

# *Abilene MPO Insider*

*The Official Newsletter of the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization*

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# Over the river and through the woods...

## Tips to Stay Safe During Holiday Travel

*As the holidays approach, many of us will choose to travel far and wide to visit relatives, see friends, and celebrate. No matter where you go or why, it's always important to be prepared for any and all situations.*

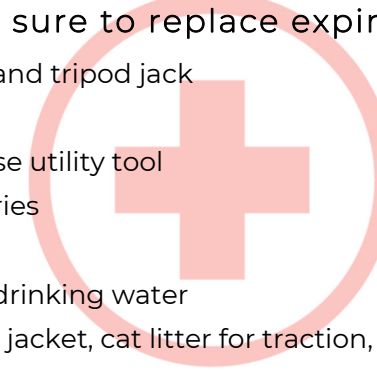
*Whether you're travelling by plane, train, or automobile, we're here to give you the tools you need to have a successful and stress-free holiday season.*

For more information, visit the National Safety Council's official website at [nsc.org](https://www.nsc.org)  
(cited on pg. 16)

### KEEP AN EMERGENCY KIT IN YOUR CAR

Be ready for any situation on the road. Check your kit every 6 months and be sure to replace expired items regularly.

- Spare tire, wheel wrench, and tripod jack
- Jumper cables
- Toolkit and/or multipurpose utility tool
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Complete first aid kit
- Nonperishable foods and drinking water
- Extreme weather gear (ex: jacket, cat litter for traction, shovel, blankets)
- Reflective vest, triangles, and cloth to make you and your car visible



### DON'T GET CAUGHT IN THE COLD

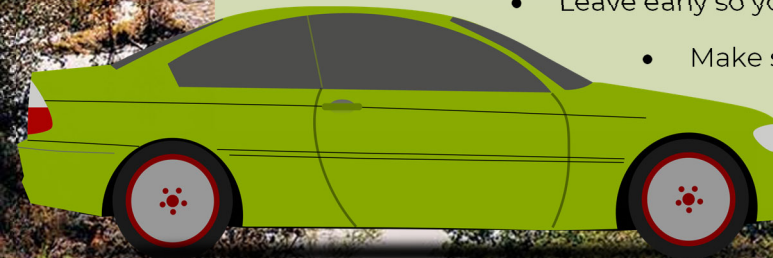
Make sure your car can handle winter weather.

- Test your battery; battery power drops as the temperature drops
- Have winter tires put on your car or check your tread and replace if less than 2/32 of an inch
- Check your tire pressure; tire pressure drops as the temperature drops
- Check your wiper blades and replace if needed

**Always check the forecast beforehand. Wait out the storm if possible; if you must travel, share your plans and route with someone before leaving.**

### ON THE ROAD

- Get a good night's sleep to avoid drowsy driving
- Leave early so you aren't rushed or speeding; plan for traffic
- Make sure every person in the car is buckled - every time
- If you attend a holiday party, designate a sober driver to ensure everyone makes it home safely



### IN THE AIR

- Keep your ID, passport, and boarding pass in a secure, easy-to reach place
- Take pictures of important documents so you have access even if the physical copy is lost, stolen, or destroyed
- Pack all medications and other necessary, irreplaceable items in your carry-on in case your luggage is lost





# Notable News

## FEDERAL FUNDING APPROVED FOR THE SOUTH 14TH WALKABILITY PROJECT

TxDOT has approved millions in federal funding for projects across the state that will improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety as part of the Transportation Alternatives Program. We are delighted to report that Abilene has received some of this funding for an important project!

Among other pedestrian improvements, the South 14th Walkability Project will construct a 5-foot sidewalk along South 14th Street between Pioneer Drive and Barrow Street and other pedestrian bridges over Catclaw Creek and Elm Creek.

With the assistance of this funding, Abilene and other communities across the state will be able to “help Texans get safer access to schools, work, public transit and community destinations across the state.”\*

*\*See the full TxDOT press release (cited on pg. 16) for more information.*



## ATTENTION DRIVERS:

TxDOT is conducting an I-20 Texas Corridor Study and they need your input!

Answer this survey by December 10th, 2021 to let them know how you use I-20 and what improvements can be made.



# MEET THE BOARD



*Glenn Allbritton, P.E.*

**TxDOT District Engineer**

Glenn Allbritton, P.E., is the district engineer for TxDOT's Abilene District.

The district comprises 13 counties: Borden, Callahan, Fisher, Haskell, Howard, Jones, Kent, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry, Shackelford, Stonewall and Taylor

Allbritton is a native of Seymour, Texas where he graduated high school. He received his engineering degree from Midwestern State University in 2003 and received his P.E. license in 2009.

In 1998, he began work for TxDOT in the district signal shop in Wichita Falls while attending college. Allbritton has served in numerous other positions in the Wichita Falls District until 2013 at which time he transferred to the Childress District to serve as the Munday area engineer. In 2015, he moved to the Abilene District to serve as the director of construction. He returned to the Wichita Falls District, in late 2016 as the director of operations. In 2020 he was named as the district engineer in Abilene.

