



MassDOT traffic counts find huge increases in volume across Boston area

By: Jessica Reyes

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BOSTON - Gridlocked roads, bottlenecked backups, and crawling commutes are nothing new for drivers in the Boston area.

However, if your commute seems to be getting longer, it's probably not your imagination – and you're certainly not alone.

"I'd say over the past few years it's gotten worse," said commuter David Foote, who lives in Danvers.

Foote leaves his house at 4:30 a.m. every weekday morning for his Boston office, a trip of about 20 miles.

"If I don't do that, I sit in traffic for hours," he said.

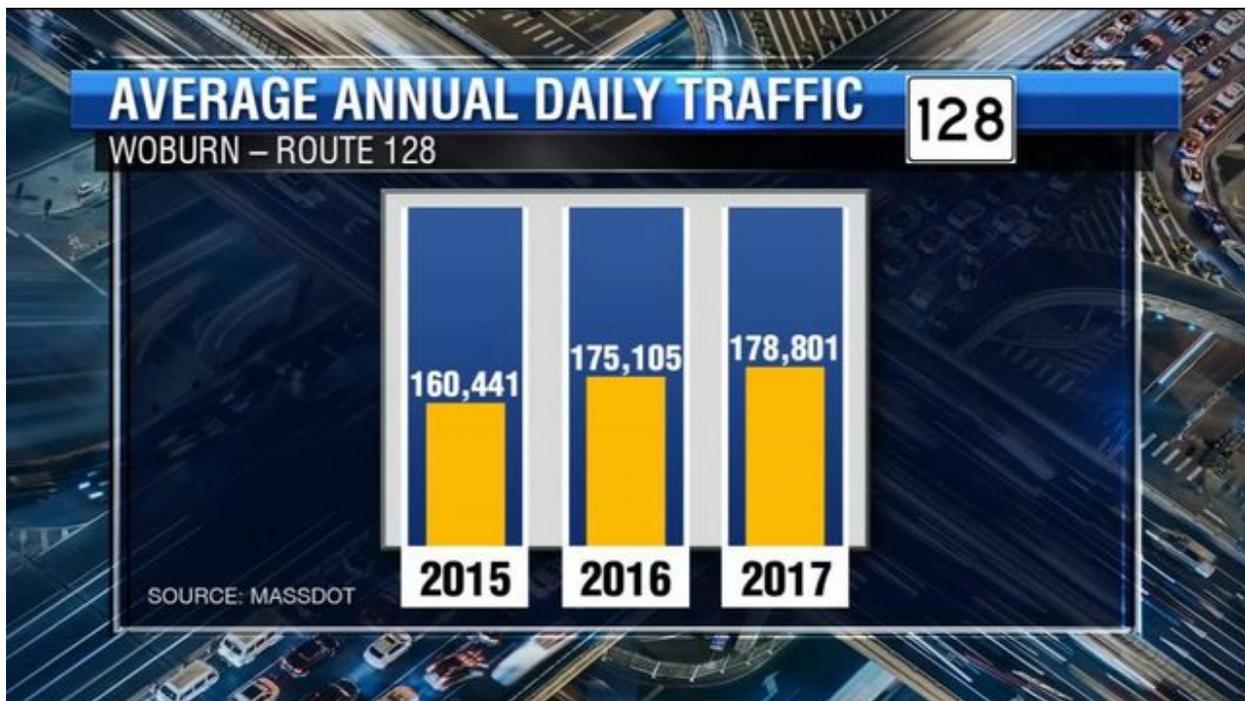
Foote isn't the only one.

Commuters all over the state say they're spending more time in traffic than ever before.

"I go to Boston three to four times a week and it is brutal," said Paul Ferraguto, who commutes from Woburn to Boston.

Boston 25 News pulled the most recent MassDOT traffic volume data, which shows the number of cars on Boston area roads is at an all-time high.

From 2015 to 2017, we found there were approximately 8,000 more cars a day on Interstate 290 in Shrewsbury. The number of vehicles on Interstate 495 went up by about 12,000 in the same time frame. On Route 128 in Woburn, it was even worse, with a jump of about 18,000 cars a day.



The biggest jump was on the part of Interstate 93 known as the Southeast Expressway. In just those two years, MassDOT saw an increase of roughly 32,000 cars a day on the stretch that runs through Quincy.

Livable Streets Alliance is a local advocacy group dedicated to making transportation more practical and user friendly in and around Boston. Executive Director Stacy Thompson is one of many transportation advocates who want the state to explore a concept known as smarter tolling.

