For Immediate Release

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TexDOT and TCEQ Rev Up “Drive Clean Across Texas” Campaign for Summer Ozone Season

June 10, 2003 (AUSTIN, TX) With ozone season upon us, state officials have a message for drivers: Help clean up Texas air. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) are urging Texans to help clean up the air we breathe by driving clean across Texas.

Drive Clean Across Texas is a statewide campaign sponsored jointly by TxDOT and TCEQ to raise awareness about the seriousness of air pollution and what steps individual drivers can take to help solve the problem. Emissions from cars and trucks contribute to the air pollution problem in Texas.

At stake is the health of millions of Texans – and vital federal funds for the state’s highway system.

As part of this year’s summer campaign, TXDOT officials, their counterparts at TCEQ and representatives from local air quality coalitions will hit the airwaves with “Drive Clean” advice, appearing on a broad range of television and radio programs in the nine areas of Texas that are either exceeding or nearing federal air pollution limits. Along with billboards, TV and radio public service announcements will also urge Texans to act now to clean up the air.

Areas which have exceeded the federal limits for air pollution include Houston/Galveston, Dallas/Fort Worth, Beaumont/Port Arthur and El Paso. Five other Texas areas are nearing the federal limits: Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Tyler/Longview and Victoria.

The media messages will encourage Texans to keep their vehicles well maintained and tires properly inflated. Other tips include: minimizing the time an engine is idling, using public transportation or carpooling, combining errands, purchasing low-emitting vehicles and driving within the speed limit.

Ozone is generally worse during the summer than any other time of year. When hot temperatures combine with vehicle emissions, the result can be higher levels of ozone – and that spells trouble for children, senior citizens and people with breathing problems. Studies say even a few hours of exposure to ozone for an otherwise healthy person can reduce the ability of lungs to function properly.

The penalty for not improving air quality in the next few years is stiff: the potential loss of federal dollars that help pay for new roads.

Bottom line: Experts say the good habits that reduce emissions, help reduce traffic jams and save money at the gas pump will also improve the quality of the air we all breathe – and that’s good for everyone’s health. To learn more about how you can help clean up the air in Texas log on to www.drivecleanacrosstexas.org.

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