



Fed Up: Traffic on the I-95 Corridor

Report #3: New Haven

CHRIS 
MURPHY

Fed Up: The Human Cost of Traffic in Connecticut

By the Office of Senator Chris Murphy

A Note to the Reader:

I launched the *Fed Up* campaign to hear directly from commuters about their struggles, and the response was overwhelming. I heard from over a thousand people who spend hours in traffic each day: a barber who travels from Waterbury to Stamford every day on the Metro North branch line forced to choose between extra work and dinner with his family; a father of triplets who desperately needs to be home to take care of his kids; a business owner who loses revenue for his company and employees as a direct result of congestion.

Equipped with these real stories from real people, I'm bringing the *Fed Up* campaign into its next phase. My goal is to marry the voices of commuters with real data and use both to propose and advance a set of policies to improve commutes in Connecticut. As such, I began releasing a series of reports that will each focus on specific towns along the I-95 corridor from New Haven to the New York border. It's impossible to fix the entire corridor all at once, which is why I am taking a town-by-town approach and focusing on what's fixable. This report, my third, focuses on New Haven.

We need a long-term vision for a people-focused transportation system—one that ensures commuters can make it home in time for dinner and safely get to their jobs and their children's schools.

I encourage you to spread the word on my campaign and to share your stories with me if you haven't already by visiting: <http://www.murphy.senate.gov/fedup>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "M".

U.S. Senator Chris Murphy

Why New Haven Commuters are Fed Up

“ Proper investment in quicker trains and reducing transit time would make a huge difference to all the commuters from New Haven. ”

Michael, New Haven Commuter

“ If I had a shorter commute, I would be able to do more things with that time like exercise, spend time with my family, and work on my lesson plans for my students. ”

Becky, New Haven Commuter

“ The ride on Metro North over the last 20 years has gotten longer. When I first started riding the New Haven - Grand Central Line, the trip took a total of 90 minutes. Now it's two hours. ”

Robb, New Haven Commuter

“ My commute is horrendous. Every day I sit in at least 20 mins of traffic both to and from work ”

Lindsey, New Haven Commuter

“ This commute impacts my Troopers coming to and from work and the number of calls they take on a given shift. ”

Kenneth, New Haven Commuter

Key Findings of Fed Up New Haven Survey

In order to hear directly from New Haven residents and commuters about their traffic concerns, I reached out in a number of ways. In 2015, I launched an online *Fed Up* survey. I held office hours at a Merritt Parkway gas station, live-streamed my experience of sitting in traffic during rush hour on I-95, and talked personally to New Haven residents about their frustrations with certain parts of New Haven's and Connecticut's transportation infrastructure. Though the experiences of individual commuters varied, an analysis of all New Haven commuter feedback showed the following recurring themes:

- New Haven residents travel using various modes of transportation, including car, rail, bus, and foot—often in the same day—and they want multiple options for safe and reliable transportation.
- New Haven commuters want improved accessibility to Metro-North trains and faster commutes to Grand Central Station.
- New Haven businesses want to increase foot traffic and create pedestrian-friendly roads within the city—not just roads to move cars out of town as quickly as possible.
- New Haven commuters want the New Haven-Hartford Line to be completed.

My Recommendations to Improve New Haven Transportation Based on 'Fed Up' Survey Feedback

1. Finish Redesign of Route 34 (Downtown Crossing)
2. Improve Connection Between Union Station and Downtown
3. Upgrade Metro-North Service to New York City
4. Make Updates to Public Transit
5. Improve Bike-Pedestrian Infrastructure
6. Complete the New Haven-Hartford Line

Non-Highway Assets in New Haven

According to the City of New Haven’s Office of Transportation, Traffic, and Parking, fewer New Haven residents use a car to get to work than residents in any other Connecticut city. In fact, over one-third of New Haven residents use an alternative mode of transportation to get to work. As such, the needs and desires of New Haven residents are somewhat distinct from those of residents of other cities and towns in the state. For instance, public transit, bike lanes, and sidewalks were more often cited by New Haven residents in our survey.

However, highways remain the reality for most commuters. New Haven is home to one of the state’s busiest highway interchanges, which is the site of a massive reconfiguration and construction project. The “Highways in New Haven” portion of this report will focus on the realities of commuting on those highways.

Interstate 95 Corridor

The United States once led the world in transportation infrastructure. In the 19th Century, we built and boasted the most extensive and sophisticated rail system in the world. In the 20th Century, we executed one of the largest construction projects in history—the Interstate Highway System. However, after years of neglect and underinvestment, our country’s leadership in transportation infrastructure has waned.

