



2021 Look Ahead Report: A Return to Normal Chaos!

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

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The 8th year of the Kyle Field Transportation Plan will be similar to the 2019 season, but with some lessons learned from the 2020 COVID pandemic year. The experience from the first seven Plan seasons, as well as decades of prior operating knowledge provides a great base to work from; the people working the Plan and the partners around the Plan will work to ensure a great fan experience for the return of football to a packed and loud Kyle Field.

The Aggie Park reconstruction project will be a source of change in tailgating locations. New pedestrian-friendly features with the completion of wide sidewalks and bus stops along West Lamar Boulevard in front of the Memorial Student Center and the Innovative Learning Classroom Building will also enhance the bus service and pedestrian environment.

The 2021 Kyle Field Transportation Plan will be similar in one way to previous years; it will be the product of a large coordination and communication effort including the groups noted below and others. Improving the fan experience during gameday weekends in and around the 4th largest Texas downtown requires several mobility services and options for getting to, around and away from campus. The team that creates and deploys the Kyle Field Transportation Plan continues to successfully meet these expectations by incorporating a variety of fan interests and gameday operations requirements.

- Texas A&M University Transportation Services
- City of College Station
- City of Bryan
- Brazos County
- Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Bryan Association
- Experience BCS
- Tailgate Guys
- Texas A&M University Athletics
- Texas A&M University Marketing and Communications
- Texas A&M University Student Affairs
- Texas A&M Transportation Institute
- Texas A&M Ventures
- 12th Man Foundation
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
- Local and state safety and law enforcement agencies

Annual reports and individual game evaluations since 2013 are published at tti.tamu.edu/kyle

Overview

Can you really learn anything from a season where Kyle Field is only one-quarter full? There are a few lessons that will be helpful to address the challenges we see for a return to a full-Kyle in 2021.

- A ¼ full Kyle Field is loud. (Source: Dan Mullen, University of Florida Head Football Coach)
- The Corps of Cadets reviewing stand was moved to the corner of Houston Street and Joe Rott Boulevard for the Campus March route. The Corps reports a better experience at this location. Moving the stand from Stallings Boulevard dramatically improves the vehicle entry process for the Stallings Boulevard Garage, the bus routes in the area and pedestrian flow. The Houston/Joe Rott corner is inside the No Wheels Zone and there are no other conflicting activities with the Corps Review stand.
- The airport access route for the visiting team was changed to the south end of Easterwood; this eliminated the need for the motorcycle escorts to use FM 2818 and Turkey Creek Road, greatly improving the travel time and vehicle conflict issues.
- Closing access from Marion Pugh Drive to the eastbound section of George Bush Drive crossing the Union Pacific Railroad tracks improved the pedestrian safety and vehicle operation in the Bush/Wellborn intersection. This path had been provided for vehicles to leave the apartments along Marion Pugh, but those travel needs can be accommodated on Luther Street and Holleman Drive. With only a few trained bus drivers crossing the railroad tracks, pedestrian safety in this congested area was improved.
- Guests parking in E Lot 100C on the northwest corner of Reed Arena were allowed more exit options for postgame traffic. This reduces the staffing needs and is not thought to significantly harm vehicle flow in the area.
- The Get-to-the-Grid park-and-ride service to American Momentum Bank Plaza was discontinued in 2020 and will not return in 2021. The Downtown Bryan route has sufficient capacity for additional riders and buses can be added to that service if needed.
- Lubbock Street, near the Corps Quad was used by the off campus apartment shuttles. This allowed the four routes to move away from the Aggie Park construction area. For 2021 and possibly 2022 football seasons, Aggie Park will include a fence along the edge of the sidewalk in most perimeter locations. This configuration will not allow patrons to wait in the adjacent grass and would likely lead to pedestrians in Throckmorton and Houston Streets.
- Pedestrians traveling to-and-from Northgate and northside dorms will be encouraged to walk on the east side of Houston Street or on Military Walk. Using the sidewalk along the Simpson Drill Field creates vehicle conflicts at Old Main Drive and Lamar Street.

