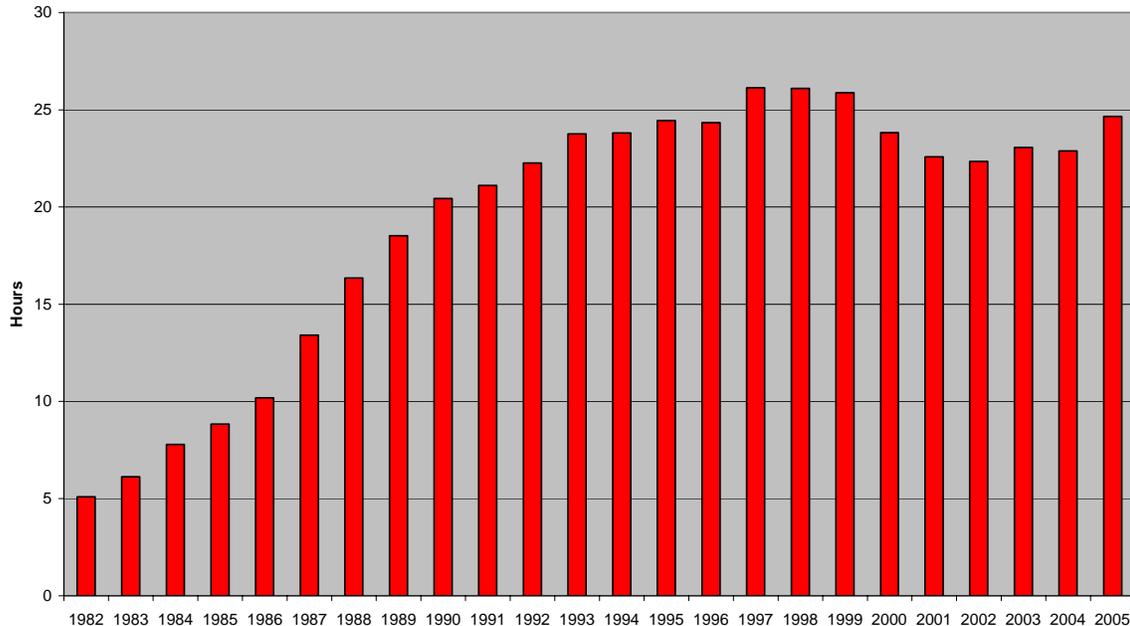<u>FAQ's regarding transportation in the Puget Sound Region</u>

1. *Why is congestion the problem?*

Annual Delay per Person, Seattle Urbanized Area

Source: 2007 Urban Mobility Report, Texas Transportation Institute

Citizen opinion polls in the Puget Sound region consistently find that the general public's leading top-of-mind regional issue with citizens is traffic congestion. For example, in a poll of randomly-selected citizens in King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties conducted in early April 2007, 51% of respondents named transportation, traffic, or roads as the leading problem in the Puget Sound region.

Congestion Hurts Families. Congestion and the growing unreliability of the highway system impose severe costs on the quality of life for millions of Americans. Parents miss events with their children, friends and families find it harder to spend time together, and civic participation suffers. Sociologist Robert Putnam's assessment is that each additional 10 minutes in daily commuting time cuts involvement in community affairs by 10 percent.

Congestion Costs to Travelers. Growing congestion in U.S. transportation systems poses a substantial threat to the U.S. economy and to the quality of life for millions of Americans.

- According to the well-recognized experts at Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), the cost of congestion in the Puget Sound region in 2005 was over $1.4 billion, counting both wasted time and wasted fuel.
- In the Seattle-Tacoma, rush hour travelers on average suffer an annual cost of about $800 in lost time and fuel, and spend the equivalent of about 46 hours each year stuck in traffic.

Congestion Costs to Business. Beyond lost time and fuel, transportation congestion imposes significant additional costs on U.S. businesses. The cost figures above take into account only time and fuel, and would be much higher if they incorporated other costs, such as the cost of unreliability, the loss of productive delivery cycles, or the need for increased inventory. Businesses have to put on additional trucks and drivers, pay more late delivery fees, make pick ups earlier to meet shipping deadlines, and carry extra inventory as safety stock to compensate for inability to make efficient, just-in-time deliveries that are the essence of modern logistics. These business issues all translate to higher costs. In some cases these congestion problems lead to business relocations.

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters puts it this way: "Mobility is one of our country's greatest freedoms, but congestion across all of our transportation modes continues to limit predictable, reliable movement of people and goods, and poses a serious threat to continued economic growth."

Congestion Costs to the Environment. Congested traffic generates more air pollution per vehicle mile than smoothly flowing traffic. Stop-and-go traffic burns extra fuel and causes engines to operate less efficiently. Large diesel trucks and buses produce conspicuously more emissions in congested conditions than when operating in a smooth flow.

Congestion is not inevitable. We know that congestion is a problem facing families, communities and businesses, and we know that more can be done to improve the performance of the existing transportation network. We do not accept poor service levels from our other network and public utility services, and there is no reason to accept it in our transportation system.

Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta summarized the problem of traffic congestion very well on May 16, 2006 in a speech to the National Retail Federation:

"Congestion is not a scientific mystery, nor is it an uncontrollable force. Congestion results from poor policy choices and a failure to separate solutions that are effective from those that are not. We need a new approach, and we need it now."

Additional Links

http://www.fightgridlocknow.gov/docs/conginitoverview070301.htm

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/congestion/

http://www.brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb128.htm

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion/factoids.htm