

Chicago ranked the most road congested city

BY [JAYDINE SAYER](#) | JAN 28, 2011

The traffic study that was released last week will be a surprise to no one who travels around the Chicago area in a vehicle. It confirms what many drivers had long thought was true—Chicagoland ranked at the top of the list as the area with the most congested roadways in the country.

The new 2010 [Urban Mobility Report](#) issued by the Texas Transportation Institute measures congestion in 439 urban areas in the U.S. in an attempt to identify the problems facing urban travelers.



Google map showing real time traffic on a Thursday morning. The red indicates near bumper to bumper traffic.

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According to a recent article in the [Chicago Tribune](#), Chicago commuters now have the longest delays, a distinction has Los Angeles long held.

But it's more than just time being wasted in our cars. Money is too. Congestion costs each commuter an extra \$1,738 on average in 2009, reports the Tribune.

All this may ring very true with Chicagoland drivers, but although the Urban Mobility Report receives a lot of media attention it is by no means a comprehensive study on overall mobility.

"The report is actually a very crude way of looking at congestion and is quite arbitrary. It just measures traffic and not public transit and mobility in the broad sense," says Hani Mahmassani, director of the Northwestern University Transportation Center. "What I'm more concerned with is the ability to move trucks and freight and merchandise and the logistics of that."



Chicago has long been a hub of freight transit, and congestion can be detrimental to the city's status in this arena. That may not seem like a big concern to the average Chicagoan, but according to Mahmassani, when Chicago becomes too incompetent to move freight around efficiently it affects the city's overall economy all the way down to consumers who have to pay more for goods.

Traffic, of course, affects freight mobility, but so does aging bridges, construction and a host of other complexities. The [Federal Highway Administration](#) has studied the freight transit issues in Chicago in hopes of combating them. There's also an initiative called

CREATE, a massive undertaking to improve and increase the efficiency of the region's rail infrastructure and quality of life of Chicago-area residents. The overall goal is to reduce traffic congestion, deliver shorter commute times, better air quality and increased public safety. You can read more about the initiatives [here](#).

Plans for the near future and beyond are also in the works. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning recently debuted "Go to 2040," a regional plan with recommendations for officials and local businesses to improve quality of life in Chicagoland. You can learn about the comprehensive regional mobility plan [here](#).