Other changes that will not be relevant for 2021, but may help with smaller events in the Kyle Field area include the following:

- The “Contraflow Lite” plan at Bush/Wellborn worked well. Northbound Wellborn traffic was narrowed to one lane north of Luther and the two-way left turn lane was used to

receive the one left turn lane from George Bush Drive. South of Bush the two southbound Wellborn lanes were merged with the one George Bush Drive lane. This plan was much less extensive, could be set up and removed in a very short time and was much better at managing the changing traffic patterns of the smaller Kyle Field games. Officers assigned to the intersection did a good job of managing the vehicle and pedestrian traffic with coordination from College Station Police and Public Works. After the initial surge of pedestrians, more time was given to vehicle flow while waiting for groups of pedestrians and buses to gather. This design might be effective for Kyle Field events up to 50 percent capacity.

- Southbound Wellborn Road was closed at the south end of the University Drive interchange. This reduced vehicle pressure at the Kimbrough/Wellborn intersection for vehicles leaving West Campus Garage and allowed more time to be given to pedestrians connecting from the underpass across Kimbrough Boulevard.
- The Discovery Drive contraflow was not deployed and there was no indication it was needed at the 25 percent capacity level.

Beyond the 2020 season, there will also be other building and roadway construction projects that may affect gameday traffic. These include (but are not limited to):

- Raising the level of Wellborn Road at Holleman and Deacon to match the elevation of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks – These projects will improve railroad crossing operations but will require some lane closures which can reduce road capacity. Agencies are working to avoid football season construction effects.
- FM 2818 (Harvey Mitchell Parkway) construction – Between 2020 and 2023 there will be a six-lane superstreet built between Stotzer Parkway and Wellborn Road. Generally, this will look like frontage roads built outside the existing roadway and then the existing roadway will be demolished. The configuration of the roadways will change during this period, but the 2021 season changes should be modest.
- SH 6 (Earl Rudder Freeway) construction – The freeway will be widened to six lanes from SH 21 to SH 40 (WD Fitch) and interchange improvements will also be implemented. Some additional road construction will be performed to improve operations around Texas Avenue South and Rock Prairie. Construction will begin in 2022.
- Bush-Wellborn interchange construction – This three-level interchange design and the construction schedule are still being developed, but there will likely be some football transportation plan changes. The significant effects will likely not begin until 2023 or 2024, after the substantial completion of the FM 2818 project.

Season Review

The 2021 Look Ahead Report reviews seasons 2013 through 2020. And while experience is a good teacher, the 2020 season is hopefully one that we will not have to repeat soon. The 2020 Season did provide some insight into the deployment of staffing resources and opened discussion about expanding the postgame traffic flow options. The construction of an improved

FM 2818 will present an on-going traffic challenge for the next three football seasons, but the railroad Quiet Zone improvements along Wellborn Road should make vehicle and pedestrian travel safer and more efficient in that area.

Game Times

Many of the transportation elements and the performance results differ according to kickoff times and game results. Exhibit 1 displays key factors used in the gameday traffic evaluations.

Exhibit 1. 2020 Home Game Statistics

2020	Kickoff	Attendance	3rd Quarter Score	
			TAMU	Opponent
Vanderbilt	6:39 p.m.	24,073	14	12
Florida	11:02 a.m.	24,709	24	28
Arkansas	6:39 p.m.	27,114	42	17
LSU	6:10 p.m.	23,607	20	0

2020 Trends

Previous “Look Ahead” reports and the Appendix provide more information about the initial 2014 transportation plan modifications and the changes in subsequent seasons. This section highlights the 2020 season experiences that are relevant to 2021 parking, transit and traffic operations.

