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TTI: Mass Transit Saved Drivers 45.4 Million Hours Last Year

by Tanya Snyder on September 27, 2011

Last year, the D.C. region ran away with the dubious honor of Most Congested Metro Area. D.C. area drivers wasted 74 hours and 37 gallons of fuel sitting in traffic last year, which would have cost about \$100 over the course of the year. But the gasoline cost is just the tip of the iceberg.

According to the 2011 Urban Mobility Report, released today by the Texas Transportation Institute, this delay cost the average D.C. driver \$1,495 once you factor in lost productivity and increased trucking times. In Chicago, it's \$1,568. L.A., \$1,334.

Every year, TTI puts out their Urban Mobility Report, and every year we criticize it for its autocentrism. After all, its sole measure is how fast a vehicle can speed down a given mile of roadway. Maybe your city is dense and friendly to pedestrians and bikes, so that it's easy to glide past the automobile gridlock on your short commute to work. Or maybe transit provides an excellent and affordable alternative to traffic jams. None of that matters to TTI. If someone, somewhere, is sitting in traffic, that's all that matters. All other measures and modes of urban mobility are ignored.

TTI doesn't bother to figure out how much time is saved if one avoids that congestion by taking transit, but they do examine how much time transit riders save drivers by taking vehicles off the road.

Hours of Delay Saved Rank	Urban Area	Savings from Public Transportation Use	
		Hours of Delay Saved (Thousands)	Congestion Cost Savings (Millions of Dollars)
1	New York-Newark, NY-NJ-CT	377,069	7,932.1
2	Chicago, IL-IN	91,109	2,036.5
3	Washington, DC-VA-MD	35,567	725.7
4	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	33,606	708.8
5	Boston, MA-NH-RI	32,477	662.9
6	San Francisco-Oakland, CA	28,431	566.6
7	Philadelphia, PA-NJ-DE-MD	26,082	549.5
8	Seattle, WA	14,377	312.8
9	Baltimore, MD	13,924	295.8
10	Miami, FL	9,276	192.9
11	Atlanta, GA	8,589	184.4
12	Houston, TX	7,082	147.9
13	San Diego, CA	6,460	136.3
14	Denver-Aurora, CO	6,376	130.8
15	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	6,137	126.2
16	San Juan, PR	5,798	116.8
17	Portland, OR-WA	5,581	113.7
18	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	5,360	109.0
19	Pittsburgh, PA	5,058	104.7
20	Salt Lake City, UT	3,251	63.3

How public transportation reduces delays for drivers, 2010. Source: 2011 Urban Mobility Report, via APTA.

If there were no transit, the country's drivers would be facing an additional 796 million hours of traffic delay. (Take that, drivers who grumble when their gas tax "user fee" funds mass transit!)

"Operational treatments" like ramp metering, traffic light timing, and removing crashed vehicles from the road have become much more effective in the last 20 years but still don't come close to the savings provided by transit, saving about 40 percent as much as transit in terms of hours of delays, fuel, and costs.

Still, in TTI's examination of congestion relief strategies, public transportation is barely alluded to and never mentioned outright, while operational treatments get significant attention. There is a shout-out to smart growth, or "denser developments with a mix of jobs, shops and homes, so that more people can walk, bike or take transit to more, and closer, destinations." They also suggest telework and, of course, adding capacity.

TTI warns that congestion is only as bad as it is because the economy is still sluggish. We can expect a rapid worsening of the situation when the economy rebounds – 3 more hours of delay by 2015 and 7 hours by 2020, per commuter, with costs rising from \$101 billion to \$133 billion, more than \$900 for every commuter, and enough wasted fuel to fill more than 275,000 gasoline tanker trucks.

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TRANSIT RIDERSHIP REPORT
 Second Quarter 2011

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ESTIMATED UNITED STATES UNLINKED TRANSIT PASSENGER TRIPS

Period	Percent Change			CALENDAR COMPARISON					
	2011	2010	2010-2011	APRIL		MAY		JUNE	
				2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010
APRIL	869,693	884,480	-1.67%	Weekdays	21	22	21	20	22
MAY	899,220	859,302	4.65%	Saturdays	5	4	4	5	4
JUNE	870,503	855,251	1.78%	Sundays	4	4	5	5	4
Second Quarter	2,639,416	2,599,032	1.55%	Holidays	0	0	1	1	0

ESTIMATED UNLINKED TRANSIT PASSENGER TRIPS *

MODE	CURRENT YEAR (a)(b)						PRECEDING YEAR (a)(b)						% CHANGE (b)	
	APRIL '11 (000's)	MAY '11 (000's)	JUN '11 (000's)	APR '11- JUN '11 (000's)	JAN '11- JUN '11 (000's)	APRIL '10 (000's)	MAY '10 (000's)	JUN '10 (000's)	APR '10- JUN '10 (000's)	JAN '10- JUN '10 (000's)	Second Quarter (000's)	Year -to-Date (000's)		
Heavy Rail	298,343	323,430	312,714	934,487	1,807,897	303,096	299,864	304,641	907,602	1,741,593	-2.96%	3.81%		
Light Rail	41,034	41,179	40,891	123,104	238,071	39,942	38,697	38,685	117,224	229,560	5.02%	3.71%		
Commuter Rail	37,867	39,515	40,122	117,505	227,740	38,663	37,639	39,138	115,440	225,180	1.79%	1.14%		
Trolleybus	8,330	8,520	8,263	25,113	49,467	8,742	8,244	8,065	25,051	49,952	0.25%	-0.97%		
Bus Population Group														
2,000,000+	307,093	322,059	309,961	939,113	1,827,395	318,861	318,022	311,355	948,238	1,843,155	-0.96%	-0.86%		
500,000 to 1,999,999	87,728	85,841	83,106	256,675	510,701	87,481	82,624	81,248	251,354	503,659	2.12%	1.42%		
100,000 to 499,999	36,180	31,371	28,784	96,336	203,113	35,232	29,177	27,899	92,007	195,314	4.70%	3.99%		
Below 100,000	18,731	11,906	9,705	40,342	96,028	18,099	10,884	9,014	37,996	91,607	6.17%	4.83%		
Bus Total	449,732	451,178	431,556	1,332,466	2,637,238	459,673	440,707	429,215	1,329,595	2,633,635	0.22%	0.14%		
Demand Response	16,654	16,907	16,890	50,452	98,564	16,507	15,962	16,226	48,695	95,136	3.61%	3.60%		
Other (c)	17,733	18,490	20,067	56,290	104,179	17,858	18,289	19,280	55,427	102,410	1.56%	1.73%		
United States Total	869,693	899,220	870,503	2,639,416	5,163,156	884,480	859,302	855,251	2,599,032	5,077,465	1.55%	1.69%		
Canada (reporting systems)	201,182	204,250	200,992	606,424	1,232,508	193,635	194,926	193,430	581,990	1,197,348	4.20%	2.94%		

* Preliminary information based on data from reporting systems.
 Note: Data may differ from that included in Federal Transit Administration reports due to differences in data calculation procedures and in periods of time covered.
 (a) Transit agencies assigned by urbanized areas or urban places of less than 50,000 population outside urbanized areas based on 2000 U.S. Census Population.
 (b) Year-to-date ridership adjusted for data received after closing dates of previous issues.
 (c) Includes aerial tramway, automated guideway, cable car, ferryboat, inclined plane, monorail, and vanpool.