

Congestion Conditions in the South Western Region Summary of the Urban Mobility 2005 Report

SWRPA Technical Memo: May 2005

In May of 2005, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) released their annual report on congestion conditions across the country, the Urban Mobility Study (Study). The 2005 Study builds on the data reported in previous TTI congestion reports. The Study shows that congestion levels for the Bridgeport-Stamford urban area have remained relatively constant over the past several years. The Study uses many variables to analyze congestion, allowing for a broad perspective on what factors are most influenced by congestion. This summary will highlight some changes from the 2004 Urban Mobility Study, as well as changes in congestion over time, trends the TTI claims are imperative for understanding how to ameliorate congestion in the future.

Believe it or not, according to the TTI congestion has leveled off over the past several years in some regions of Connecticut and has actually declined in other regions. The study does not provide rationale for why this has occurred, only the analysis of data exhibiting this trend. As shown in the table below, the three Connecticut urban areas decreased in measurable levels of congestion between 2002 and 2003.

Congestion Measures, Urban Areas in Connecticut: 2002 to 2003

Urban Area	Travel Time Index		Annual Hours of Delay per Peak Traveler		Cost of Congestion per Peak Traveler (in dollars)	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
Bridgeport-Stamford CT-NY	1.30	1.29	33	32	\$ 554	\$ 541
Hartford CT	1.12	1.11	17	16	\$ 284	\$ 268
New Haven CT	1.14	1.13	22	20	\$ 360	\$ 338

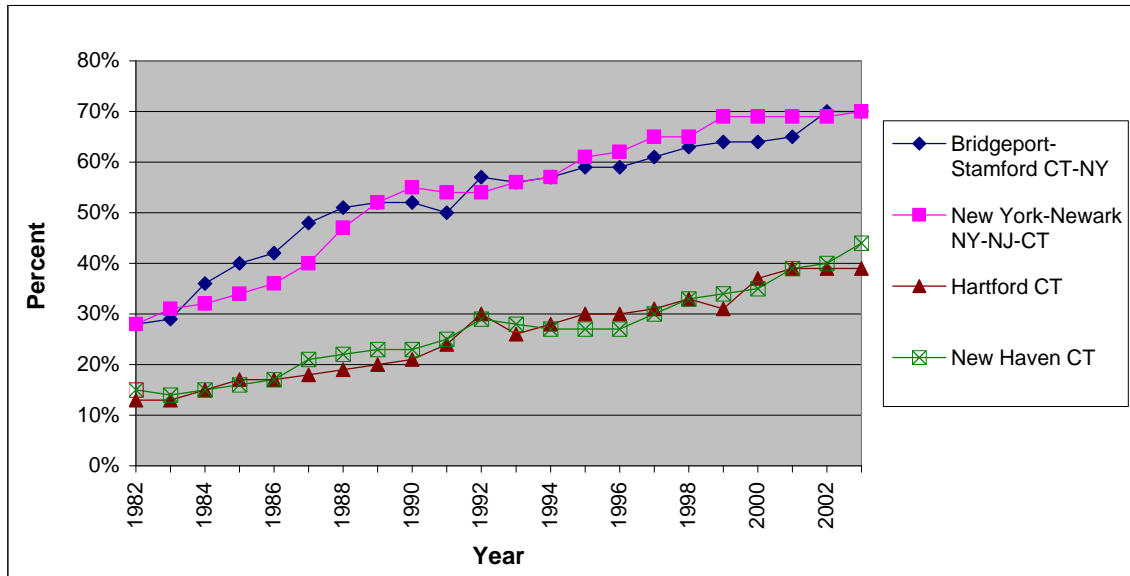
Source: Texas Transportation Institute, 2005 Urban Mobility Study, <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/>.

The travel time index measures how much longer a trip at rush hour takes than a trip during free-flow travel times, those during which congestion is not experienced. For instance, in 2002, a 20 minute free-flow trip would take 26 minutes during peak travel hours. This variable decreased in each of the urban areas in 2003. It will be necessary to monitor these congestion measures to determine if this decrease represents a significant trend or an anomaly in historically increasing congestion.

The following chart compares the percent of congested travel experienced by peak hour travelers in the Bridgeport-Stamford, New Haven, Hartford and New York City urban areas. This measure is the percentage of cars that experience significant congestion during the peak hours of the day. The Bridgeport-Stamford urban area tracks closely with the New York metropolitan area and at times has experienced greater levels of congested travel than the New York metropolitan area. This chart demonstrates a clear increase in congested conditions for all

Connecticut urban areas since 1982. While each area is experiencing increasing congestion, the problem is most severe in the Bridgeport-Stamford urban area.

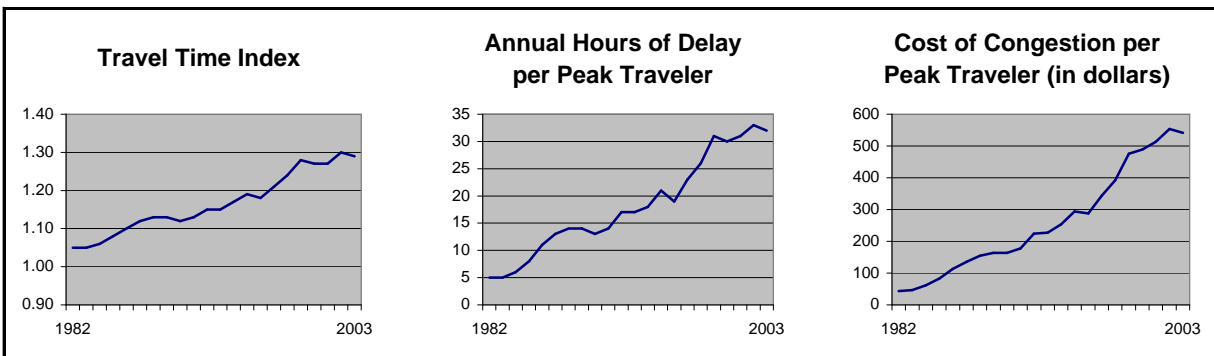
Congested Travel, Percent of Peak Vehicle-miles Traveled: 1982-2003



Source: Texas Transportation Institute, 2005 Urban Mobility Study, <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/>.

The TTI recommends examining three variables over time to determine the accuracy of the data TTI uses in relation to real-life conditions. These include the travel time index (previously discussed), the annual hours of delay per peak traveler and the annual cost of congestion per peak traveler. The following series of graphics depict the trends for each of these measures in the Bridgeport-Stamford urban area.

Congestion Measures: Bridgeport-Stamford Urban Area, 1982-2003



Source: Texas Transportation Institute, 2005 Urban Mobility Study, <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/>.

The data shows that congestion continues to increase over time in the Bridgeport-Stamford urban area, though there is a decrease across several measures from 2002 to 2003. There are also measurable decreases at other points in time, including 1989 to 1990, 1995 to 1996 and 1999 to 2000. If the historic trend continues, future data will likely show a continued increase in congestion levels. SWRPA will continue to monitor the congestion information published in the Urban Mobility Report.