The busiest interstate highway in the country, I-95, stretches from Maine to Florida, cutting through southern Connecticut and following along our state’s coast. Each day, hundreds of thousands of people enter and exit the highway—by far Connecticut’s busiest. The Interstate serves as the backbone of the state and the region, and the lives of many residents are punctuated by time spent—often exasperatingly—driving on it. But what became clear from the commuters I heard from is that this is not an “I-95” story so much as a story of specific stretches of the highway commuters see every day, making an exit-by-exit analysis more pertinent to the average commuter than a broad analysis that focuses on the entire corridor. As such, I will be releasing a series of reports that will go town-by-town and exit-by-exit to drill down on commuter experiences from New Haven to the New York border.

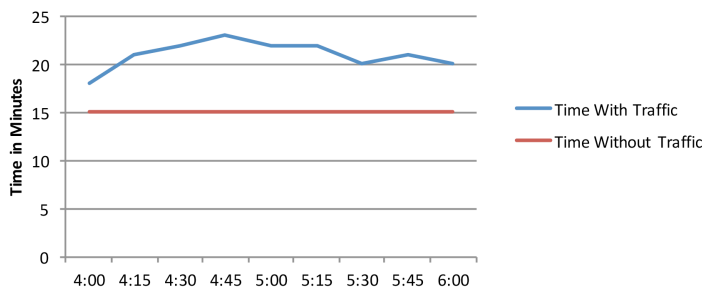
This report will cover exits on I-91 and I-95 in New Haven. However, New Haven is home to the highest percentage of commuters in the state who get to work without a car. Therefore, the report’s primary recommendations will center on non-highway assets, such as mass transit and rail.

Highways in New Haven

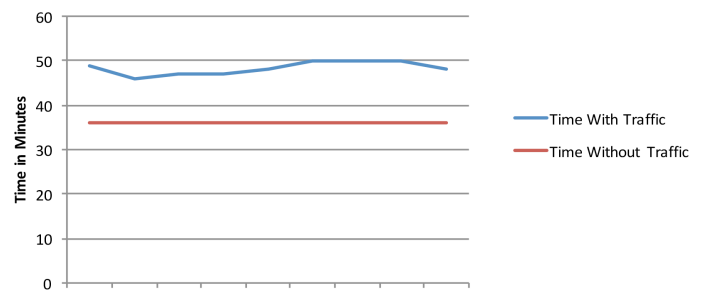
New Haven is home to the intersection of I-95, which runs from Maine to Florida, and I-91, which runs from New Haven to Derby Line, Vermont. It has several exits on I-95, including exits 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, and 51, and several exits on I-91, including exits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

The on-ramps and off-ramps of these exits transport people to the corridors of Connecticut's second largest city, connecting New Haven's 130,000 residents to their homes, businesses, and jobs.

