



## Study: State Government to Blame for Twin Cities Congestion

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A new study says you shouldn't blame Twin Cities metro traffic on an increase in drivers, or on road work or detours.

Instead, it suggests blaming Minnesota's state government.

Released Monday morning by the Golden Valley-based think tank Center of the American Experiment, the study claims congestion has quadrupled in the Twin Cities metro since 1982.

And that the average Twin Cities driver now spends about 47 hours per year in traffic.

It claims policies pursued by state agencies, particularly the Metropolitan Council, are to blame.

"Many of their policies actually make congestion worse," said study author Randal O'Toole, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

O'Toole said it's as if agencies like the Metropolitan Council decided they couldn't build their way out of congestion, so they decided not to try.

Instead, O'Toole said they've backed projects like light rail and new bike lanes, which don't serve enough people and can actually make congestion worse.

"It would be kind of like me saying, 'You know, I can't restore my house to the way it was when it was brand-new, so therefore not only am I not going to maintain it, I'm going to introduce some termites into it so it will rot even faster,'" O'Toole said.

Representatives of the Metropolitan Council, however, said that's just not the case.

Director of Metropolitan Transportation Services Nick Thompson pointed to data he said proves that - while the number of travelers has increased dramatically in the Twin Cities since 2002 - congestion has remained relatively flat.

"It really shows that our mix of multi-modal investments has really paid off," Thompson said.

He added that the state is currently investing in new lanes and roads - hence all those orange cones you see around town. But he said that shouldn't be the only investment made by the state.

"If you talk to the customers out there," Thompson said. "They want those choices and those investments across the board. Not just a single investment type."