

ITEM 10 – Information

December 21, 2011

Briefing on 2011 Peak Period Freeway Congestion in the Washington Region, and Changes Since 2008 and 2005

Staff Recommendation: Receive briefing on the recurring congestion observed in the latest survey of Spring 2011, and on changes in congestion locations and durations since the surveys of 2005 and 2008.

Issues: None

Background: Beginning in 1993, the TPB has commissioned aerial surveys every three years to monitor the performance of the regional freeway system during the morning and afternoon peak periods.

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Results from Regional Traffic Congestion Analysis Released

I-395 remains most congested corridor in the region

WASHINGTON, DC – Results from the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board’s (TPB) [2011 Aerial Traffic Congestion Survey](#) indicate that several areas of the region are experiencing increasing congestion. The survey, which is conducted every three years, highlights changes in congestion locations and durations in comparison to earlier surveys.

Overall, traffic congestion in the region increased significantly between 2008 and 2011, after decreasing between 2005 and 2008 due to the economic recession.

Ron Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), said the results represent a double-edged sword. “Congestion is worsening because the economy has improved since the last survey. Depending on which part you focus on, there’s good news and there’s bad news,” Kirby said.

According to the 2011 Survey, [the most congested locations in the region are:](#)

1. Northbound I-395 (from VA 27/Washington Boulevard to VA 110/Jefferson Davis Highway)
 - *From 8:30 to 9:30 am, average speed is 5 miles per hour*
2. (tie) Inner Loop I-495 (from VA 193/Georgetown Pike to George Washington Memorial Parkway)
 - *From 5:30 to 6:30 pm, average speed is 5-10 miles per hour*
2. (tie) Southbound I-395/Southwest Freeway (from 4th Street to 12th Street)
 - *From 6:00 to 7:00 pm, average speed is 5-10 miles per hour*
4. Eastbound I-66 (from VA 7/Leesburg Pike to Dulles Access Road)
 - *From 6:00 to 7:00 pm, average speed is 7-10 miles per hour*
5. (tie) Inner Loop I-495 (from MD 355/I-270 to MD 185/Connecticut Avenue)
 - *From 4:30 to 5:30 pm, average speed is 10-15 miles per hour*
5. (tie) Outer Loop I-495 (from VA 267/Dulles Toll Road to VA 123/Chain Bridge Road)
 - *From 5:30 to 6:30 pm, average speed is 10-15 miles per hour*

Although congestion increased overall, there were areas that experienced congestion reduction since 2008. The biggest positive impact on congestion in the region was the opening of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. What was previously a location of hours-long congestion during the morning peak on the Inner Loop of the Capital Beltway (I-95) from St. Barnabas Road in Prince George’s County to Telegraph Road in Alexandria has been completely eliminated.

Other areas with significantly reduced congestion during the morning peak period include Eastbound Dulles Toll Road (VA 267) between Centreville Road and Hunter Mill Road in Fairfax County, Southbound MD 295/I-295 approaching and beyond the US 50 interchange, and Westbound and Southbound Southwest Freeway/I-395 across the District of Columbia.

This is the seventh edition of the Aerial Traffic Congestion Survey. The TPB has commissioned these surveys since 1993 to monitor congestion on the region's freeways during morning and evening peak periods. To view the complete report, [click here](#).

This program is directed and managed by COG and is executed by Skycomp, Inc. For additional resources, including photographs, maps, and graphics, contact Daivamani Sivasailam at siva@mwcog.org or 202-962-3226.

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One Region Moving Forward

The TPB is the regional transportation planning organization for the Washington region. It includes local governments, state transportation agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and members of the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies.

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