
- Improve pedestrian safety by adding complete sidewalk networks and improved pedestrian crossing signals.

PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

TxDOT has a number of state and federally-funded traffic safety public information campaigns. The following campaigns administered by TxDOT in 2022 focus attention on efforts to deter drunk driving, improve motorcycle safety, encourage safety belt use, decrease the incidence of distracted driving, including texting while driving, and change other unsafe driver behaviors.

- Distracted Driving (April).
- Motorists’ Awareness of Motorcycles (May).
- Be Safe. Drive Smart:
 - General Topics (all year long) include Turn Around Don’t Drown (April), Pedestrian Safety (July and October), Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Laws (August and October), Back To School (August-September), Work Zone Safety (April);
 - Energy Sector (June and October); and
 - Speed (June).
- Statewide Impaired Driving:
 - Christmas and New Year’s (November - January);
 - Football (October – November);
 - College and Young Adult (March);
 - Faces of Drunk Driving (June - July);
 - Spring Holidays (April - May); and
 - Labor Day (August - September).
- Youth Occupant Protection:
 - Teen Click It or Ticket (February); and
 - Child Passenger Safety (September).
- Adult Click It or Ticket (May).
- Move Over Law (March).

While many of these traffic safety public information campaigns continue from year-to-year and new campaigns are added, specific campaigns and their timing depend on federal funding and requirements that may change from year-to-year. For updated information and how you can get involved in helping TxDOT traffic safety public information campaigns, please visit [txdot.gov](https://www.txdot.gov/keyword-search/Traffic%20safety%20campaigns.html) keyword search “Traffic safety campaigns.”



<https://www.txdot.gov/safety/traffic-safety-campaigns.html>

WORK ZONE SAFETY

A primary part of the TxDOT mission is to improve safety and reduce congestion on Texas roadways. On any given day, TxDOT has over 3,000 active work zones in operation in and near road improvement projects. In 2021, more than 26,000 crashes occurred in these Texas work zones, resulting in 245 fatalities and 858 serious injuries.

Drivers and passengers account for the majority of those involved in fatal work zone crashes. In 2021, 198 motorists and passengers died in work zone crashes. Four construction workers and 43 pedestrians and bicyclists also died. The leading causes of work zone crashes statewide – speeding and driver inattention – are entirely preventable.

Work zones present a different environment for drivers to navigate. Drivers are likely to encounter uneven pavement, narrow lanes, concrete barriers, slow-moving heavy equipment, and vehicles that make sudden stops. TxDOT



continues to explore options to enhance work zone safety, including the following:

- Internal Traffic Control Plans to control activities behind the cones. (Examples include controlled access points, routes for trucks and equipment, and designated escape routes for workers on foot);
- Temporary traffic signals;
- Movable traffic barrier systems to protect the public and workers;
- Law enforcement presence and speed reductions in work zones;
- Smart work zone technology in various areas;
- Work zone intrusion alarms;
- Traffic queue detection systems;
- Worker detection systems; and
- Construction equipment alerts.

SPEED LIMITS

ESTABLISHING SPEED LIMITS: SAFETY – THE PRIMARY CONCERN

TxDOT’s goal is to establish speed zones that maximize safety and that motorists respect and obey. By using sound engineering principles, TxDOT can provide a balanced transportation system that gets motorists to their destinations as safely and as quickly as possible. The large majority of drivers select a speed that they perceive to be prudent and will get them to their destination safely in the shortest possible time.

State law requires that TxDOT set speed limits on state roadways at the state prima facie speed limits based on the type of road unless engineering and traffic investigations show a need to alter a speed limit. From Latin, prima facie means at “first impression” or accepted as correct until proven otherwise. The primary Texas prima facie speed limits as set out in state law in Texas are:

- 15 miles per hour in an urban district alley;
- 15 miles per hour on beaches or county roads adjacent to a beach;
- 30 miles per hour on urban district streets;
- 60 miles per hour on unnumbered highways outside urban districts; and
- 70 miles per hour on numbered highways outside urban districts.