Parking, Bus Ridership and Traffic Congestion Trends

The parking and bus route structure contracted significantly for the 2020 season. There were fewer buses and fewer routes serving fewer parking lots. The game-to-game variation was relatively small, and the differences between parking areas and bus routes were modest. Since it is very unlikely there will be a repeat of this type of season, there is not a big benefit to examining these. (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2. Parking and Ridership per Game Averages

2020 Game	Parking	Bus Riders
Vanderbilt	7,480	4,110
Florida	7,240	4,650
Arkansas	7,730	5,100
LSU	7,180	4,850
2019 Average	20,150	26,790

Traffic congestion was similarly much lighter and quite different from previous years. Pregame congestion (Exhibit 3) rarely approached 10 percent of the street network and postgame congestion (Exhibit 4) was never above 15 percent. The smaller parking volume was matched with smaller staff and fewer resources, but congestion peaked lower and lasted less time than

any other game since 2014. The University of South Carolina game in 2019 was used as a display comparison, but that 11 a.m. kickoff time with a modest crowd is really no comparison.

Exhibit 3. Pregame Congestion Patterns, 2020

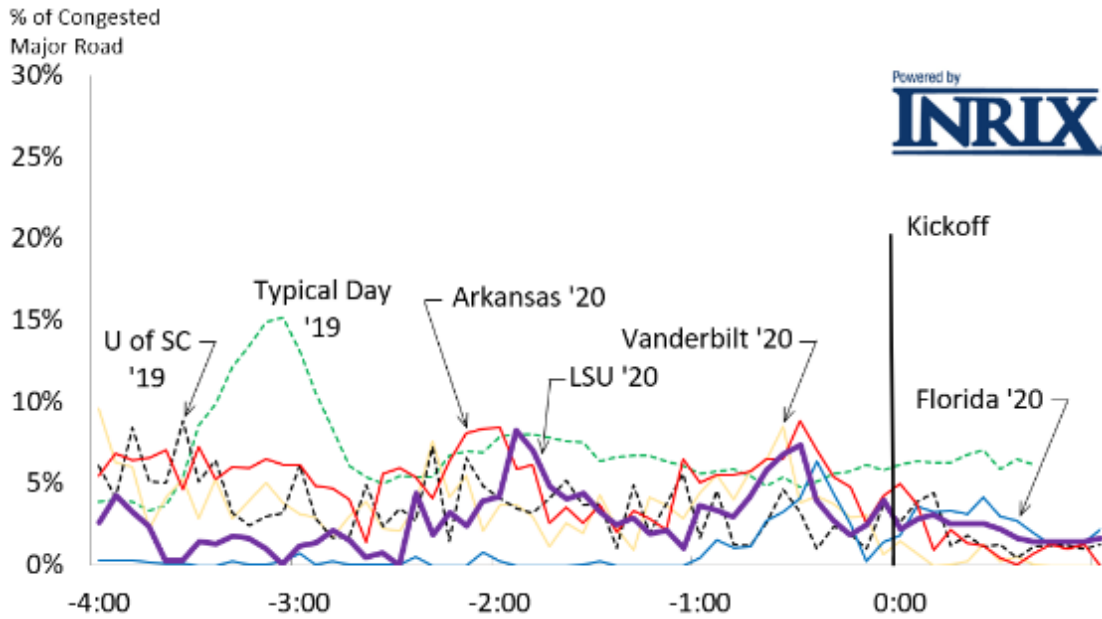
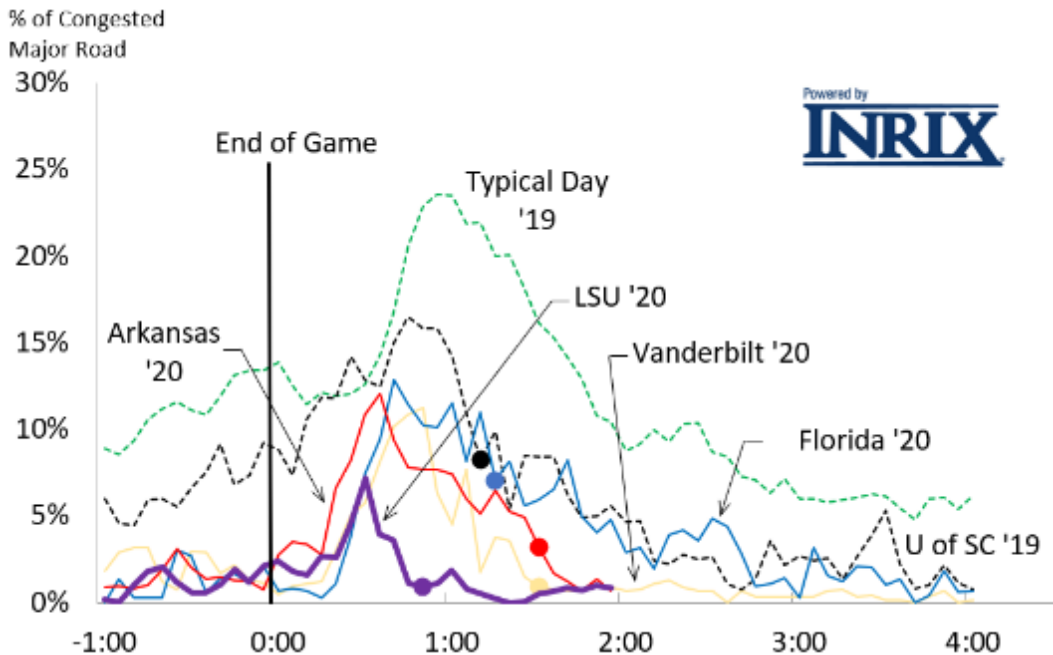


