

Market Snapshot

Project: Sam Houston Tollway, from US 290 to IH 45 | Houston, Texas

For the construction of overhead sign bridges, cantilevers, large ground mounted signs, small signs, and pavement markings.

Plunging oil prices appear to have not yet dampened the booming Texas economy. To sustain the projected \$10.8 billion annual transportation requirements, as many states have, Texas has implemented design-build projects which are frequently a mix of public/private investment funding. These types of projects can sometimes create exceptionally challenging circumstances for contractors.

Driving through and around Houston, the scale of road construction in progress is awe-inspiring. Pouring vast amounts of concrete has caused a shortage, with lead times now extending to 2-3 weeks. Of course, skyrocketing concrete costs are also a byproduct of the increased demand.

Stakeholders struggle to meet unprecedented requirements and constraints as construction proceeds at a breakneck pace. Exceeding completion dates without penalty has become the norm. Contractors are advising vendors to ignore completion dates when bidding, to expect time extensions, and factor material escalation into the quoting process.

Coordinating procurement around ever-changing design-build plans is a special nightmare for Houston contractors. Upon release of approved submittals, material is being fabricated and shipped. Necessary plan revisions then make material obsolete before installation. Although contractors receive compensation, such revisions are an additional burden to already strained resources.

Houston's Grand Parkway, currently under construction, is the city's third beltway. When complete, this outer perimeter of the freeway system will exceed a circumference of 180 miles.

The Sam Houston Tollway is part of the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) system, which consists of 132 miles of principal arterial roads primarily located between the first and third loops of the beltway network.

Detail of The Grand Parkway



Image from www.grandparkway99.com

The HCTRA System Map

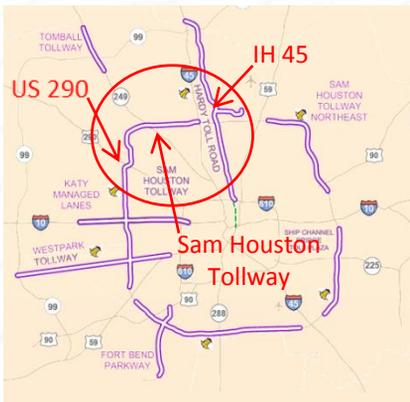


Image from www.hctra.org

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Image from <http://captrac.hctra.com/>

For the Sam Houston project, Traffic Systems Construction installed approximately 22,000 square feet of extruded aluminum signs fabricated by Interstate SignWays. The signs were built per HCTRA's unique specifications, using 3M™ Diamond Grade™ DG³ Reflective Sheeting. The visibility difference of DG³ greatly increases the brightness of road signs, helping nighttime drivers get critical visual information.

Installation was limited to three scheduled 24-hour lane closures occurring during a 6-week timeframe. HCTRA allowed roadway shutdown in two 3-mile segments, and one 8-mile segment. The 8-mile segment required closure of all ramps to the Sam Houston Tollway from US 290, and 27 police officers were utilized. Traffic Systems crews worked 30 straight hours in 55 degree weather and periods of heavy rain to install all signs for the 8-mile segment. With a challenging time constraint to complete the assembly and installation of sign structure bridges and sign panels, error was simply not an option. Last minute design changes added to the logistical difficulties. Upon discovery of various signs being designed to display incorrect tolling fees, Interstate SignWays expedited fabrication and delivery of numerous corrective overlays to assist Traffic Systems in meeting schedule deadlines.



3M™ Diamond Grade™ DG³
Reflective Sheeting



Heavyweight 12" Extruded
Aluminum Panel

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Image from <http://captrac.hctra.com/>

Interstate SignWays facilitated installation for Traffic Systems by loading uncrated, fully assembled signs onto Interstate-provided A-frame trailers, in the order of the planned installation. Deliveries were appropriately staged, and trailers remained with Traffic Systems for project use. A rotation of six trailers was required.



Image from <http://captrac.hctra.com/>

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Traffic Systems Construction, a Houston-based specialty electrical contractor in business since 1999, performs a diversified scope of work including signing, signalization, lighting, ITS and waste water treatment plants. For more information about Traffic Systems, please call (281) 337-1926.

Interstate SignWays is America's largest guide sign manufacturer, and experts in the fabrication of custom architectural and wayfinding solutions. Established in 1959, Interstate offers a 170,000 SF production facility and combined employee experience of 700+ years.



Image from <http://captrac.hctra.com/>



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Sources:

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