



THE COST OF DOING NOTHING

Some experts have noted that the United States now has one of the worst transportation systems in the developed world, while other countries are investing heavily in transit infrastructure. China recently completed a new \$33 billion high speed rail line between Beijing and Shanghai reducing travel time to under five hours to go 820 miles and is expected to carry 80 million passengers a year.

No doubt about it, transportation costs are huge. From the \$2 billion price tag to rebuild the “Q” Bridge in New Haven, to the price at the pump for gas, to fare hikes for public buses or trains, we are all feeling the pain. But what about all the many other associated costs of transportation? The costs of congestion on businesses and on our health and the environment, and the hidden costs of gasoline that are not reflected in the day to day cost of filling the tank. And what about the cost of doing nothing – the cost of not investing in a 21st Century transportation infrastructure?

It is a long held belief that American’s love their cars, however that love affair comes at a price. In 2011, the American Automobile Association reported the yearly cost to own and operate a sedan in the U.S. has risen to \$8,776 per year, based upon 15,000 miles of annual driving and for an SUV to \$11,239 yearly. Those numbers are based on a cost of \$2.88 per gallon of gasoline. Yet there are many hidden costs in the price of oil that are not reflected in the price you pay at the pump. These hidden costs impact our transportation budget, our economy and your own wallet. One obvious hidden cost is the money dedicated to defending those countries that provide us with oil; but other factors such as loss of investment in U.S. alternative energy businesses and loss of associated tax revenue add to the impact.



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\$2 billion Pearl Harbor Memorial 'Q' Bridge project under construction

The cost of congestion on our highways has a very real financial impact on businesses, consumers and commuters due to the cost of travel delay and the extra gas used while sitting in traffic. These costs of congestion add to our high cost of living in Connecticut. And here's another way to think of it; if you are stuck in traffic for just thirty minutes of your total daily commute, and you work an average full time job of 260 days per year, then each year you will have spent ten days sitting in traffic. Work with the same commute for twenty years and you will have lost over 200 days of your life sitting in a car.

Beyond the impact on our wallets, congestion costs us all in terms of public health and medical care. Research has shown the link between asthma and air pollution. Connecticut has one of the highest asthma rates in the country. Cars and trucks idling in traffic on our roads and highways are the major source of air pollution in Connecticut and contribute to the high asthma rate. Congestion is costing all of us in one way or another.

We must also consider the cost of highway crashes, both in the number of deaths and injuries as well as the associated economic costs. Despite safety improvements, the number of deaths on our roads nationally was still over 32,000 in 2011. While the death toll is sobering and represents a terrible personal loss, the extreme financial burden on our nation is also staggering.

DID YOU KNOW?



In 2009, Connecticut spent over

\$112 MILLION

for acute care of asthma patients.

Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health



THE 2011 URBAN MOBILITY REPORT FINDS ANNUAL CONGESTIONS COSTS FOR:

<i>Bridgeport-Stamford area</i>	\$441 MILLION
<i>New Haven area</i>	\$235 MILLION
<i>Hartford area</i>	\$295 MILLION

Source: Texas Transportation Institute

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?



Shore Line East arriving in Guilford train station

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DID YOU KNOW?



A family could save

\$9,743

per year if it had access to public transportation so that it could get by with one less car.

Source: American Public Transportation Association

Some experts predict that over the next decade, there will be a shortage of affordable housing in our cities and a surplus of single family houses in the suburbs as aging baby boomers move out and the millenials (those born between 1980 and 2001) either don't want or can't afford the big house in the suburbs. As these two significant demographics, empty nesters and millenials, continue to move to the cities there will be an increased demand for alternatives to owning a car such as walking, riding a bike, or public transit, or a combination of those.

Clearly trends are changing and the Census data reinforces the need to address those changing preferences and expectations. No question, the car will continue to play the major role in our transportation system, but to move forward, we will have to restore the balance in our transportation system. Connecticut needs to expand public transit, make our streets more pedestrian and bike friendly, and focus and incentivize development in areas where public transit is readily available in order to attract and keep young people and aging baby boomers to our state. We can no longer "do nothing," it just costs too much.