Setting speed limits

<https://www.txdot.gov/safety/driving-laws/speed-limits/limits.html>

MAXIMUM SPEED LIMIT

TxDOT may set a speed limit of 75 mph on any portion of the state highway system if an engineering and traffic investigation shows that it is a reasonable and safe speed. TxDOT may set a speed limit of up to 85 mph if an engineering and traffic investigation shows that it is a reasonable and safe speed and if the highway design accommodates that speed.

REASONABLE SPEED LIMITS

TxDOT conducts engineering and traffic investigations according to the requirements in the TxDOT manual, Procedures for Establishing Speed Zones. After TxDOT engineers conduct and review the appropriate studies, the Texas Transportation Commission reviews and approves all permanent speed limits on state highways.

The research has shown that posting speed limits based on the results of an engineering and traffic investigation has a beneficial effect on reducing total crashes and improved driver compliance. Posting speed limits more than 5 miles per hour below the results of an engineering and traffic investigation does not reduce crashes and can have an adverse effect on driver compliance.

SPEED ENFORCEMENT

TxDOT is responsible for building and maintaining the state transportation system and has no authority to cite vehicle violations of any kind. That jurisdiction falls under the Texas Department of Public Safety and local law enforcement authorities.

DRIVING TO CONDITIONS

Observing speed limits means more than driving at the posted speed. It means driving to conditions. When it is raining or foggy, when ice is on the road, when traffic is heavy, or when road construction is ahead, drivers must adjust their speed accordingly for safety.

ROADWAYS OFF THE STATE SYSTEM: CITIES AND COUNTIES

State law requires that local governmental entities base any non-prima facie speed limit on the results of an engineering and traffic investigation. Cities and counties may use the TxDOT Procedures for Establishing Speed Zones manual when altering speed limits on city streets and county roads; however, it is not a requirement.

TxDOT uses the 85th percentile method for speed studies. This method assumes that most drivers are reasonable and prudent, do not want to have a crash, and desire to reach their destination in the shortest possible time. The 85th percentile is the speed at or below which 85 percent of people drive at any given location under good weather and visibility conditions; this is the maximum safe speed for that location.

TxDOT only has jurisdiction over establishing speed limits on the state highway system. The public should direct any questions about speed limits on city streets or county roads to these local entities' transportation departments.

TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

In addition to setting reasonable speed limits based on accepted engineering principles, TxDOT uses a variety of traffic control devices to improve safety. These include the use of warning, regulatory, and guide signs; traffic signals; and pavement markings to alert drivers of current roadway conditions.

BRIDGE SAFETY

The traveling public's safety is one of TxDOT's top priorities, which includes ensuring that the more than 54,000 Texas bridges that are open to public vehicular traffic are safe. This includes bridges on the state highway system and off the system (city and county bridges).

All Texas bridges open to the public are subject to standardized and regularly scheduled inspections required by federal law. TxDOT conducts bridge inspections according to the TxDOT Bridge Inspection Manual and the National Bridge Inspection Standards. Bridge inspections serve two primary purposes:

1. To ensure the safety of the public; and
2. To catalog accurate data reflecting each bridge's physical attributes and current condition.

In accordance with National Bridge Inspection Standards, TxDOT annually reports statewide bridge inspection data to the Federal Highway Administration to support the National Bridge Inventory.