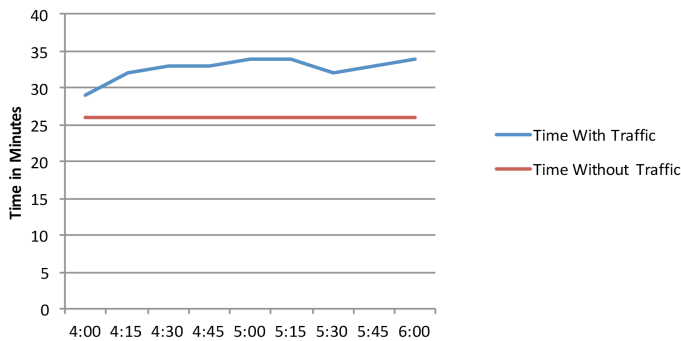
New Haven to Milford



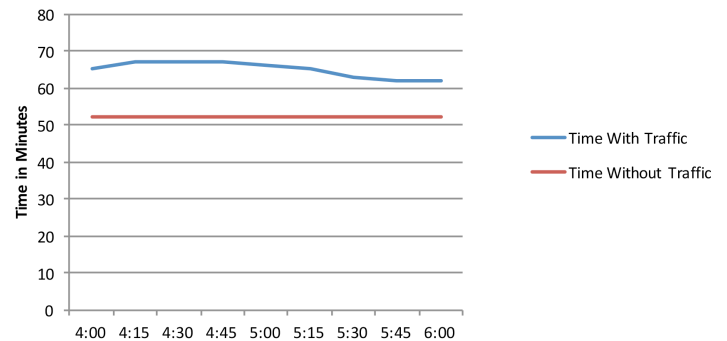
Norwalk to New Haven



New Haven to Bridgeport

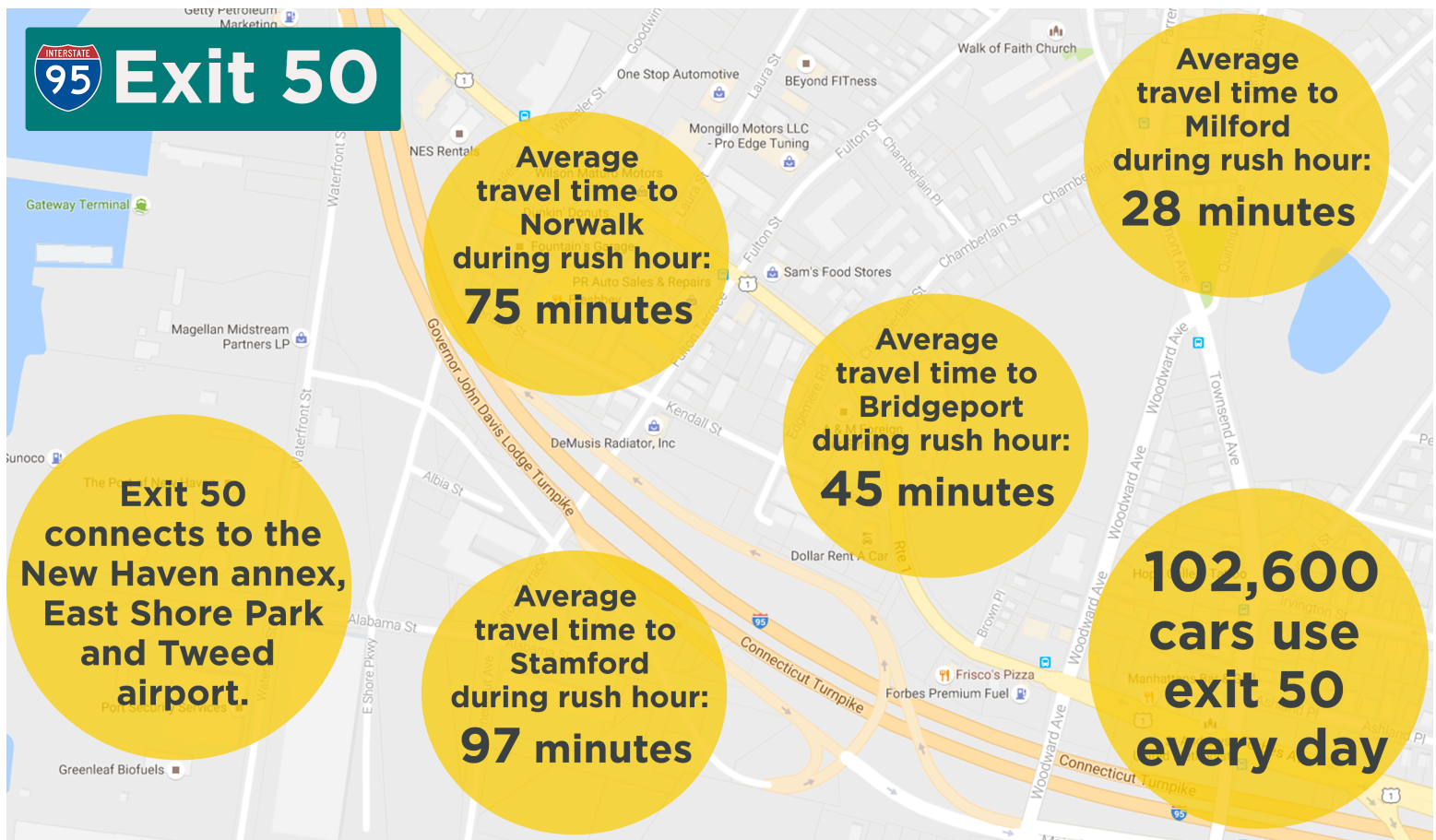


Stamford to New Haven



The data above was compiled using a Google Maps analytics tool that computes average travel times

I-95 North of the Q Bridge



I-95 only extends into the Annex and East Shore for about one mile; the city limit is met at East Haven Plaza. The southbound exit 50 allows drivers to access the port area or Woodward and Townsend Avenues, which include access to Fort Nathan Hale, the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound, the Port of New Haven, as well as Tweed New Haven Airport, Lighthouse Point Park, East Shore Park, and the Cove. The southbound exit 51 allows access to Frontage Road in East Haven and East Haven shopping centers.

Commuters expressed satisfaction with the newly completed Pearl Harbor Memorial, or Q, Bridge, though many expressed dismay that construction endured so long and that there is still congestion leading up to the bridge from East Haven. The \$417 million project was completed in July 2015. The original Quinnipiac Bridge, which had been in operation since 1958, has been demolished.