Glenn is married to Jan and they have 3 kids: Lexi (21), Tyler (17), and Leah (14).



# WHAT'S MAPPENING?

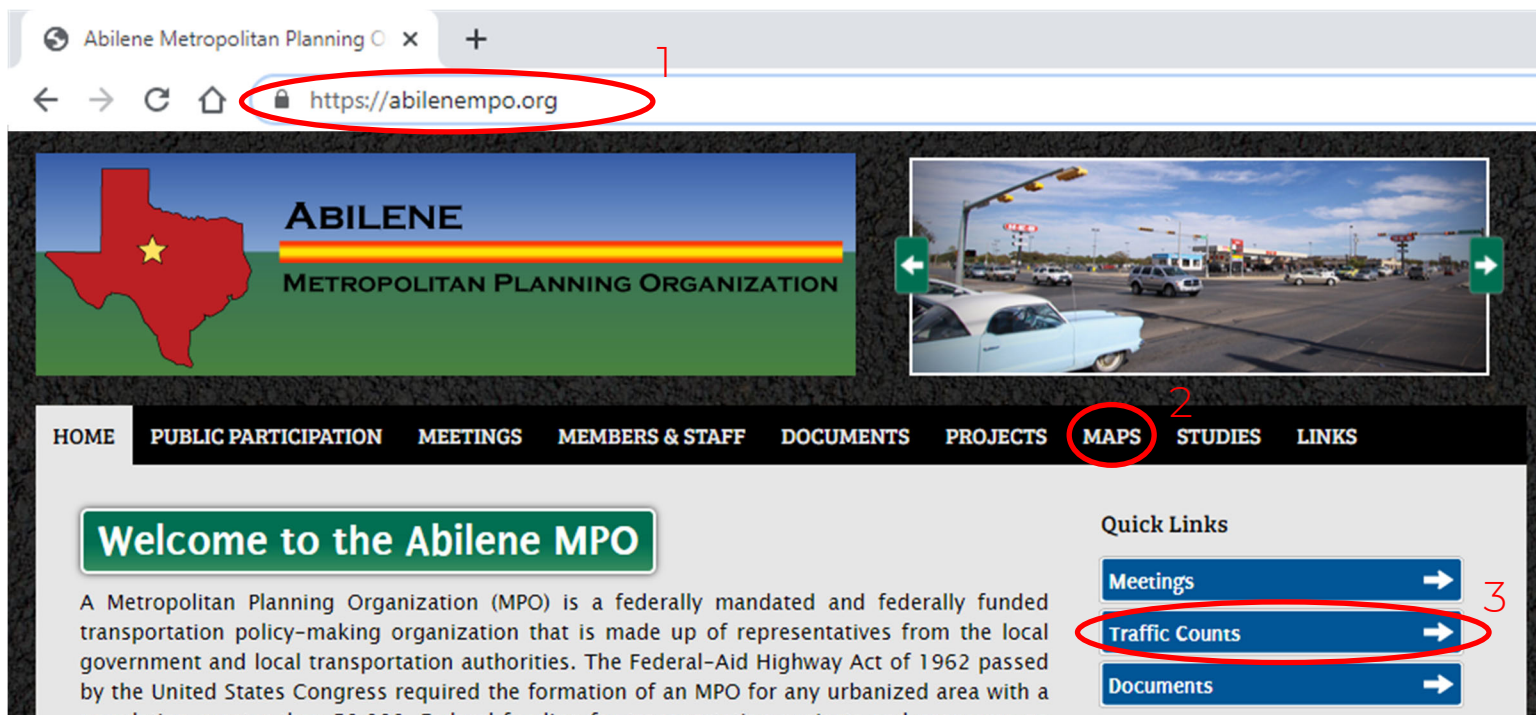
How many crashes have occurred in the Abilene MPO area over the last year?  
Where is traffic heaviest downtown? Is there a bike route near me?

These questions and more can all be answered by visiting the “Maps” tab on the Abilene MPO website. With both interactive and PDF maps, we have everything you need to learn more about transportation in the area.

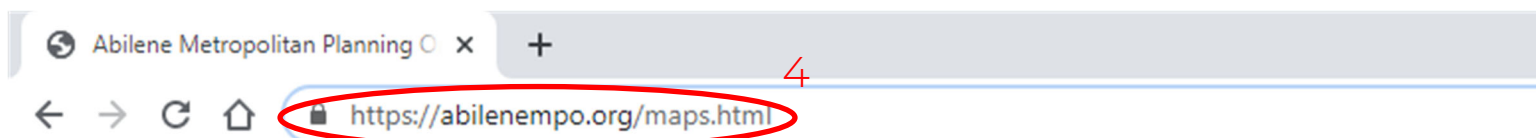
In this issue of the *Abilene MPO Insider*, we'll go over how to access maps through the Abilene MPO website and how to navigate the ARCGIS Interactive Map System. Along the way, we'll apply what we've learned to look at and interpret the TxDOT Traffic Counts map.

