UK TRAFFIC CONGESTION 14% WORSE THAN FIVE YEARS AGO

Tuesday 22 March, 2016

Traffic congestion in the UK's biggest cities is 14% worse than it was just five years ago, according to a major new report out today (March 22). Across the rest of Europe, average congestion is actually 3% down over the same period.

The annual Traffic Index from TomTom shows average UK journeys in 2015 took 29%* longer than they would in free-flowing conditions – up from a 25% delay in 2010.

The analysis of **14 trillion** pieces of traffic data worldwide showed that the morning rush hour is almost 10% more congested than in 2010, with the evening peak nearly a fifth (19%) worse – suggesting that people return home in a narrower time period in the evenings .

The average commuter driving to and from work in the UK's top 25 cities wasted 127 hours (more than 5 whole days) stuck in traffic during 2015.

Congestion has got 4% worse in the past year alone. It's risen in 17 of the 25 UK cities in the report, with a further 4 remaining about the same. Only Nottingham, Portsmouth, Middlesbrough and Preston have shown slight decreases.

The TomTom Traffic Index analysed traffic patterns in 295 cities globally and found that Belfast was once again the most congested city in the UK – and 14th worst in the world. Journey times in 2015 were 40% slower than free-flow traffic throughout the day – peaking at 86% longer in the evening rush hour.

London is the 20th most congested city worldwide – and second worst in the UK - with journey times 38% slower, rising to 66% in the evening peak. The Northern Powerhouse of Manchester (37% slower) moves up into third place, overtaking Edinburgh (37%) and Brighton (34%).

The next five worst cities for congestion are Hull, Bournemouth, Newcastle, Bristol and Sheffield.

“Transport authorities are managing congestion with well-engineered policies, but you can't just build your way out of traffic jams”, comments Ralf-Peter Schaefer, Vice-President of TomTom Traffic. "Studies have shown that policies of 'predict and provide' are unsustainable. Building new motorways and ring roads doesn't eliminate congestion. More must be done to better manage existing road space and to spread demand.

“People simply aren't doing enough to change their travel habits - such as working flexible hours, avoiding peak commuting times, making use of real–time traffic information and trying alternative travel modes.

“If only five per cent of us changed our travel plans, we could improve traffic congestion on our main roads by up to thirty per cent.”

Globally, Istanbul has been knocked off the top spot by Mexico City. Commuters in the Mexican capital can expect to spend 59% extra travel time stuck in traffic during the day, rising to 94% in the evening peak period – a total of 219 wasted hours a year.

The next most congested big cities worldwide are Bangkok (57%), Istanbul (50%), Rio de Janeiro (47%) and Moscow (44%).

TomTom has been collecting traffic data since 2008 and over that period, the UK city that has recorded the largest overall growth in congestion is Coventry - up a staggering 67%. Stoke-on-Trent has seen the biggest increase in rush hour congestion, at 44%.

But Cardiff can give itself a pat on the back, with overall congestion down 19% since 2008.

The TomTom Traffic Index is the only global measurement of congestion comparing travel times between non-congested hours and rush hour periods, for passenger vehicles. It takes into account local roads, main roads and motorways across 295 cities in 38 countries on six continents.

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