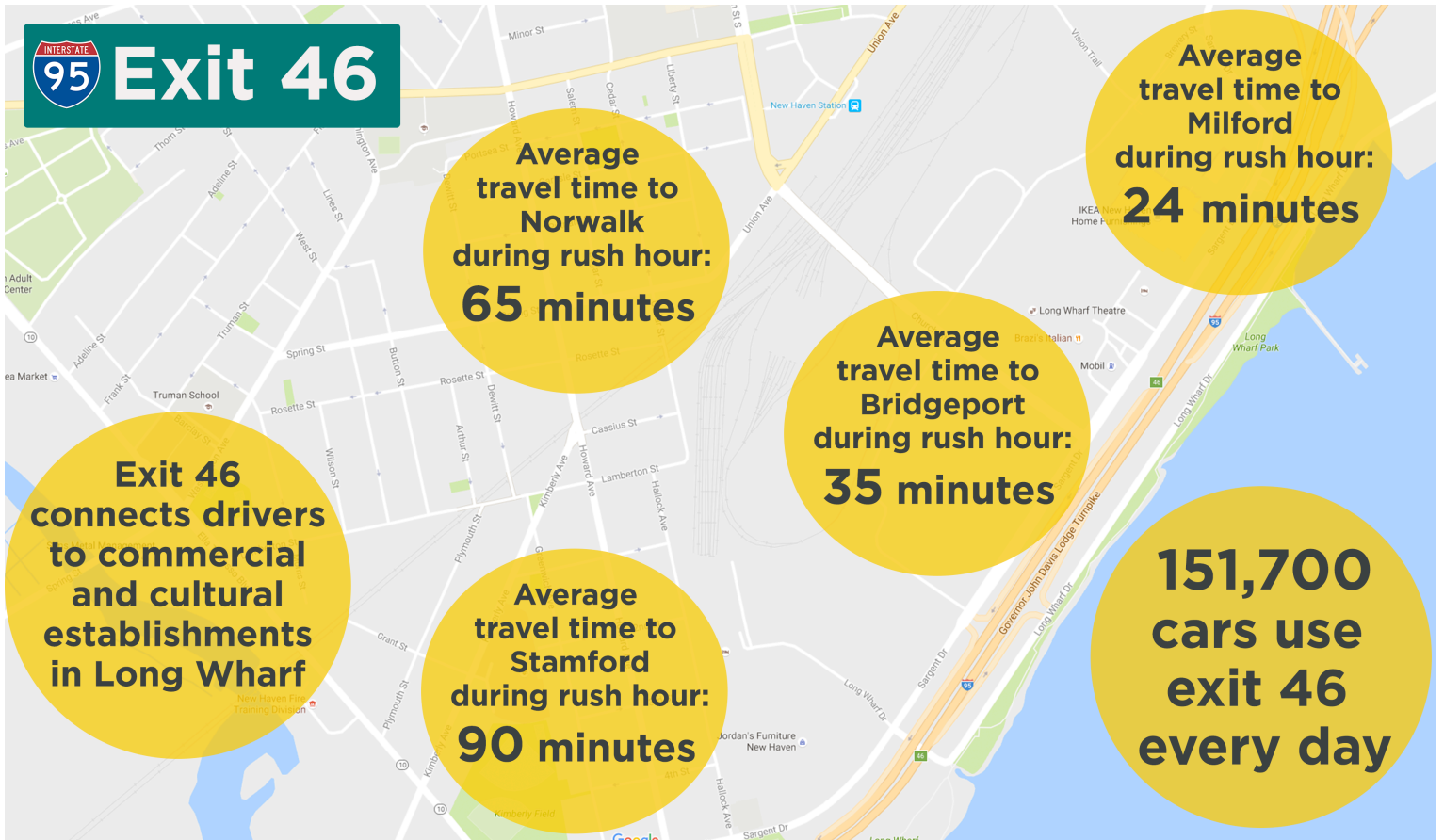
About 140,000 vehicles per day passed over the old Q Bridge, more than three times the 40,000 vehicles per day it was designed for.

The interchange reconfiguration of I-95, I-95 and Route 34 cost \$453.7 million. The new bridge is part of the 16-year, \$2 billion I-95 New Haven Harbor Crossing Corridor Improvement Program, making it the largest highway project ever undertaken by the state.

In July 2016, the I-95 and I-91 interchange—one of the most-traveled in the state—was reconfigured. Two lanes of I-95 north and two lanes of I-91 north in the Long Wharf area were flipped, changing the destinations for the four lanes. This switch changed sixty years of traffic flows on the highway.