TxDOT collects bridge inventory and condition data using the following inspection types:

- Initial Inspection — TxDOT performs an initial inspection of all new bridges and when TxDOT first records a bridge in the inventory;
- Routine Inspection — TxDOT performs routine inspections on all bridges according to a regular schedule (also referred to as "routine safety inspections"). These are the most common form of bridge inspections, and they occur on a 24-month inspection frequency for most bridges;



- **Fracture Critical Inspection** — TxDOT performs fracture critical inspections on non-redundant tensile elements of steel bridges on a 24-month inspection frequency;
- **Underwater Inspection** — TxDOT performs underwater inspections on bridge elements below the water line on a 60-month inspection frequency;
- **Event or Emergency Driven Inspection** — TxDOT performs event-driven inspections in response to an incident that might threaten bridge stability (i.e., collision, fire, flood, significant environmental changes, loss of support, etc.). TxDOT sometimes refers to these inspections as “Emergency Inspections” and performs them on an as-needed basis;
- **In-Depth Inspection** — TxDOT performs in-depth inspections typically as follow-up inspections to better identify deficiencies found in any other type of inspection;
- **Special Inspections** — TxDOT performs special inspections to monitor a particular feature, deficiency, or changing condition. Unusual bridge features (such as external, grouted, or post-tensioned tendons) may compel TxDOT to pursue a special inspection; and
- **Condition Assessment Surveys and Damage Assessment Surveys** — TxDOT performs conditional assessment surveys and damage assessment surveys to evaluate, to a heightened level of detail, the features, and defects that TxDOT should address in future bridge work. TxDOT typically conducts these inspections in preparation for a bridge repair, rehabilitation, widening, or replacement project.

In addition to these inspections, TxDOT performs additional maintenance inspections of bridges every two years. TxDOT districts use maintenance inspections to identify and plan routine maintenance or improvement work and schedule these inspections between safety inspections.

TxDOT evaluates bridges for safe load-carrying capacity and makes a yearly submission of bridge inventory data to the Federal Highway Administration. TxDOT also monitors the

qualifications of individuals performing bridge inspections, including contracted and in-house personnel, to ensure that they meet federal regulatory requirements.

TxDOT publishes a summary of network-level bridge information on TxDOT’s website for the public to view. Each report on Texas Bridges contains bridge conditions and funding information on a biennial basis.

As part of the National Bridge Inspection Standards, TxDOT assigns condition ratings to various elements and classifies each bridge as good, fair, or poor. Poor-condition bridges may also be structurally deficient. Hearing those bridges are open to traffic after TxDOT has deemed the bridge to be in poor or structurally deficient condition frequently causes concern for the media and the traveling public. That is due largely to the nomenclature that is mandated and used by federal regulators. A poor condition or structurally deficient bridge that is open to traffic needs some maintenance, repair, or rehabilitation, but the bridge is safe to continue carrying traffic. TxDOT will immediately close any bridge that is unsafe for the traveling public. Furthermore, TxDOT places load restrictions on a bridge if an evaluation as part of a bridge inspection reveals a need to do so.

Finally, it is beneficial to see how Texas bridge conditions compare to other states. According to a 2020 report by American Road & Transportation Builders Association, Texas has the second lowest percentage of structurally deficient bridges of the 50 states and the District of Columbia while having more than double the number of bridges of any other state.

TxDOT accomplishes all of this while keeping costs low. According to the Federal Highway Administration in 2018, Texas bridge replacement costs were the lowest in the nation.

TRAVEL INFORMATION & DRIVETEXAS.ORG

Working together, TxDOT Travel Information Centers and DriveTexas.org (DriveTexas) bring important safety and economic benefits to the State of Texas and the traveling public. DriveTexas provides vital highway conditions information online and through an automated phone system with Travel Information Center travel counselors answering callers' requests for assistance. Travel Information Center travel counselors are experts in answering travelers' questions on travel safety and tourism.

A 2021 Visitor Survey by TxDOT and the Governor's Economic Development & Tourism Office showed that TxDOT travel counselors' tourism recommendations generated \$40.8 million in visitor spending, yielding \$2.5 million in state tax revenue, and supporting 408 Texas Jobs. The University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Texas at Austin Center for Transportation Research performed Safety and Economic Impact Studies in 2014, 2016, and 2018, finding that Travel Information Centers have had a positive effect on highway safety in Texas, most notably by Travel Information Centers employees communicating highway safety messages to the traveling public.

