

## Study ranks state highways among the most congested in the nation



Traffic moves through Meriden at the merge of Interstate 91, Interstate 691 and Route 15 near the East Main Street overpass, Tuesday, July 5, 2016. | Dave Zajac, Record-Journal



**By Mike Savino**  
**Record-Journal staff**

A recent study from national highway researchers ranks Connecticut's interstates as being among the most congested in the country.

TRIP, a private, nonprofit transportation research organization, said 60 percent of Connecticut's urban interstates experience congestion —defined as delays during peak travel time — ranking eighth in the country. The national average is 43 percent, according to federal data.

Connecticut's congestion problems are largely because its urban interstates rank as the third busiest nationally, behind only California and Maryland, the TRIP study found.

In addition, the TRIP study found that 7 percent of Connecticut's interstate bridges were structurally deficient, according to federal data. That ranked fifth nationally and is more than double the national average of 3 percent. Another 19 percent of the state's highway bridges were rated structurally obsolete, roughly on par with the national average of 18 percent, the study states.

TRIP noted in its study that the U.S. Department of Transportation estimates the backlog of needed improvements to the interstate system nationally is \$189 billion.

The study's release last week coincided with the 60th anniversary of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's signing of the Federal Highway Act, which authorized the expense of \$25 billion for the construction of 41,000 miles of highway.

It was the largest infrastructure project at the time. American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Executive Director Bud Wright said the country now "moves in large part thanks" to the act.

"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," he said.

The authors of the TRIP study said that the interstate system, initially built to transport goods between urban areas and for national defense purposes, has increasingly become essential for even local travel.

Interstates make up just 2.5 percent of lane miles nationwide, but handle roughly one-quarter of the country's traffic, according to the study.

Chris Collibee, a spokesman for Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, said the study shows that "transportation is too important for our future" and serves "as a reminder of exactly why" the state needs to upgrade its infrastructure. Malloy has made his proposed 30 year, \$100 billion transportation plan one of the centerpieces of his second term.

"If we want to grow jobs and attract businesses, we must make our infrastructure best-in-class," Collibee said. "We're making progress to change the way we travel, as we design and plan new projects that will help reverse decades of neglect."

A TRIP study in November found that Connecticut's interstates cost motorists \$5.1 billion annually in operating costs, time lost to congestion and damage from accidents.

msavino@record-journal.com 203-317-2266 Twitter: @reporter\_savino