Daily Traffic Volume - Exit By Exit	
Exit 50	Exit 48
Southbound: 49,900	Southbound: 41,900
Northbound: 52,700	Northbound: 65,100
Total: 102,600	Total: 107,000

I-95 South of the Q Bridge



Exit 47 and exit 46

These two exits allow drivers to access Long Wharf Drive and Long Wharf Park, while also providing access to Sargent Drive and to the commercial and cultural establishments in Long Wharf. The city has recently undertaken a renovation of Long Wharf Drive to better accommodate the expanding food truck options along Long Wharf Drive. The city is also taking measures to combat the persistent litter problem along the wharf, particularly near the food trucks. Recently, New Haven welcomed the Amistad back to Long Wharf Pier. New Haven is also resurrecting an historic boathouse between Long Wharf Pier and Lenny & Joe's Fish Tale. The boathouse is scheduled to open in the spring of 2017 and will bring city residents access to aquatic sports and New Haven Harbor. The boathouse is being funded with both federal and state dollars, while the city owns the property, which is operated by the non-profit Canal Dock Boathouse Inc.

Exit 45 and exit 44

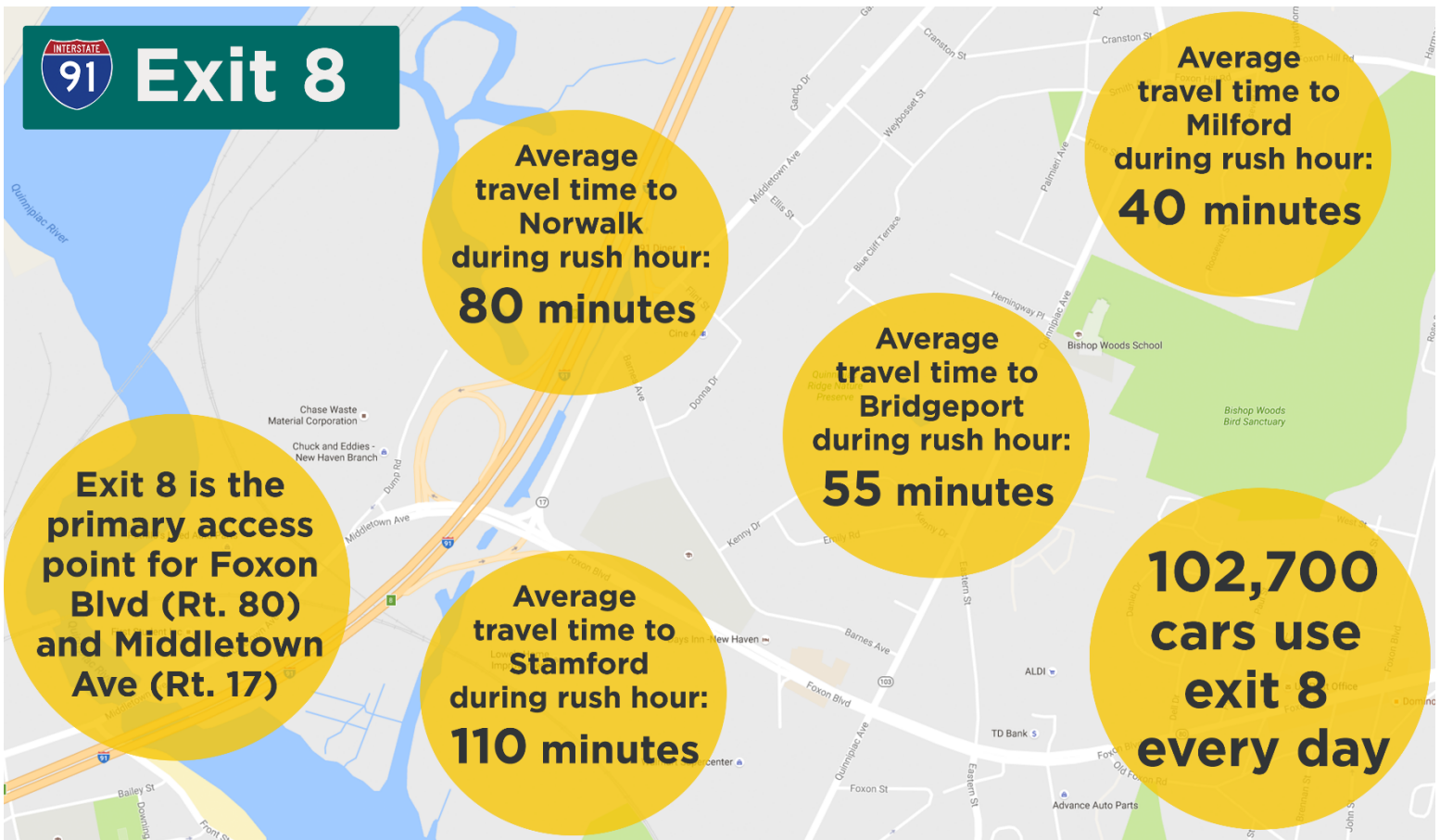
The southbound exit 44 is the last exit before West Haven, and it allows commuters to access Ella T. Grasso Boulevard Kimberly Avenue. The northbound exit is the first New Haven exit, and in addition to dropping commuters on Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, it provides access to City Point and Bayview Park.

