

**Harris County Archives**  
**Houston, Texas**

*Finding Aid*

**Harris County Toll Road Authority**  
**CR005**  
**1986-2003**

**Size:** 1.25 cubic Foot, 1 VHS Tape

**Restrictions on Access:** None

**Restrictions on Use:** None

**Acquisition:** Harris County Toll Road Authority

**Accession Number:** 2005.042

**Processed by:** Annie Golden, 2008

**Citation:** [Identification of Item], Harris County Toll Road Authority, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

**Creator Sketch:**

The Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) came into existence on September 13, 1983, when Harris County voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum by a 7-3 margin to release up to \$900 million in bonds to create two toll roads, the Hardy Toll Road and the Sam Houston Tollway, to relieve Houston's traffic problems. While the Harris County voters, the Houston City Council, and officials from the Texas Highway Commission supported the building of toll roads, the Commissioners Court met with opposition from political groups and individuals in Harris County. Political groups, such as The Metropolitan Organization, opposed the construction of the toll roads fearing Harris County tax dollars were to be used to guarantee the toll roads bonds making it an unacceptable financial risk. Commissioner E.A. "Squatty" Lyons opposed the toll road plan because he did not believe his colleagues had studied and reviewed the proposal enough. These oppositions did not stall the Commissioners Court. On September 23, 1983, the Harris County Commissioners Court and County Judge Jon S. Lindsay formally created the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) and designated all five-court members to act as a governing and operating board.

Effective November 1, 1983, the Commissioners Court named W.W. "Bill" Thorne executive director of the HCTRA. The Commissioners Court also approved \$91,000 in county money to pay for five new employees and office costs. One year later, Thorne resigned stating that he had completed the job that he was hired to do, organizing \$900 million in toll road projects. Wesley E. Freise, a civil engineer, replaced Thorne as executive director.

Construction of the Hardy Toll Road began on September 13, 1984, the first anniversary of the \$900 million referendum. Three years later on September 20, 1987, the north leg

of the Hardy Toll Road opened providing a new link to connect the Greenspoint and Intercontinental Airport areas within the northern suburbs. By June 1988 the southern segment of the Hardy Toll Road, 8.2 miles from the North Belt to the North Loop, and the Sam Houston Tollway opened, five months earlier than projected.

The HCTRA is currently a division of the Harris County Public Infrastructure Department. The HCTRA operates under three separate units: the Operations Division which oversees all aspects of toll operations which includes revenue collections, facilities and maintenance, human resources, and incident management; the Engineering Division that manages toll road design, engineering, construction management and right-of-way acquisition; and the Services Division which handles all EZ TAG customer services, violations and information technology. Wesley E. Freise was executive director until October 2000. Bernard Koudella was executive director from October 2000 until June 2001. Mike Stretch was interim executive director from July 28, 2001 until May 31, 2007. The current executive director is Gary Stobb.

### **Bibliography:**

Coulter, Bill. "Toll Road Authority Created," *The Houston Post*, September 14, 1983.

Benton, Pete. "Council Supports County on Toll Road," *The Houston Chronicle*, October 08, 1983.

Paternoster, Laurie. "Coalition Says it Will Oppose Toll Road Bond Referendum," *The Houston Post*, July 23, 1983.

"County Selects Thorne to Direct Toll Authority," *The Houston Post*, September 30, 1983.

"First Hardy Toll Road Segment Opens Today," *The Houston Chronicle*, September 20, 1987.

### **Collection Summary:**

Patron correspondence, general correspondence, patron communications, press releases, reports, publications, membership directories, and 1 VHS tape (1986-2003) document the administrative functions of the Harris County Toll Road Authority.

**Series:** Administrative Records  
**Size:** 1.25 cubic foot, 1 VHS tape  
**Range of Dates:** 1986-2003

**Scope and Contents Note:**

Patron correspondence, general correspondence, patron communications, press releases, publications, reports, membership directories and a VHS tape document the functions of the Harris County Toll Road Authority. Administrative Records focus on the daily responsibilities in dealing with toll road patrons who call in or write letters reporting abuse from toll workers, non-functioning automated tolls, and general comments. The Administrative Records also document the professional interests of the Toll Road Authority Director and Assistant Director and how they interacted with and educated other state and foreign officials interested in the construction and functions of toll roads. The Administrative Records are divided in seven subseries: Correspondence, Patron Communications, Press Releases, Publications, Reports, Directories, and VHS Tapes. The correspondence records have been sampled.

**Subseries: Correspondence**  
**Range of Dates:** 1991-2003

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>          | <b>Date</b>               | <b>Location</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Patron Correspondence | 1991, 12/13 – 1992, 01/02 | 0923-X-01       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1992, 01-12               | 0923-X-02       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1993, 01-12               | 0923-X-03       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1994, 01-12               | 0923-X-04       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1995, 01-12               | 0923-X-05       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1996, 01-12               | 0923-X-06       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1997, 01-12               | 0923-X-07       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1998, 01-12               | 0923-X-08       |
| Patron Correspondence | 1999, 01-12               | 0923-X-09       |
| Patron Correspondence | 2000, 01-12               | 0923-X-10       |
| Patron Correspondence | 2002, 01-12               | 0923-X-11       |

| <b>Title</b>            | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Patron Correspondence   | 2003, 01-12 | 0923-X-12       |
| United States Relations | 1993-1999   | 0923-X-13       |
| Foreign Relations       | 1993-1999   | 0923-X-14       |
| Municipal Relations     | 1999-2001   | 0923-X-15       |

**Subseries: Patron Communications**

**Range of Dates: 2000-2003**

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>          | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Patron Communications | 2000, 01-02 | 0923-X-16       |
| Patron Communications | 2001, 01-02 | 0923-X-17       |
| Patron Communications | 2002, 01-02 | 0923-X-18       |
| Patron Communications | 2003, 01-02 | 0923-X-19       |

**Subseries: Press Releases**

**Range of Dates: 1994-2001**

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>   | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Press Releases | 1994, 01-12 | 0923-X-20       |
| Press Releases | 1995, 01-12 | 0923-X-21       |
| Press Releases | 1996, 01-12 | 0923-X-22       |
| Press Releases | 1997, 01-14 | 0923-X-23       |
| Press Releases | 2001, 04-24 | 0923-X-24       |

**Subseries: Publications**  
**Range of Dates: 1986-1996**

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>                          | <b>Date</b>              | <b>Location</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Houston Region Transportation Seminar | 1986, 06/18              | 0923-X-25       |
| Super Group Meeting                   | 1995, 01/30 -1995, 07/17 | 0923-X-26       |
| Super Group Meeting                   | 1996, 10/24              | 0935-X-01       |

**Subseries: Reports**  
**Range of Dates: 1994-1998**

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>                  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Monthly Reports on Traffic    | 1994, 01-12 | 0935-X-02       |
| Sick Leave Utilization Report | 1998, 05/15 | 0935-X-03       |

**Subseries: Directories**  
**Range of Dates: 1984-1992**

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>   | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|--|-------------|-----------------|
| Houston Engineering and Scientific Society Directory | 1984-1985   | 0935-X-04       |
| Houston Contractors Association Directory            | 1990-1992   | 0935-X-05       |

**Subseries: VHS Tapes**  
**Size: 1 Tape**  
**Range of Dates: 1999, 12/12**

**Inventory**

| <b>Title</b>   | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Toll Violators | 1999, 12/12 | VHS-097         |