## Getting Started

You can access the Abilene MPO website at [abilenempore.org](http://abilenempore.org)<sup>1</sup>. Already there? Perfect. Near the top of the screen are nine tabs: everything you need on the website can be accessed through one of these. For a list of all the maps available for public access, click **the third tab from the right**<sup>2</sup> labeled “Maps.” Only interested in the Traffic Counts? A **direct link**<sup>3</sup> to this map can be found under “Quick Links”

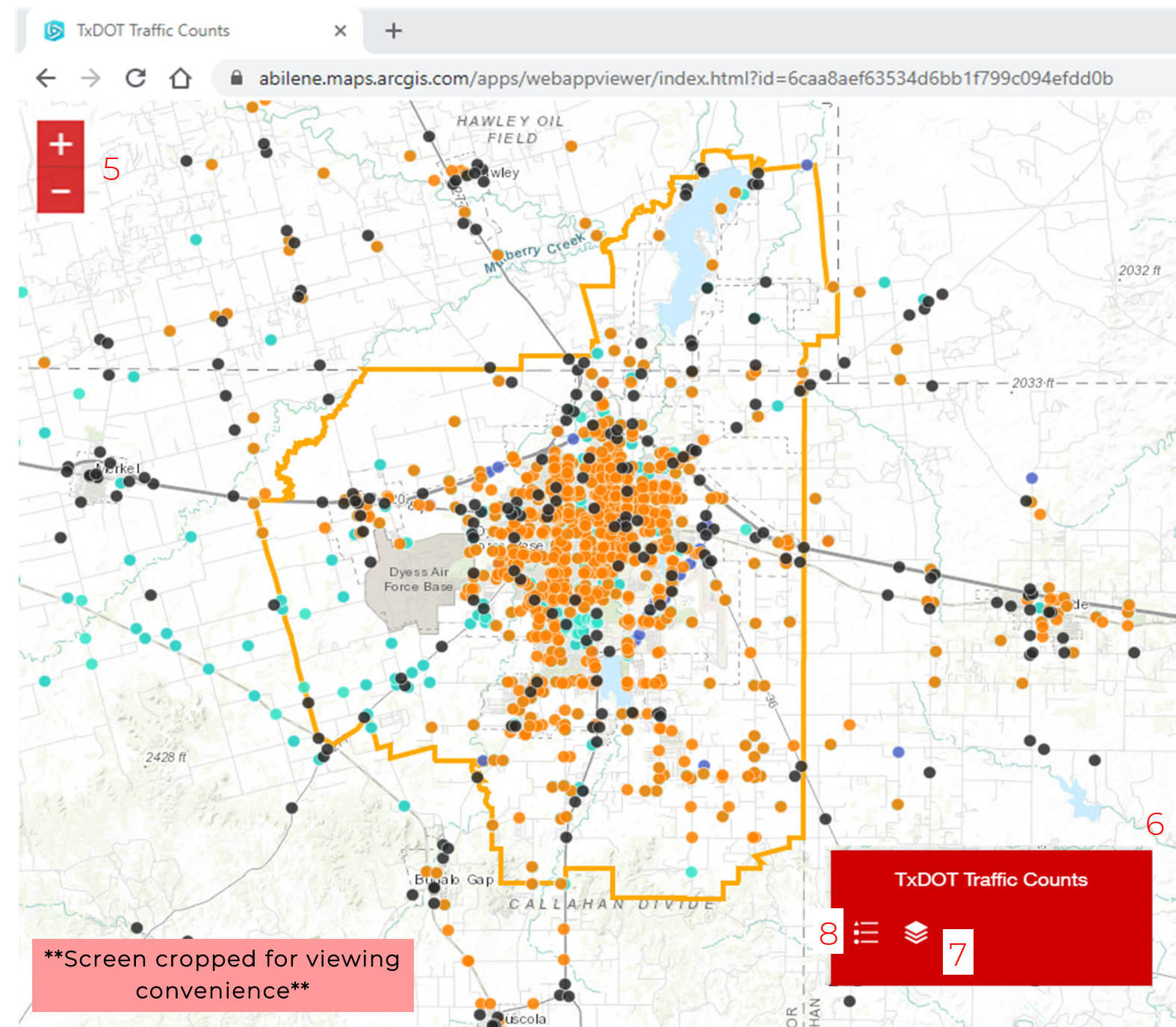


To visit the Maps tab directly, go to [abilenempo.org/maps](http://abilenempo.org/maps) <sup>4</sup>.