Daily Traffic Volume - Exit By Exit	
Exit 47 Southbound: -- Northbound: 70,600 Total: 70,600	Exit 46 Southbound:78,400 Northbound: 73,300 Total: 151,700
Exit 45 Southbound: -- Northbound: 73,300 Total: 73,300	Exit 44 Southbound:71,600 Northbound: -- Total: 71,600

I-91

Exit 8

Exit 8 is the primary access point for Foxon Boulevard (Route 80) and Middletown Avenue (Route 17) for drivers. Route 80 connects New Haven residents to a variety of highly-trafficked restaurants and to northern East Haven and North Branford. Quinnipiac Avenue (Route 103) also connects to Foxon Boulevard, to Bishop Woods School and eventually turns into Maple Avenue that leads to the North Haven Town Green.



Exit 7

Exit 7 connects commuters to Middletown Avenue and Ferry Street. Ferry Street in turn connects to State Street, which runs south towards downtown New Haven and State Street and Union Station, and north towards the east side of East Rock Park and farther towards North Haven.

Exit 6

Exit 6 drops commuters off at Willow Street, across from Blake Field and near Wilbur Cross High School and the East Rock neighborhood. The northbound off-ramp comes to a hairpin turn before getting drivers to Willow Street, which causes some confusion and danger to those drivers unfamiliar with the exit.

Exit 5

While there is no exit 5 off-ramp for southbound commuters, northbound commuters can access State Street and Fair Haven using Exit 5. The exit allows drivers to continue north on State Street or to turn right at the intersection of State and James Streets.

Exit 4

The southbound exit 4 off-ramp deposits commuters onto Humphrey Street. Drivers can turn left on Humphrey Street to reach Grand Avenue and the northern tip of Wooster Square, or turn right on Humphrey to immediately arrive at State Street near Modern Apizza and several bars and restaurants.

Exit 3

Both northbound and southbound exit 3 brings commuters to the intersection of Orange Street and Trumbull Street. Drivers can proceed straight to Whitney Avenue and Prospect Street, while Orange Street leads to East Rock or to downtown.

Exit 2

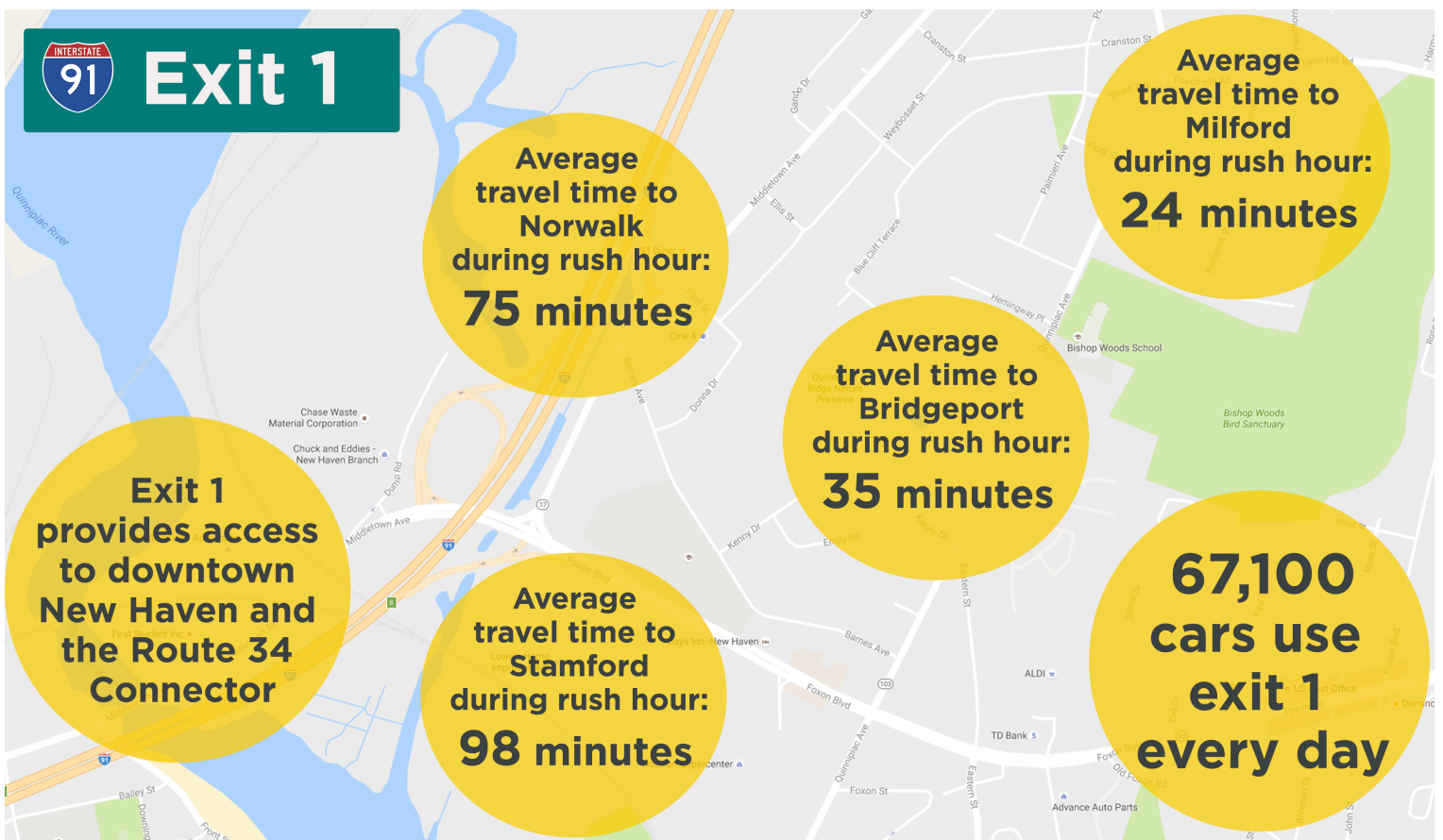
Exit 2 provides access to Hamilton Street, which connects to both Grand Avenue and Chapel Street. Chapel Street runs west to Wooster Square and towards the New Haven Green and Yale campus.