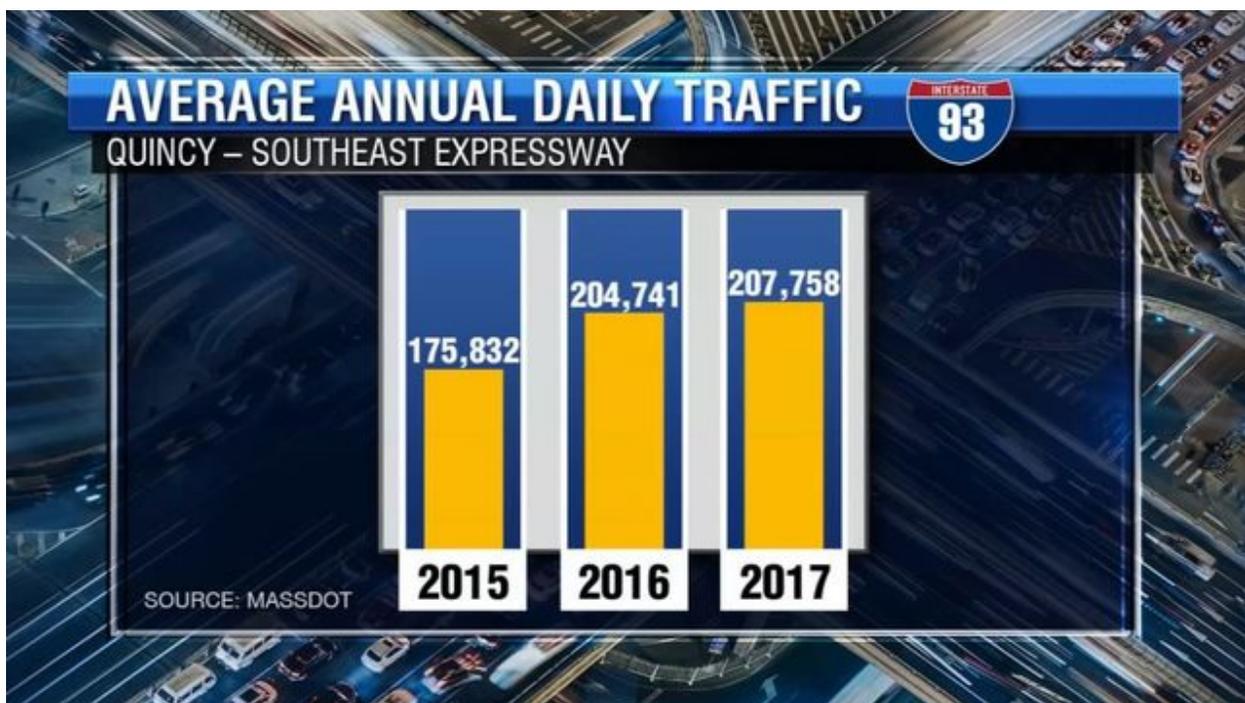
Thompson says smarter tolling could help spread the traffic volume throughout the day. The idea would be essentially to lower toll costs for people who travel during off-peak hours as an incentive to keep them off the roads at rush hour.

"Many people in Massachusetts are at a breaking point. They're tired of sitting in traffic. They can't get to daycare to pick up their kids, can't get home to cook dinner, it's a real problem," Thompson said.

Chris Dempsey, director of advocacy group Transportation for Massachusetts, is also a proponent of smarter tolling.

"It's something that has worked well in other parts of the country. We don't know if it will work well in Massachusetts, but we want MassDOT to try it. Traffic in Massachusetts is a crisis, and it's getting worse and worse every year," Dempsey said.

Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack says MassDOT is hesitant to implement a smarter tolling program, because there hasn't been enough research done about why traffic is getting worse.



"We don't study congestion a lot. So we don't have the answers to those questions. One of the things we're talking about doing is a more comprehensive study of where is the congestion? Why is it happening? Can we understand it better so we can propose things that will really fix it," Pollack said.

Pollack says MassDOT has been focusing most of their attention on the MBTA, with billions invested in projects to upgrade the aging subway system. Construction on the Green Line investment project started back in June, and will add seven new stops through Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford. The state is also working to replace the entire fleets of cars on the Red and Orange Lines.

"The most important thing if we want to help people make better transportation choices to avoid congestion, is they have to have another option. So we're focusing on giving them that other option," Pollack said.

For suburban commuters like Paul Ferraguto and David Foote, the MBTA isn't an option.

"I plan accordingly and my wife says she'll have dinner ready at 8:00," said Foote.

They're among the hundreds of thousands of drivers who are still stuck in their cars, facing longer drive times with each passing day.

"You gotta make sure you go at the right time and get in and out and you just work with it. It is the worst it's ever been," Ferraguto said.

MassDOT has recorded average annual daily traffic numbers across the state since 1970, and are constantly updating their counts online.

To search the trends in your town or route to work, visit [MassDOT's searchable database](#).

Using the **quick search** allows you to narrow down traffic count locations and data by county, community or even certain roads (some residential streets may not be measured by MassDOT).

Use the **tools** panel on the top right corner of the map to calculate drive times from selected locations, based on MassDOT data.