## *Navigating through the ARCGIS System*

At first glance, the interactive map can look a bit overwhelming. No worries! The ARCGIS system has several tools to make your search easier. Use the **plus and minus symbols**<sup>5</sup> in the upper-left-hand corner to zoom in and out on the map. Interactive maps contain several **layers**, and each layer can show you something different. The **legend** is the key to understanding what you see on a map; it will tell you what each color and pattern represents. The **box**<sup>6</sup> in the bottom-right-hand corner has a **layer list**<sup>7</sup>, which allows you to choose which layers are visible, and provides a **legend**<sup>8</sup> to understand what each marking means. (continued on the next page)





# WHAT'S MAPPENING? continued

After clicking on one of the two symbols, the box expands to show more detail. Let’s look at the expanded layer list first:

## The Layer List

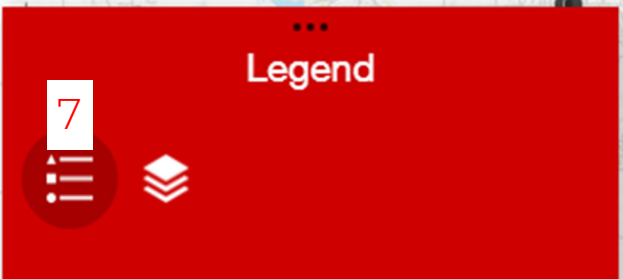
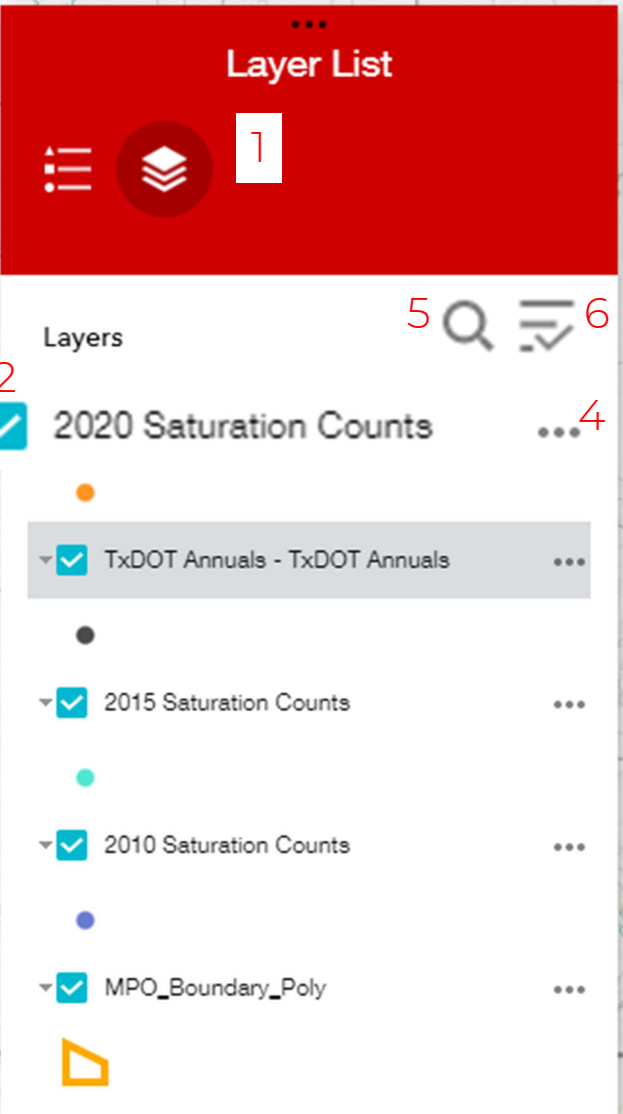
Represented by the right-most **symbol**<sup>1</sup>, the layer list shows that there are five different layers in the Traffic Counts map: TxDOT Annuals, 2020 Saturation Counts, 2015 Saturation Counts, 2010 Saturation Counts, and the MPO Boundary. The **blue check box**<sup>2</sup> indicates whether that layer is currently visible or hidden. Moving to the left, the **small arrow**<sup>3</sup> can be clicked to view more details — in this case, the symbol that represents that layer. Clicking the **three dots**<sup>4</sup> to the right gives you several options. You can...

- Zoom to view all points in this category across the state
- Change the transparency of the layer’s markings
- Set the visibility range for the layer — this runs on a scale from countries to rooms
- Move the layer forward and backward in relation to any other visible layers
- View more details

Near the top of the list is a **keyword search**<sup>5</sup> (this is helpful for maps with many layers). The **symbol**<sup>6</sup> directly to the right of that allows you to make all layers visible or hidden and to expand or collapse the details of all layers.