Some commuters complain that exit 2 cannot be accessed from the I-95 Interchange. While the configurations of this and other exits has undergone significant renovations, some commuters expressed frustration at the current layout of this exit while lamenting the slow speed of construction.

Exit 1

Exit 1 affords access to downtown New Haven and the Route 34 Connector. The Route 34 Connector has undergone a transformation from a short, stub-like highway to a series of walkable and interconnected city streets. This change helped incentivize Alexion Pharmaceuticals to move their headquarters to downtown New Haven. Further redevelopment brings the promise of other companies relocating to benefit from the proximity to Yale and its medical facilities.

While commuters support the smoother ride from the highway to Route 34 and downtown New Haven, many complained about the slow speed of the redevelopment, citing frequent congestion during peak hours. In addition to attracting new businesses and mixed-use commercial development to downtown New Haven, the completion of Downtown Crossing (as the project is known) would alleviate traffic in the area and improve traffic flow.



Daily Traffic Volume - Exit By Exit

Exit 8 Southbound: 51,400 Northbound: 51,300 Total: 102,700	Exit 7 Southbound: 64,600 Northbound: -- Total: 64,600
Exit 6 Southbound: 67,700 Northbound: 59,400 Total: 127,100	Exit 5 Southbound: -- Northbound: 63,700 Total: 63,700
Exit 4 Southbound: 68,400 Northbound: -- Total: 68,400	Exit 3 Southbound: 68,400 Northbound: 74,000 Total: 142,400
Exit 2 Southbound: 68,600 Northbound: 70,100 Total: 138,700	Exit 1 Southbound: 34,000 Northbound: 33,100 Total: 67,100

Recommendations Based on Commuter Feedback

1. Finish Redesign of Route 34 (Downtown Crossing)

Commuters like the improved flow of traffic of Route 34, but they complain that construction is taking years, while impacting traffic. Local businesses appreciate the walkable nature of the new street configuration, which allows for more foot traffic and customers.

Route 34 dates back to the city's urban renewal projects during the administration of Mayor Richard Lee. The Route 34 project wiped out the Oak Street neighborhood and created a state highway connector designed to link New Haven to its western suburbs. The Downtown Crossing project is designed to remediate the consequences of earlier renewal projects by transforming the leftover stub of the Route 34 highway into a grid of city streets with a mix of residential and commercial development along them.

In late July 2016, I was proud to help secure a \$20 million federal TIGER grant for the city to redevelop Downtown Crossing, the city's second TIGER grant for the project; in 2010, the city was awarded \$16 million. The 2010 grant helped complete the first crossing, which has enabled the construction of 100 College Street, home to the 450,000 square foot headquarters of Alexion, housing 1,200 employees.

The new grant will allow the city to complete all of the new South Orange Street intersection—reconnecting two halves of South Orange Street that were severed by the highway and increasing access to Union Station, including new protected bike lanes and intersections. At the Temple Street crossing, the city will rebuild the two flanking roads, Martin Luther King Boulevard and South Frontage Road, by raising their elevations. The \$20 million grant will also allow the city to lower the eastbound and westbound service drives to prepare for the eventual development and bridge.

The federal contribution to the project will be matched by \$33.5 million in non-federal investments. One estimate suggests that the project will trigger \$400 million in new private investment at the former New Haven Coliseum site.

