

Borderland

El Paso Times **B** Saturday, Dec. 31, 2011

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El Paso auto registrations climb

By Diana Washington Valdez
EL PASO TIMES

El Paso County saw a rise of nearly 11 percent in the number of registered vehicles in fiscal year 2011 over the previous year.

Officials said vehicle owners from Fort Bliss and Juárez who moved to El Paso are behind the sharp upturn.

The county had 611,510 passenger vehicles registered at the end of the fiscal year that ended

Sept. 30. In fiscal year 2010, El Paso had 551,638 registered vehicles, and in fiscal year 2009, it had 539,926 vehicles.

"Most of the growth appears to come from a combination of Fort Bliss and Juárez vehicle owners," said Siria Rocha, El Paso County deputy assessor-collector.

"We have seen a significant increase in the number of people from Juárez that are trying to register their vehicles in

the U.S."

Robert Monarez, a veteran El Paso commuter, said he's noticed a surge in traffic congestion during the past two years.

"You can tell from the traffic on Interstate 10 that's its congested all the time, not just during rush hour or weekdays or in the daytime," Monarez said. "Cars are on I-10 every day of the week and at all hours."

Monarez said a direct connection to the Spur 601 and an additional lane on I-10 east of McRae to at least the Eastlake intersection could help relieve some of the traffic congestion.

County statistics also show that El Paso had 539,926 registered vehicles in fiscal 2009, or 29,705 fewer than in fiscal year 2008, when it had 569,631 registered vehicles. It was the only time that the growth pattern of the past 10 years had a

reversal.

"It is hard to pinpoint a cause for the decrease in registrations," Rocha said. "It could have been because of a downturn in the economy, when people may tend not to renew their registrations, or military soldiers choosing to keep their out-of-state license plates, or simply fewer people driving."

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