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Daily Grind

Best And Worst Cities For Commuters

Francesca Levy, 02.16.10, 06:00 AM EST

In these areas, urban sprawl and solo drivers are the difference between a hassle-free and a harrowing trek to work.

COMMUTER RANK ▲	METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA ◆	2007 TRAVEL DELAY RANK ¹ ◆	GREEN COMMUTER RANKING ² ◆	TRAVEL TIME RANK ² ◆
1	Salt Lake City, UT	26	13	11
2	Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY	2	36	1
3	Rochester, NY	1	40	2
4	Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	14	33	5
5	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	8	32	10
5	Fresno, CA	14	23	16
7	Tulsa, OK	8	48	4
8	Pittsburgh, PA	5	14	40
8	Tucson, AZ	31	18	23
10	Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH	4	41	14
11	Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA	38	8	31
12	Oklahoma City, OK	11	52	3
13	Albuquerque	22	28	22
14	Dayton, OH	5	54	6
14	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	31	29	18
16	Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	42	22	20
17	Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	11	46	12
18	Honolulu, HI	31	3	46
19	Louisville-Jefferson County, KY-IN	27	43	9
20	Kansas City, MO-KS	2	58	7

21	Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	22	37	19
22	Richmond, VA	5	44	21
23	Memphis, TN-MS-AR	11	49	15
23	San Antonio, TX	29	27	28
25	New Haven-Milford, CT	10	34	32
25	Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN	22	47	13
27	Austin-Round Rock, TX	38	17	36
28	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	38	6	48
29	Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	36	5	51
30	Columbus, OH	22	57	8
30	Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC	34	35	24
32	New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA	19	24	43
32	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	37	9	49
32	Denver-Aurora, CO	45	21	33
35	Raleigh-Cary, NC	19	45	26
36	Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	42	16	44
36	Sacramento--Arden-Arcade--Roseville, CA	48	15	42
36	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	52	25	30
39	St. Louis, MO-IL	14	51	25
40	Jacksonville, FL	29	42	27
41	Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	34	11	56
41	San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	58	2	53
43	San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	54	20	39
44	Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA	19	39	38
44	Baltimore-Towson, MD	45	12	52
46	New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	54	1	60
47	Indianapolis-Carmel, IN	28	59	17
48	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	57	4	59

49	Nashville-Davidson-- Murfreesboro-- Franklin, TN	17	55	29
50	Chicago-Naperville- Joliet, IL-IN-WI	59	7	57
51	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	60	10	54
52	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	17	56	34
53	Houston-Sugar Land- Baytown, TX	50	26	50
54	Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	52	19	58
55	Miami-Fort Lauderdale- Pompano Beach, FL	54	31	47
56	Dallas-Fort Worth- Arlington, TX	48	38	45
57	Orlando-Kissimmee, FL	42	50	37
58	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	51	30	55
59	Detroit-Warren- Livonia, MI	38	60	35
60	Tampa-St. Petersburg- Clearwater, FL	45	53	41

¹Source: Texas Transportation Institute.

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Full Story: Best And Worst Cities For Commuters

To find the cities with the best commutes, we measured travel time, road congestion and travel delays for the 60 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the U.S. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, we calculated what percentage of commuters in each metro area took an hour or more to get to work in each of these cities in 2008, the most recent year for which these data are kept. To find the areas with the fewest cars on the road, we next factored in the percentage of commuters who carpooled or used alternatives to driving like walking, biking or taking public transportation in 2008. We referred to this as the "green commuter" ranking. Finally, we looked at the Travel Time Index, a measure that the Texas Transportation Institute, a transportation research organization, uses to measure delays. The TTI indicates how long a commute takes during rush hour compared to the same trip in ideal conditions. A short commute is good, but a dependably short commute is even better. The most recent TTI data is from 2007, and was released in July 2009. We ranked the metros on each of those measures, and then averaged the rankings for the final score. We gave heavier weight to travel time and congestion measures, since many of the cities have minimal differences in TTI numbers.