## The Legend

The legend can be accessed and expanded by clicking the left-most **symbol**<sup>7</sup>. Pictured below are the markings that represent each of the five layers in the Traffic Counts map. (This will be a helpful reference when learning to interpret the data on the next page)

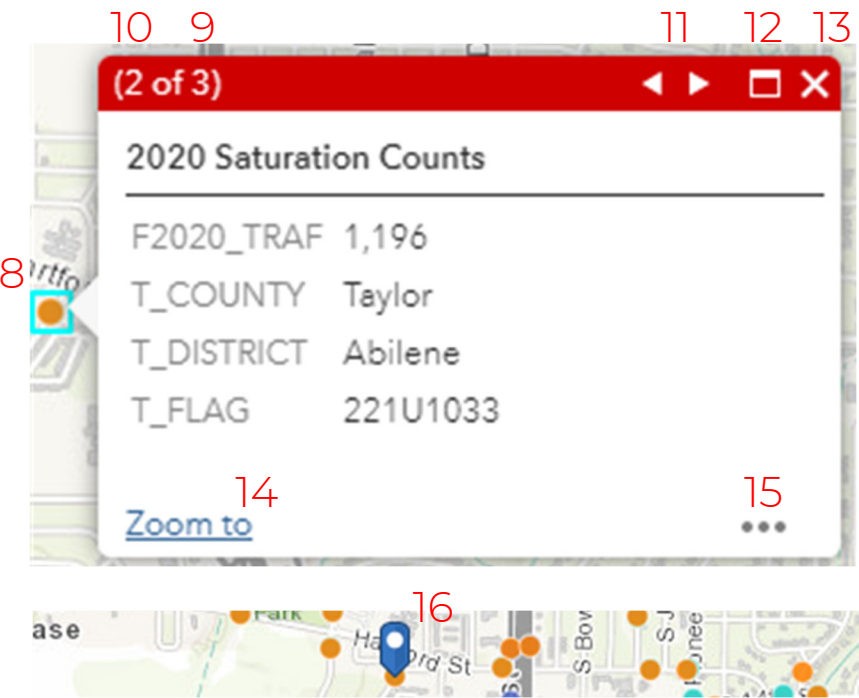


## Viewing the Data

The data found in the Traffic Counts Map is the copyrighted property of TxDOT and cannot be used or reproduced without express permission. Additionally, TxDOT and the Abilene MPO are not responsible for any harm or other claims caused, should the map contain outdated information. The full terms and conditions can be found on the Abilene MPO website and should be consulted before viewing any data.

Clicking a **point**<sup>8</sup> on the map will bring up a window (shown below) with information about the data in that area. Depending on where the view is zoomed to, there is a chance that clicking in an area will select multiple points at once. The top left corner of the window lists how many **total points**<sup>9</sup> are selected and which one you are **currently viewing**<sup>10</sup>. The top right corner has **arrows**<sup>11</sup> you can use to switch between each point’s details (shown in the full window), as well as the options to **maximize**<sup>12</sup> or **close**<sup>13</sup> the window.

The details of a single data point are listed with the name of the layer/study in bold at the top. Click “**Zoom to**<sup>14</sup>” in the bottom left corner to zoom in and see the exact location of the point on the map. Clicking the **three dots**<sup>15</sup> in the bottom right corner gives you the options to pan and center the point in the map view and to place a marker. **Markers**<sup>16</sup> remain visible and can be used to highlight and remember multiple points on the map, regardless of which layers are hidden.



## Understanding the Data

Unless you want to see a change over time or traffic counts from the past, the most relevant data for drivers today can be found in the TxDOT Annuals – which are recorded yearly on state highways – and the **2020 Saturation Counts** – which are recorded every 5 years on various city streets. These layers will show the most recent and up-to-date numbers available to the public.

The number given for any single data point represents the traffic count or volume for that particular intersection or stretch of road. Traffic volumes are 24-hour unadjusted axle counts divided by 2; they are not adjusted for trucks or seasonal variation. Put simply, traffic counts are a representation of approximately how many vehicles cross a specific area within a full day, with axle counts accounting for the size taken up by certain vehicles. The higher the number, the heavier the traffic.

