

NORTHEAST TARRANT

Northeast Loop 820 and Rufe Snow Drive called worst bottleneck in DFW

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NORTH RICHLAND HILLS — By all accounts, Rufus "Rufe" Snow was a decent guy.

So it doesn't seem fair that the name of this turn-of-the-20th-century farmer — one of North Richland Hills' founders — is once again being taken in vain, at least in traffic circles.

This time it's because a study released Tuesday concluded that the worst bottleneck in Dallas-Fort Worth is at Northeast Loop 820 and — you guessed it — Rufe Snow Drive.

The westbound side of Loop 820 at Rufe Snow Drive is congested for 42 hours per week, more than any other point on the Metroplex map, according to INRIX. The navigation software company measures gridlock by reviewing data from GPS-equipped vehicles.

"I'm in City Hall right now and you can sit outside and see the traffic is stopped, just like it always is. It doesn't matter if it's a weekday or a Saturday or a Sunday," North Richland Hills Mayor Oscar Trevino said. "We'll continue to talk about Rufe Snow until they get out there on Loop 820 and start widening it."

Rufe Snow Drive, a main north-south pathway that cuts through North Richland Hills, Watauga and Keller, was cursed by drivers for decades for its dense traffic and notoriously long lines at stoplights.

In 2005, the four-lane road was finally widened to six lanes north of Loop 820. For a while, not an insulting word was uttered Mr. Snow's way.

But now his name is back in focus — and this time the barbs are aimed at the Rufe Snow Drive/Loop 820 intersection.

State officials say they're doing something about it. Northeast Loop 820 is scheduled to be widened beginning early next year after the Texas Department of Transportation awarded a contract for the so-called North Tarrant Express project to private developer NTE Mobility Partners. The lead partner is the U.S. arm of Cintra, a global toll road investment company based in Spain.

Tolls would be collected on the new lanes, and existing lanes would remain free.

Overall, Dallas-Fort Worth is the fifth-most-congested metro area, an improvement from last year's fourth-place showing, the INRIX study showed. North Texas travel delays increased 3 percent during the first half of 2009.

Nationwide, traffic congestion tapered off in the second quarter of 2009, when the effects of the economic downturn were at their peak, INRIX concluded. But now traffic appears to be back on the rise, and congestion is likely to worsen.

Top 10 congested areas

1. Los Angeles
2. New York
3. Chicago
4. Washington
5. Dallas-Fort Worth
6. Houston
7. San Francisco
8. Boston
9. Seattle
10. Philadelphia

Source: INRIX