Exhibit 4. Postgame Congestion Patterns, 2020



*Note: Traffic speed information provided by INRIX, a leading provider of traffic information.
 Note: Dot indicates when traffic control began to be removed by City of College Station (goal is within 2 hours of game end).*

New Transportation Plan Elements for 2021

The basic transportation plan has not changed since 2014, but changes are made every year to adapt to new parking and roadway configurations and to take advantage of improved operational capabilities. Highlights of the important changes planned for the 2021 season are listed below.

- The Destination Aggieland smartphone app has been discontinued by the app developer. The same content will be hosted on the TAMU Mobile website. The only foreseeable drawback is that a wi-fi or cell service connection is needed. Cell and wi-fi service has been improved in and around Kyle Field in the past few years. This change will be a part of gameday messaging.
- Pregame traffic could benefit from more fans using FM 2818 to access the west campus parking areas. This route will be encouraged by the social media accounts and Destination Aggieland. These same channels have been used to alert fans about filling parking areas and shuttle route status for several years. With several pre-paid and day-of-game parking areas, as well as the free Downtown Bryan park-and-ride route, it is important to alert fans of their options before they arrive on campus.
- The Polo Garage opened in Fall 2020, putting more gameday parking spaces in the northeast corner of campus. The bus and traffic plans have not been tested with a full-size crowd; they will be monitored on gamedays and modified if necessary.
- A railroad quiet zone is being developed throughout campus. This will control the railroad crossings in a way that will allow trains to pass without a very noisy horn blowing. While the “Guess the Number of Locomotives” contest at Blue Bell Park will be affected, campus will be quieter. As part of the project, the endpoints of the Kimbrough/Joe Routt underpass below Wellborn Road will be revised to improve the pregame and postgame pedestrian environment.
- The fluidity in parking and tailgating patterns mean that the postgame traffic plan must be reviewed during each game and adjusted if cars are parked more heavily in one area. One significant game-to-game variation is on Fan Field where between 660 and 1,730 vehicles parked in 2019. This lot connects to the Discovery Drive contraflow which requires a fair amount of personnel and time to set up. For some games, contraflow is useful for under 30 minutes; for big games that have a close score at the end, contraflow can be needed for more than an hour. To take advantage of the set-up effort, the transportation group will look to offer this route to some of the traffic coming from Reed Arena for the short duration post-traffic games. This will give those fans another travel path option and make more efficient use of the available road space, staff and green signal time.
- Penberthy Boulevard is converted to two lanes southbound to George Bush Drive during postgame operations to unload the Reed Arena lots efficiently. Unfortunately, some drivers do not observe the “use two lanes” signs. Additional signage and traffic cones will be deployed to improve the two-lane flow.

- The FM 2818 construction will include a narrower, one-lane-in-each-direction road section under Stotzer Parkway. The FM 2818 lanes must be lowered to provide the standard clearance under the bridge. This will mostly affect the postgame operation. College Station Public Works cameras will allow traffic staff to monitor the operation, although there are very few available options.