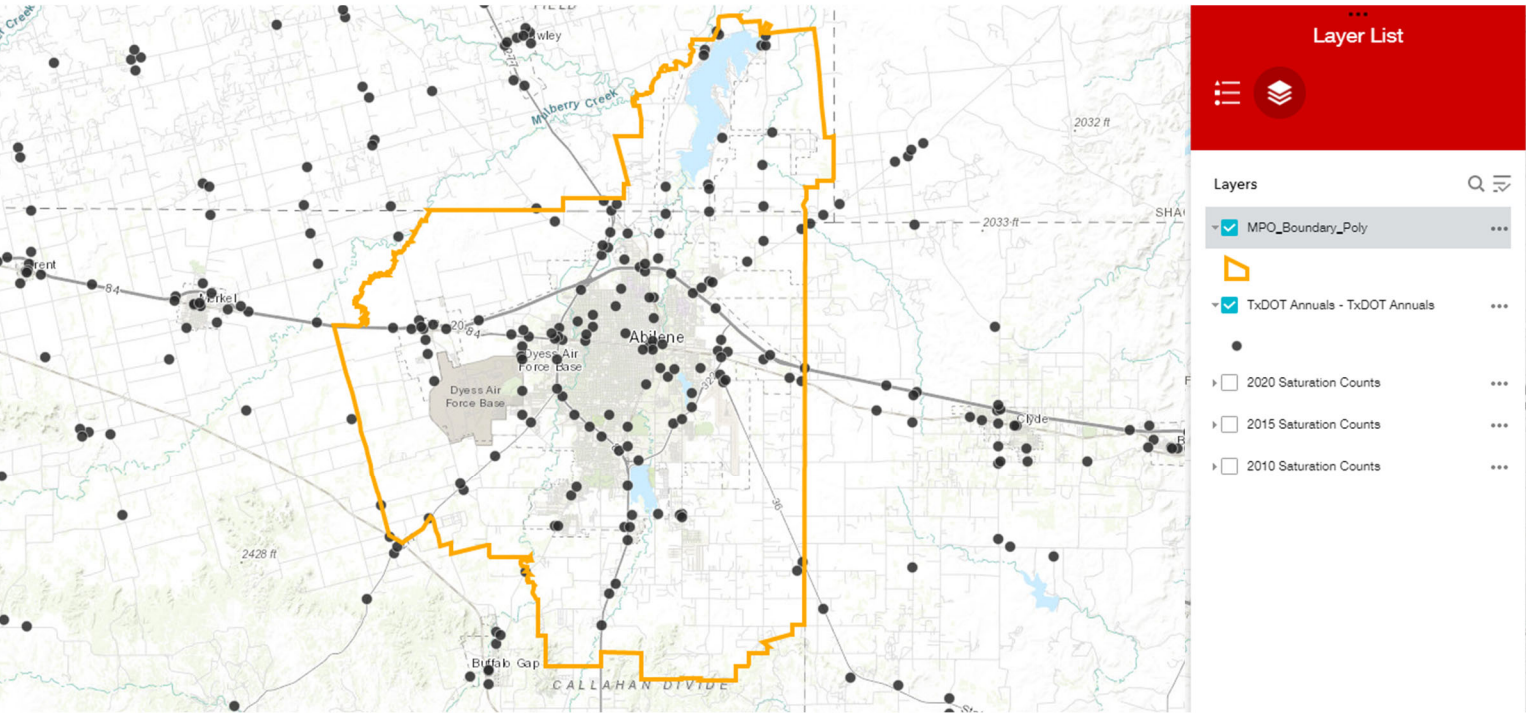
*Let’s wrap up our Traffic Counts map tour by looking at some examples...*



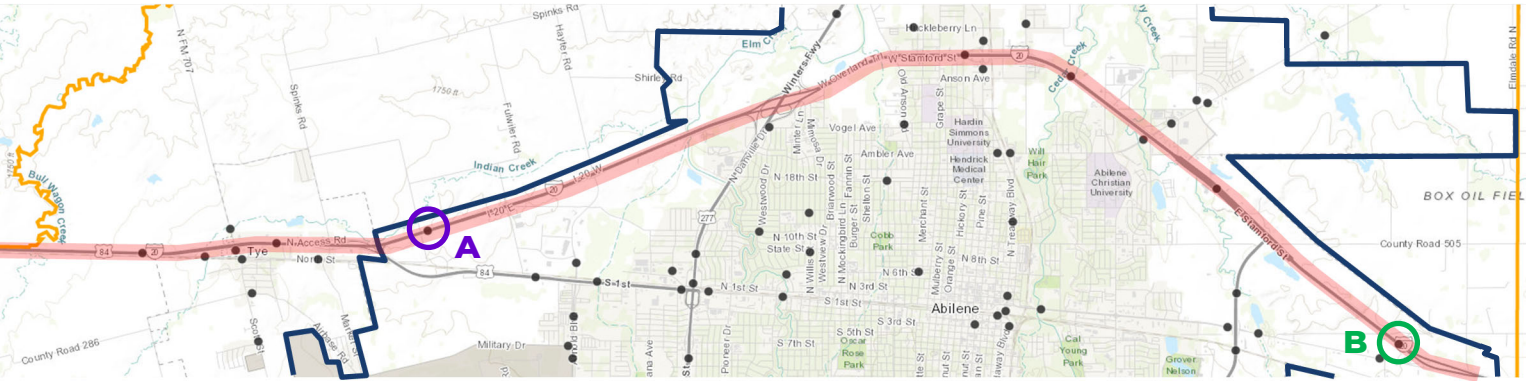
Data Interpretation Examples

Question: Is traffic on I-20 heavier near the east or the west side of Abilene?

I-20 is a state road, so we'll be focusing on the TxDOT Annuals. After hiding any unneeded layers, it's time to define our location. On most maps, major highways are emphasized; here, they're bolded in gray.