Downtown Crossing Redevelopment: **\$73.5 million**

2. Improve Connection Between Union Station and Downtown

New Haven's Union Station is less than three-quarters of a mile from the New Haven Green, but you wouldn't know it. Visitors to New Haven and commuters to and from New Haven rarely walk downtown from Union Station.

Responding to the desires of residents, commuters, and businesses, the city is executing plans to better connect the Hill neighborhood and Union Station to downtown. Part of that plan involves completing Downtown Crossing. Another part of that plan is to revitalize Union Station and the area immediately surrounding it in the hopes of creating a Grand Central Station experience, replete with shops, restaurants, and a

generally welcoming environment. The city is also planning to redevelop the Church Street South housing projects directly across the street from the station. The overarching goal is to better connect residents to the economic centers of the city and better welcome visitors and travelers to New Haven. For many visitors experiencing New Haven for the first time, Union Station and its surroundings are the first things they see, and as many local businesses note, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression.

Hill-to-downtown redevelopment (including Downtown Crossing): **\$100-150 million**
Union Station Transit-Oriented Development Upgrades: **\$200 million**

3. Upgrade Metro-North Service to New York City

At the turn of the 20th century, a trip to New York City from New Haven by train took eighty minutes. Today, that same trip takes approximately two hours. While this change is partly due to more station stops and the critical safety upgrades implemented on the line over the last hundred years, the change in travel time is nonetheless startling.

Metro-North Railroad is the busiest commuter rail operator in the country, and improving speed, safety, and reliability of the service will mean better commutes for thousands of New Haven residents.

Improving speed, safety, and reliability of Metro-North and Amtrak service depends on investments all along the Northeast Corridor. For example, if the Norwalk Bridge fails to close or the Hudson River Tunnel is flooded, New Haven passengers are affected. The complex jurisdictional issues that comprise rail investments coupled with the large investment needed to get the Northeast Corridor to a state-of-good-repair make this transportation upgrade daunting. However, with thoughtful investments and strong state-to-state and public-private partnerships, rail service capacity along the corridor can be vastly increased for the tens of thousands of New Haven and Connecticut residents who travel by train daily.

4. Make Updates to Public Transit

Many New Haven residents complained about the inconsistent bus service in the city and the recent proposed fare increases that will disproportionately affect people who use public transit.

The city is currently conducting a multi-year study to identify and enhance public transit in the region. The study was funded through a 2011 Federal Transit Administration grant and through state and local sources, and the study will include a review of transit needs, access to transit, and the availability of public transportation to residents of the city. The study included an extensive public outreach component, including public meetings and online surveys. The study will conclude in 2016 and will guide future investment decisions for transit upgrades.

5. Improve Bike-Pedestrian Infrastructure

Many commuters and city residents who walk or use bikes commended the city on its efforts to make the city increasingly bike and pedestrian friendly. This feedback reflects the city's latest census data, which show that more than a third of households do not own a car.

From 2008 to January 2014, the city's marked biked routes increased from 4 to 40 miles. Since then, New Haven has added 2.3 miles. The lanes are demarcated with bright paint to increase visibility.

The city has also enhanced streets for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians by converting two-way streets to one-way streets. The remaining one-way streets in the city could be confusing to navigate and often add to commute times. The conversion to two-way streets not only reduces confusion but also slows down traffic, making the streets safer for cars, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The most likely candidates for the one-way to two-way street conversion projects are: Dwight Street, Howe Street, Park Street, York Street, College Street, Church Street, Hillhouse Avenue, Wall Street, Grove Street, Crown Street, and George Street.

Conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets: **Between \$10 and \$50 million**

6. Complete the New Haven-Hartford Line

Many commuters expressed interest in the New Haven-Hartford Line, whose commuter service is due to begin in January 2018. The line, which has tremendous economic potential, will help alleviate traffic on I-91 north and improve travel time for New Haven residents who work in Hartford.

Currently, Amtrak runs a low-frequency schedule on a single track. In 2018, the Hartford Line will run seventeen trains a day between New Haven and Hartford, with stops in Wallingford, Meriden and Berlin. Stations are planned for North Haven, Newington and West Hartford. Of those seventeen trains, twelve will continue onto Springfield, with stops in Windsor and Windsor Locks. The long-term plan of the construction project is to fully double-track the line from Hartford to Springfield, and to increase the schedule to twenty-five trains a day along the entire route. With the full twenty-five train schedule, the line is expected to transport a million passengers annually.

The project benefited from a \$191 million federal grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The project is also funded through state bonds.

New Haven's State Street Station will also serve New Haven-Hartford Line riders. The station was the recipient of a \$10 million federal grant in 2010.

New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Line: **\$639 million**