DRIVETEXAS.ORG

DriveTexas is TxDOT's official public-facing traffic information system for real-time road condition information. The DriveTexas website allows users to customize their views to see current crashes, road closures, construction, damage, traffic conditions, and other conditions across the state-maintained roadway system.

DriveTexas can handle a large number of users. For example, in February 2021 when Winter Storm Uri struck Texas, average daily website usage increased from 1,000 sessions to more than 300,000 sessions. TxDOT shared data from DriveTexas with all responding agencies during the storm and its aftermath. Overall, the DriveTexas website received approximately 3.6 million visits during and after Winter Storm Uri.

DriveTexas Toll-Free Interactive Voice Response may be contacted at 1-(800) 452-9292.

Automated travel information is available to the public 24 hours a day with an option to receive personal assistance from a travel counselor during the hours that the Travel Information Centers are open.



TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS & SAFETY REST AREAS

The first TxDOT Travel Information Centers were established in 1936 at major points of entry into the state as a part of the state's centennial celebration. TxDOT operates the Travel Information Centers on TxDOT rights-of-way, and travel counselors welcome approximately two million visitors each year. TxDOT Travel Information Centers are in Amarillo, Anthony, Denison, Gainesville, Harlingen, Langtry, Laredo, Orange, Texarkana, Waskom, Wichita Falls, and the Old General Land Office Building in the State Capitol Complex. TxDOT travel counselors staff these centers seven days a week.

The objectives of the Texas Travel Information Centers are to actively promote travel to and within Texas, increase public safety, and assist the traveling public by offering professional information and services while supporting the strategic goals of TxDOT. Travel counselors in the Texas Travel Information Centers provide highway users with a safe place to rest, facilitate economic development through the dissemination of printed and consultative travel information, and provide for the safe movement of people and goods by effectively communicating road conditions.

Additionally, Texas Travel Information Center travel counselors hold public awareness events to promote tourism, travel safety, work zone safety, and seatbelt and child safety seat use. Travel counselors also provide information on the dangers of drunk and distracted driving.