The partnership between College Station Police and Public Works and Texas A&M Transportation Services will monitor operations and work with many stakeholders to ensure the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians and vehicles to improve the fan experience.

Appendix - The Revised 2014 Kyle Field Transportation Plan

The 2014 plan relied on a combination of fewer route choices and better communication about fan travel options. This was manifest in a few significant changes that have remained relatively constant through the subsequent seasons. Big picture elements guide the plan design:

- Overall philosophy – “Let the leavers leave” – Fans, residents and both on-and off-campus leadership indicated a desire to have traffic conditions return to something close to normal as soon after the game as possible. This is accomplished by making the outbound routes as efficient as possible for those wishing to leave.
- “Know Before You Go” – Fans and residents are encouraged to study their travel options before arriving at the game, and while choosing their parking locations. The award-winning Destination Aggieland smartphone app is now part of the TAMU Mobile website; the Athletics gameday website presents the same consolidated information.
- Use of the significant City of College Station investment – The City’s \$5 million upgrade in signals, controllers and monitoring cameras connected to the Traffic Control Center in 2014 provided gameday transportation operators with the ability to monitor the traffic conditions and adjust traffic signal timing and officer instructions during entry and exit traffic flow to optimize the plan.
- Improved bus travel – Bus routes serve many apartment complexes, two park-and-ride locations and all on-campus parking areas. Routes were designed to avoid most of the usual congestion spots, and the traffic routes were designed to facilitate bus travel with minimal staffing and resources.

Many specific routing and access designs help implement these broad philosophies:

- Jointly funded traffic operations plan: Together the City of College Station and Texas A&M Transportation Services fund the postgame traffic plan for placing barricades and positioning officers.
- Wellborn Road contraflow: Four of the five lanes on Wellborn north of Southwest Parkway are used in the southbound direction. Turns from Wellborn Rd are prohibited in that section and about 85 percent of the Southwest Parkway intersection green time is for southbound traffic. A tow truck is positioned near the north end of the corridor to respond to problems.

- Discovery Drive contraflow: All four lanes operate outbound from west campus. The non-signalized intersection of Research Parkway at Stotzer Parkway is closed to outbound traffic, and the almost 4,000 parking spaces on west campus are directed out Discovery.
- FM 2818 at Holleman: Much more than half of the traffic from west campus uses this intersection to leave the area, so most of the green time at the 2818/Holleman intersection is given to FM 2818. Holleman travelers can use other routes to enter either the Wellborn contraflow lane or go south to Rock Prairie Road.
- University Drive green time: Approximately 3/4 of the green time at intersections east of Texas Avenue is dedicated to Kyle Field exiting traffic.
- Park-and-ride lots: The free park-and-ride shuttle from downtown Bryan is supported by the merchants and the City. There are many free nearby parking locations.
- Ample parking and on-campus shuttle service: At least 27,000 parking spaces are available for gameday parking and all the distant lots and many of the premium donor spaces are served by a bus route.
- Using simple directions to improve pedestrian safety, reduce traffic conflicts and create better bus service. Vehicles are routed away from pedestrians and buses, and car traffic is separated in ways that reduce the amount of inefficient 'turn-taking.' On west campus, parking lots north of Kimbrough Blvd/Research Parkway are routed north to Stotzer Parkway and lots to the south are routed to George Bush Drive. Kimbrough Blvd (the only east-west road on west campus) is not used as a through road but is used for four different traffic flows with empty pieces of road between. Most of Kimbrough Blvd/Research Parkway is used to provide congestion-free bus service.
- Better communication with fans. The Destination Aggieland mobile website and the Athletics gameday website, along with Facebook and Twitter accounts provide predictable routing maps and update information as needed. The fan site TexAgs is used to distribute information and to update fans on operating procedures before gameday. The TexAgs channel is particularly useful when problems are being addressed, as it offers a chance for better dialogue and explanation than twitter or a web posting.
- Game evaluation reports are posted at tti.tamu.edu/kyle to provide fans and stakeholders with an overview of the performance for the plan. This site also contains all evaluation reports from past seasons.