

Just How Bad are Interstate Roads and Bridges in Connecticut?

You're not imagining things; your commute is getting worse and worse.

Hartford, CT

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If you think your morning commute is bad or you just can't seem to escape traffic on the highway, recently released numbers may support your claims.

A [recent report by TRIP](#), a national transportation research group, was released to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the USS Interstate. It has revealed that Connecticut's interstate highways are among the busiest and most congested in the nation, while its interstate bridges are among the most deficient.

"The United States moves in large part thanks to the efforts of many elected officials, organizations and citizens whose shared foresight led to the construction of the national interstate system," said Bud Wright, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "Now, as we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Interstate act, it's clear that our investments in preserving the system are not keeping up even as our nation continues to grow."

Connecticut's ranking

Connecticut's urban interstates have the third highest rate of vehicle travel per lane mile and are the eighth most congested, with 60 percent of urban interstates experiencing congestion

during peak hours. California and Maryland ranked number one and two, respectively, on both lists.

Additionally, 7 percent of Connecticut's interstate bridges are structurally deficient, the fifth highest rate in the nation. Structurally deficient bridges often have deterioration of their major components.

Twelve percent of interstate highways are in poor or mediocre condition nationwide, while 14 percent of Connecticut's interstate pavements are in poor or mediocre condition. Three percent of U.S. Interstate bridges are structurally deficient, and an additional 18 percent are functionally obsolete.

Seven percent of Connecticut's interstate bridges are structurally deficient — the fifth highest rate in the nation — and 19 percent are functionally obsolete. With the increase of truck travel, growing at a rate twice that of overall interstate travel, factors like these are concerning to state officials.

Poster Child for Congestion

"When you consider that the interstate system, which was developed in the 1950s for the purpose of interstate commerce and possible evacuation routes for national emergencies, neither of these functions are now served by our present system," said Jack Condlin, president and CEO of the Stamford Chamber of Commerce. "Connecticut and the northeast are the poster child for congestion. Federal funding is the life blood that is needed to solve the Interstate system challenges. The time to act is now."

In 2015, vehicle miles of travel on the Interstate Highway System was 4 percent higher than in 2014, and through the first three months of 2016, travel on the Interstate Highway System was 5 percent higher than during the first three months of 2015.

The report says that while the Interstate Highway System represents only 2.5 percent of lane miles in the U.S., it carries 25 percent of the nation's vehicle travel.

Travel on the interstate system is increasing two times faster than new lane capacity is being added, resulting in 43 percent of urban interstate highways being congested during peak hours.

The average annual amount of travel per interstate lane mile has increased by 11 percent from 2000 to 2014. Sixty percent of Connecticut's urban interstates are congested during peak travel times, which is the eighth highest rate in the nation.

It's getting worse

Of further concern for the state is that high volumes of traffic show no signs of slowing down. In 2015, vehicle miles of travel on the Interstate Highway System was 4 percent higher than in 2014, and through the first three months of 2016, travel on the Interstate Highway System was 5 percent higher than during the first three months of 2015.

These findings are leaving state officials to seek ways to improve upon the issues brought up in the report.

"Moving products and people quickly and efficiently is a major concern for Connecticut's business leaders," said Eric Gjede, assistant counsel for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. "Congested highways and aging infrastructure impact delivery deadlines, hinder customer outreach, limit territories and markets, and pose quality-of-life issues in extending commutes for Connecticut workers. Improving and expanding our interstate system is crucial for Connecticut's economic success and vital for every individual, family, and community."