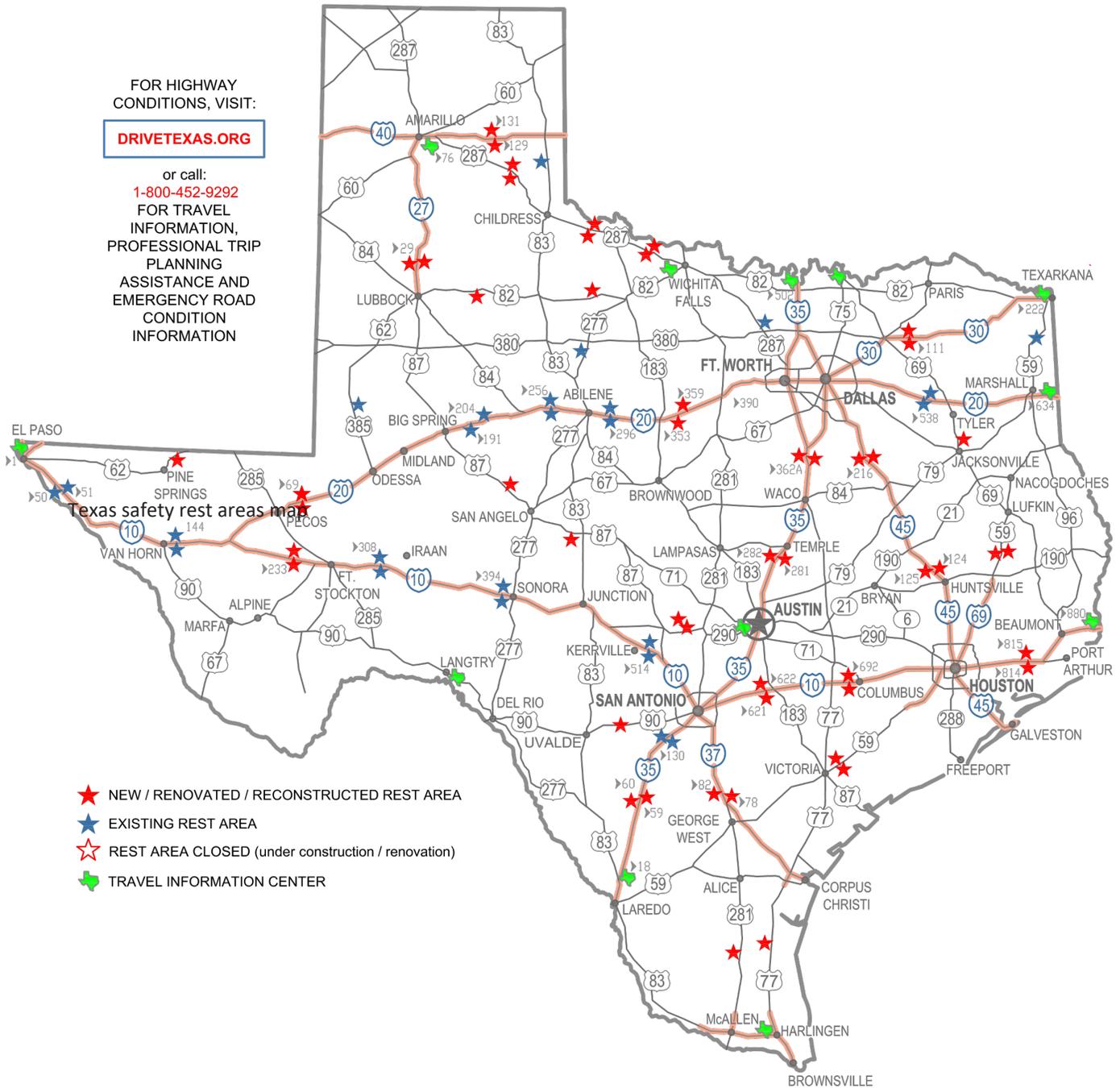
In Fiscal Year 2021, Texas Travel Information Centers served approximately 5.8 million highway users. Travel Information Centers also maintain separate customer service records to track travel counseling sessions. During Fiscal Year 2021, approximately 680,000 highway users had interactions with a TxDOT travel counselor.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS AND SAFETY REST AREAS?

Professional travel counselors staff the Travel Information Centers seven days a week. These travel counselors are experts in providing travel and safety information to the public. TxDOT does not staff the Safety Rest Areas with travel counselors, though there may be contract maintenance personnel on-site.

Crash Information represents reportable data collected from Texas Peace Officer's Crash Reports (CR-3) received and processed by the Texas Department of Transportation as of January 20, 2023.

TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS AND SAFETY REST AREAS MAP



CONNECTING YOU WITH TEXAS

RESOURCES



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PROJECT TRACKER

Project Tracker is the gateway to up-to-date information about TxDOT highway improvement projects, providing 24/7-access to the public, employees, and elected officials.



TxDOT is committed to your safety and to the reliability of the information contained on this site. While road conditions can change rapidly, DriveTexas.org is an industry leader in providing some of the most accurate and up-to-date travel-related information currently available to drivers in Texas. Information presented here is as close to real time as possible. For those who use our roads, please do not use this site while operating a motor vehicle.

Be Safe. Drive Smart. Thank you!



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2023-2024 Educational Series

TxDOT's complete 2023-2024 Educational Series that focuses on a range of transportation issues affecting TxDOT and the state of Texas.



PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

STRATEGIC GOALS

TxDOT's performance dashboard provides a transparent way to show how we are doing as an agency. We highlight performance measures related to the seven strategic goals that guide our mission of Connecting You with Texas: Promote Safety, Optimize System Performance, Preserve Our Assets, Deliver the Right Projects, Focus on the Customer, Foster Stewardship and Value Our Employees.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

TxDOT's Government Affairs Division works closely with government on both the state and federal levels through the State Legislative Affairs and Federal Affairs sections.

