EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tetra Tech project team which consisted of Tetra Tech BAS, Inc., Environmental Resource Planning (ERP) and Carson Consulting, in cooperation with GDC Marketing and Ideation (GDC) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), conducted a Visible Litter Survey (VLS) to estimate the number, types and brand names of littered items found along Texas roadways in 2023. The results of this survey were compared to those from the 2013 and 2019 VLS, also conducted by staff from the Tetra Tech project team.

In 2013, TxDOT had requested that two separate litter surveys be conducted within several months of one another and report on the changes in litter found between the two surveys. For 2019, TxDOT requested a single litter survey to be performed with the results compared to the 2013 survey. The 2023 survey subsequently duplicated the single survey approach used in 2019.

In each of these surveys, litter was tallied on 253 sites across Texas, each consisting of a one-tenth mile stretch of TxDOT-maintained roadway. The Tetra Tech project team followed this same approach and methodology for this litter survey. This Executive Summary offers an overview of findings from the 2023 VLS. The full report provides a complete analysis of the data.

Study Highlights

Highlights from the 2023 VLS are shown below. Comprehensive data can be found in the full report and appendices.

➢ Between 2013 and 2023, Large Litter overall was reduced by 63.2%. The reduction was consistent between all four roadway types.

➢ Items discarded from motorists accounted for 47% of all litter along TxDOT-maintained roadways.

➢ Recyclables comprised 38% of Large Litter in 2023 compared to 36% in 2013 and 25% in 2019.

➢ The largest Large Litter classifications by composition were Plastic (39.2%) and Metal (16.8%).

➢ In 2023, Beverage Containers were the largest category of Large Litter (29%). Plastic Water bottles (8%) were the most littered type of beverage container.

➢ Cigarette Butts continued to comprise the largest portion of Micro Litter in 2023 (29%), as was also the case in 2019 (24%) and 2013 (28%).

➢ *Given the decrease in Large Litter, and despite increased population and vehicle miles traveled, the Don't mess with Texas® program is likely more effective than is realized.*

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