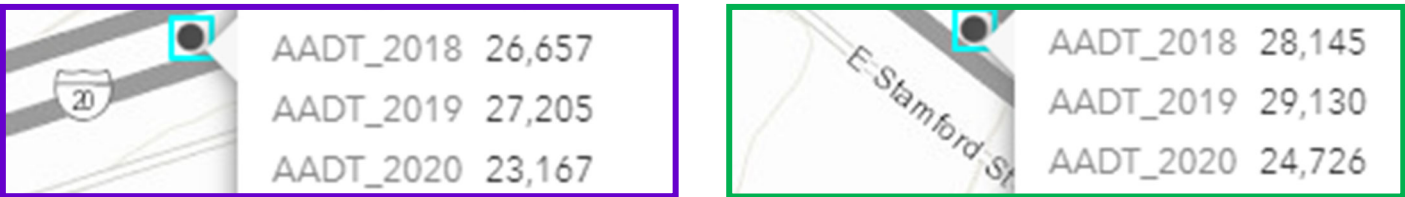
If you zoom in close enough, you can see that each road and street is labeled. Now that we've located I-20 (highlighted below), we need to find our data points. There are several points on I-20 within the MPO Boundary, but we want to know about the traffic within Abilene specifically. City and county limits are shown on the map with dotted lines, but, if you're still unsure, the [Neighborhood map](#) on the Abilene MPO website can help. With the **city limits** in mind, let's find the point **farthest west (A)** and the point **farthest east (B)** and take a look at the data.



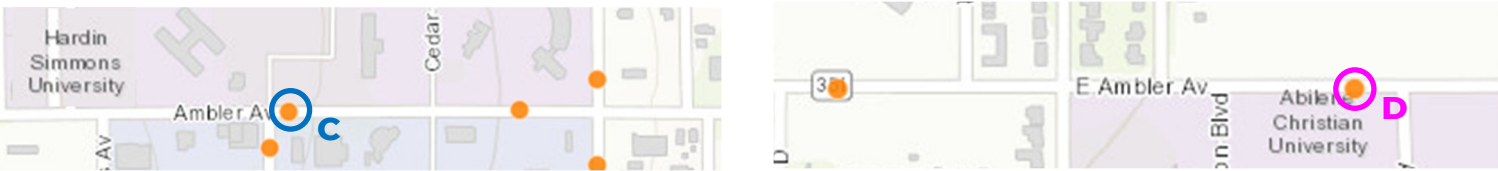
Check the county and region using the information in the point pop-up window. Once we know we're in the right area and on the right road, all that's left to do is compare the numbers.

Question: Does Ambler Ave. have heavier traffic near ACU or HSU?

Comparing the last three years, the recorded traffic volume is consistently **higher** at **Point B** than at **Point A**. Therefore, the data implies that, during the years surveyed, I-20 usually had heavier traffic on the east side of Abilene than on the west side.



Using the 2020 Saturation Counts, we can compare traffic on smaller, more localized streets. Regardless of the layer you're using, the process is similar. The TxDOT Traffic Counts map helpfully labels specific areas in the region such as hospitals, universities, and parks. Confirm the label of an area, then choose a point within it. **Point C** is in the middle of Hardin Simmons University, and **Point D** is in the middle of Abilene Christian University.



The 2020 Saturation Counts contain one set of data, so we only have to compare two numbers. Though they are close, the data shown reveals that the traffic volume on Ambler near ACU is higher than near HSU.



Conclusion

These are only a couple examples of how map data helps us to understand more about transportation in the area around us. Next issue of the *Insider*, we'll feature a different map and go over how to apply the information to real-world questions, so stay tuned!

Don't forget that the Abilene MPO website gives you easy, fast access to the TxDOT Traffic Counts map, as well as other useful maps and resources. Head to [abilenempo.org](#) to go see for yourself! As always, you can contact the Abilene MPO using the information on the last page with any questions or concerns; we are happy to help.



MPO INSIDER  
INVESTIGATION

# Fun & Games

Z	T	I	H	V	A	H	Q	I	T	R	X	L	F	E
T	I	B	S	W	U	A	P	Z	Y	R	L	O	W	L
Y	X	R	F	X	T	I	M	I	T	R	A	N	I	B
P	T	D	A	I	O	D	N	E	G	E	L	I	S	A
A	V	F	O	G	M	V	D	A	H	H	S	E	N	H
E	D	K	G	T	O	A	U	J	R	E	D	O	R	S
Q	W	G	X	U	B	G	V	U	Y	A	Z	F	T	I
M	P	H	C	B	I	I	F	M	L	Y	W	A	K	R
L	T	P	C	C	L	K	O	B	L	I	R	O	M	E
P	B	U	R	A	E	U	R	H	E	E	G	N	C	P
P	L	A	N	E	R	E	Q	P	X	M	Z	F	C	N
D	W	K	R	S	P	L	I	A	J	B	P	L	Z	O
P	Y	X	M	I	C	O	J	C	I	N	D	K	P	N
M	I	D	W	E	S	T	E	R	N	S	T	A	T	E
B	X	H	I	R	Z	L	O	B	M	Q	Z	Z	K	A

There are 9 total answers to find.

Answers can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

Need Help?

