WHAT DOES CONGESTION COST US?

Congestion has several effects on travelers, businesses, agencies and cities. One significant element is the value of the additional time and wasted fuel. The 85 areas do not include all of the congestion in the U.S., but a substantial portion of the delay and extra fuel consumed in congested conditions is included. Of the 85 urban areas in the study, the top 12 include about two-thirds of the delay estimated for 2002, and the top 20 areas account for 80 percent of annual delay. Some other highlights include:

- In 2002, congestion (based on wasted time and fuel) cost about $63.2 billion in the 85 urban areas, compared to $60.1 billion in 2001. (See Exhibit 11).
- The average cost per traveler in the 85 urban areas was $829 in 2002, up from $826 in 2001 (using constant dollars). The cost ranged from $1,104 per traveler in Very Large urban areas down to $219 per traveler in the Small areas.
- Exhibit A-10 shows that 5.7 billion gallons of fuel were wasted in the 85 urban areas. This amount of fuel would fill 114 super-tankers or 570,000 gasoline tank trucks. If you placed 570,000 gasoline tank trucks end-to-end, they would stretch from New York to Las Vegas and back.
- The urban areas with populations greater than 3 million accounted for 3.5 billion gallons (more than 60 percent) of wasted fuel.
- The amount of wasted fuel per traveler ranges from 97 gallons per year in the Very Large urban areas to 20 gallons per year in the Small areas.

**Exhibit 11. Congestion Effects on the Average Traveler – 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Group</th>
<th>Average Cost ($)</th>
<th>Average Delay (hours)</th>
<th>Average Fuel (gallons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Large areas</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large areas</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium areas</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small areas</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 area average</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 area total</td>
<td>$63.2 billion</td>
<td>3.5 billion</td>
<td>5.7 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the Total Cost of Congestion in the 85 Areas?

The total cost of congestion for each population size group is shown in Exhibit 12. This cost accounts for the amount of wasted time and fuel due to traffic congestion. The total cost of congestion in the 85 urban areas is $63.2 billion in 2002 or an average of $829 per person—each year.

Note: Only 85 of the more than 400 urbanized areas are included.

- Sixteen urban areas had a total annual congestion cost of at least $1 billion each.
- The areas with populations over 3 million persons account for more than 60 percent of the congestion cost.
What is the cost of congestion for me?

The total cost of congestion is divided by the number of peak period travelers to determine the effect of congestion on an individual (Exhibit 13). The average annual cost to each of these travelers is about $829.

- Travelers of 63 areas are “paying” more than $1 per workday in congestion costs; 42 areas have a congestion value exceeding $2 per workday.

- The average cost of congestion per traveler ranged from $1,104 in the Very Large population group to $219 in the Small population group in 2002.
**How Much Fuel is Wasted in Congestion?**

As with cost, the amount of fuel wasted in congestion is divided by the estimated number of persons in the urban area. This provides an estimate of the amount of fuel consumed for each individual because of congestion (Exhibit 14), a quantity that can be compared to other per capita consumptions. More than 40 gallons are wasted per person in the 85 urban areas. (See Exhibit A-10 for more information).

- The average amount of wasted fuel per traveler in 2002 in the 85 study areas was 74 gallons, up from 73 gallons in 2001.

- The amount of wasted fuel per traveler ranged from 20 gallons in the Small population group to 97 gallons in the Very Large population group in 2002.

- The total amount of wasted fuel in the 85 urban areas was approximately 5.7 billion gallons in 2002. To put this in perspective, if you filled tanker trucks with this wasted fuel and placed them end-to-end, they would stretch from New York City to Las Vegas and back again.