

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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NY AP TOP NEWS

## Convenience in NYC comes with a cost — more congestion

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NEW YORK — There are some things that are easy in New York City — ordering groceries and packages delivered, or getting car service at the touch of an app. There are also some things that are not — like driving around on the city's clogged streets, where delivery trucks, for-hire cars, taxis, buses and bicycles are all jostling for space.

Experts keeping an eye on the city's traffic and transit say some of the conveniences many New Yorkers take for granted to live their daily lives are coming with a cost — more street congestion.

Trucks making their deliveries, buses taking on and disgorging passengers, thousands of for-hire cars joining the ranks of the city's taxis, as well as traffic lanes dedicated to buses or bicycles and closed to cars means getting anywhere can be an exercise in frustration. According to the city's Department of Transportation, average Manhattan traffic speeds declined from 9.35 mph to 8.51 mph between 2010 and 2014.

"The streets of New York are filled with people who are trying to get someplace," said Mitchell Moss, director of the Rudin Center for Transportation at New York University. "The problem is the capacity has been shrinking as the demand has been growing."

The Associated Press looked at traffic congestion and gridlock around the country as part of a project on the nation's infrastructure, finding that the problem is spreading

beyond urban centers to medium-sized cities and the suburbs and is likely to get worse over coming decades without interventions and planning.

The number of commuters coming into New York City each day by car has actually declined over the last decade, transit experts said. But other demands have picked up.

There "seems to be sort of an insatiable demand for more rapid and frequent deliveries, people want that, they expect that from online services," said Richard Barone, director of transportation programs for the Regional Plan Association. That means trucks parked and sometimes double-parked on city streets, from early morning until well into the evening.

There are steps the city can take, said Sarah Kaufman, assistant director for technology at the Rudin Center. She pointed to a city program that encourages businesses in midtown and lower Manhattan to shift when they get deliveries to off-hours.

"A restaurant in midtown doesn't need its new shipment of linens in the middle of the day," she said.

There's also been huge growth in the for-hire car industry in recent years, with 25,000 vehicles being added since 2011, according to the city DOT.

The increased use of these app-based car ride services "is in some cases taking people away from taxis, taking people away from buses, from subways, so we have more congestion," said Sam Schwartz, a transportation engineer who spent years with the DOT and is among the main proponents of a congestion-pricing plan that would put tolls for all cars that cross 60th Street in Manhattan and the free bridges spanning the East River.

That's because in contrast to commuters, who come into the city and then park at their destination, hired cars and taxis are constantly in motion and adding to the traffic pressure.

If the hired car industry is allowed "to grow unchecked, it will grow to the point where we will slow down and all we'll be providing will be seating for people in midtown Manhattan," he said.

Legislation has been introduced in the City Council to limit for-hire expansion for at least a year while traffic congestion is studied. A council committee will review it on Monday.

Of course, New York City will always be a busy place, Barone said.

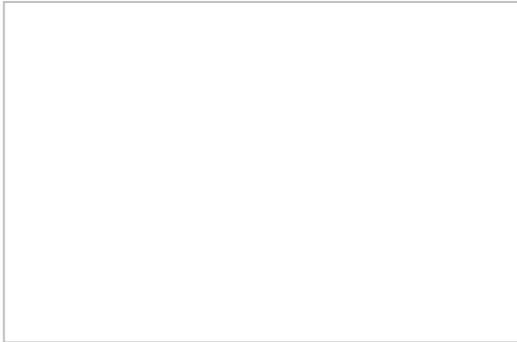
"Congestion and traffic is considered sort of a barometer of success ... up to a point, it's a good thing," he said. "But obviously you reach a tipping point where congestion affects your ability to get people to work in a reasonable amount of time and obviously impacts the cost of moving goods in the region."

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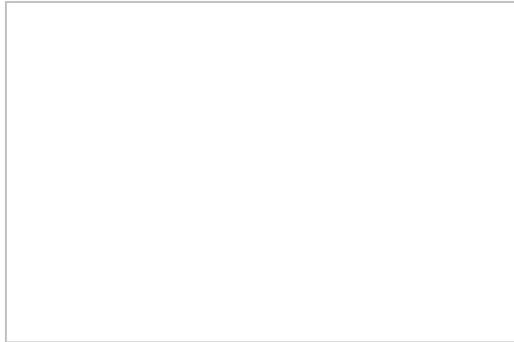
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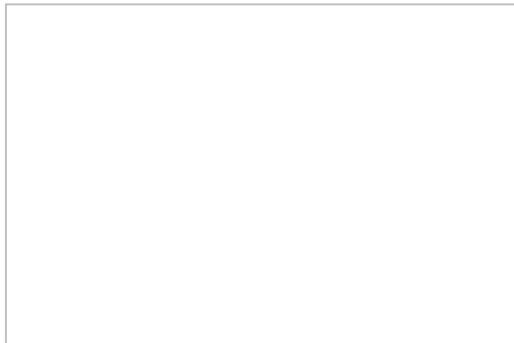
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