Try these pages:

- 1-3 Page 2
- 4 Page 5
- 5 Page 7
- 6 Page 3
- 7 Page 3
- 8 Page 5
- 9 Page 6

CLUES

- 1-3 What were the 3 modes of transportation listed in the Holiday Safety Tips introduction?
- 4 Glenn Allbritton is a native of which Texas city?
- 5 What is the key to understanding symbols on a map called?
- 6 Your car emergency kit should include what type of foods?
- 7 What part of your car should you check and, if needed, replace before driving in cold weather?
- 8 From which university did Glenn Allbritton earn his degree?
- 9 Which organization provided the data seen in the Traffic Counts Map?

TRANSPORTATION TRIVIA

Long-distance trips increase the most during which holiday travel period?

- A. Thanksgiving
- B. Christmas/New Year's
- C. Easter
- D. Independence Day

How many lives are estimated to be saved by safety belts during this Christmas holiday travel period?

- A. 529
- B. 1,003
- C. 398
- D. 135



# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

## *How can I get involved?*

Don't forget, MPO Policy Board meetings are open to the public! Members of the public are encouraged to join meetings and voice your concerns and opinions on transportation.

Can't come in person? No problem. All MPO Policy Board meetings are streamed live on the Abilene Television Network, or you can watch a meeting by visiting the City of Abilene's website at [www.abilenetx.gov/561/Live-Archived-Video](http://www.abilenetx.gov/561/Live-Archived-Video).

Our next meeting will be on December 14, 2021. For more details, visit [abilenempo.org/meetings](http://abilenempo.org/meetings).

## *Come visit us!*

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Abilene, TX 79605  
(325) 437-9999



@AbileneMPO



Abilene MPO



abilenempo.org



**ABILENE**

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



## Credits & Resources

## Tips to Stay Safe Suring Holiday Travel

<https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/holiday>

<https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/emergency-preparedness/emergency-supplies-for-car>

<https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/driving>

## Notable News

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph315097/>

<https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/administration/commission/2021-meetings.html>

# What's Mappening?

<https://abilenempo.org/>

<https://abilene.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6caa8aef63534d6bb1f799c094efdd0b>

[https://abilenempo.org/site\\_images/files/maps/Neighborhoods.pdf](https://abilenempo.org/site_images/files/maps/Neighborhoods.pdf)

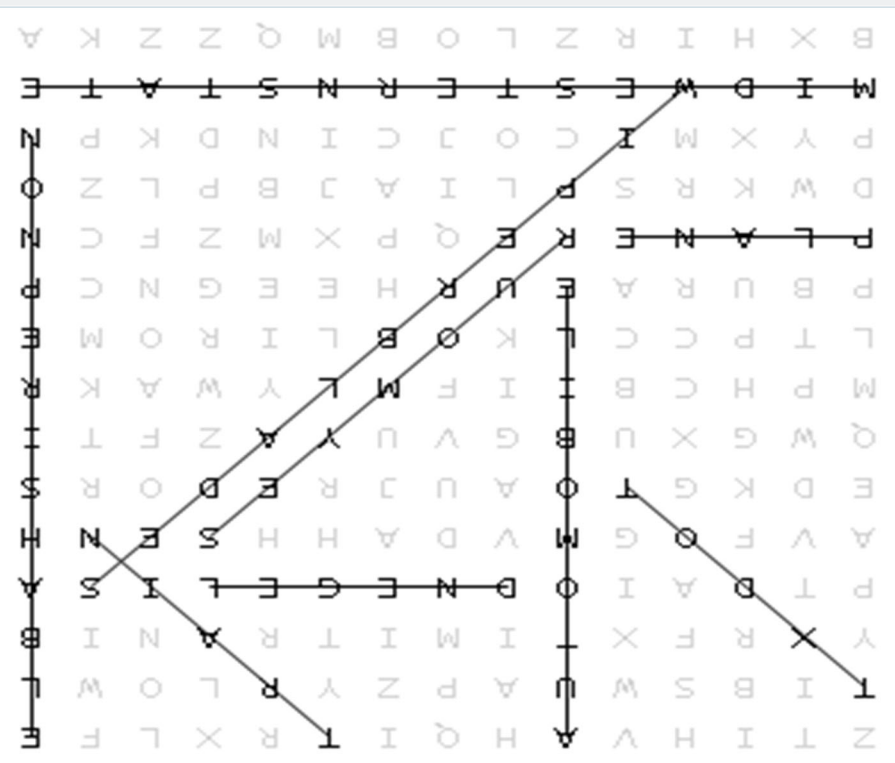
## Fun & Games

<https://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>

[https://www.bts.gov/archive/publications/america\\_on\\_the\\_go/us\\_holiday\\_travel/entire](https://www.bts.gov/archive/publications/america_on_the_go/us_holiday_travel/entire)

<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/holidays/christmas-day/>

## Fun & Games answer key:



D.135

How many lives are estimated to be saved by safety belts during the Christmas holiday travel period?

## A. Thanksgivng

Long-distance trips increase the most during which holiday travel period?