

Americans Driving At Historic Lows

Eleven Billion Fewer Vehicle Miles Traveled in March 2008 Over Previous March

Americans drove less in March 2008, continuing a trend that began last November, according to estimates released today from the Federal Highway Administration.

The FHWA's "Traffic Volume Trends" report, produced monthly since 1942, shows that estimated vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on all U.S. public roads for March 2008 fell 4.3 percent as compared with March 2007 travel. At 11 billion miles less in March 2008 than in the previous March, this is the sharpest yearly drop for any month in FHWA history.

The estimated data show that VMT on all U.S. public roads have dropped since 2006.

--Excerpt from Federal Highway Administration Press Release, Friday, May 23, 2008
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/pressroom/fhwa0811.htm>

More Facts:

- In September 2004, WSDOT concluded that the "No Replacement" (aka "Transit & Streets") option for the Viaduct was not feasible, in part, because "Vehicle trips on I-5 and SR 99 are expected to increase 25% to 30% by 2030."
- In March 2008, VMT on all Washington State roads had declined by 5.8% compared to March 2007, and by 5.2% on Washington State urban arterial roads, according to FHWA data¹

Automakers' April Sales Reflect Shift to Smaller Cars

Automakers reported higher sales of small cars as oil and gasoline prices climbed to record highs in April, but said Thursday that overall vehicle sales in the United States plummeted during the month.

Sales decreased 29 percent from April 2007 at Chrysler, 23 percent at General Motors and 19 percent at the Ford Motor Company. Toyota's sales fell 4.5 percent, and both Honda and Nissan reported 2 percent declines.

Light truck sales fell a staggering 32 percent at G.M., 31 percent at Chrysler and 25 percent at Ford. Nissan and Toyota experienced steep declines, too: 19 percent and 16 percent.

"What we did not count on is oil being as high as almost \$120 a barrel. That's causing a very sharp shift to cars and crossovers from trucks, and it's also lowering the overall industry," G.M.'s chief sales analyst, Michael C. DiGiovanni, said.

-- Excerpt from article by Nick Bunkley, New York Times, Published: May 1, 2008
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/01/business/01auto-web.html?_r=2&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

¹ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/tvtw/08martvt/08martvt.pdf>

Travelers Turn to Public Transit

Ridership Surges as Gas Prices Fuel Exodus From Cars

Soaring gas prices are pushing more Americans to take public transit, with streetcars, trolleys and other light rail experiencing a 10.3 percent increase in ridership for the first quarter of the year, according to a report released yesterday by the American Public Transportation Association.

Americans took 2.6 billion trips on all modes of public transportation, including subways and buses, in the first three months of 2008, a 3.3 percent increase, or almost 85 million more trips than in the same period last year, the report said.

"There's no doubt that the high gas prices are motivating people to change their travel behavior," APTA President William Millar said in a statement.

Even more noteworthy is that ridership at many transit agencies increased despite higher fares. In Washington, Metro's ridership has steadily increased even though the agency raised fares and fees in January, the largest increase in its history. In April, ridership increased 4.3 percent over the same period the year before.

APTA said the first-quarter increases continued a trend from last year, when Americans took the highest number of trips on public transportation -- 10.3 billion -- in 50 years. There is often a lag between gas price increases and transit ridership increases because it takes time for "folks who are not regular transit riders to make that first step," Padgett said.

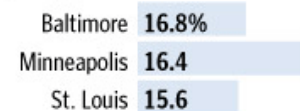
Greatest Gains In Ridership

Rising gas prices seem to be boosting public transit ridership. Metro ridership rose 4.3 percent in April over the same period last year. Other systems have posted double-digit increases.

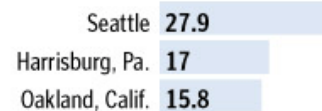
Systems with the greatest gains in ridership, first quarter 2008:

LIGHT RAIL

(modern streetcars, trolleys and heritage trolleys)



COMMUTER RAIL



HEAVY RAIL*

(subways and elevated trains)



* Metro is a heavy-rail system.

Sources: American Public Transportation Association, WMATA

The Washington Post

-- Excerpt from article by Lena H. Sun, Washington Post, June 3, 2008; Page A02

Bus Ridership Up, Gas Sales Down

As gas prices skyrocket, more Seattle-area residents are parking their cars and taking the bus.

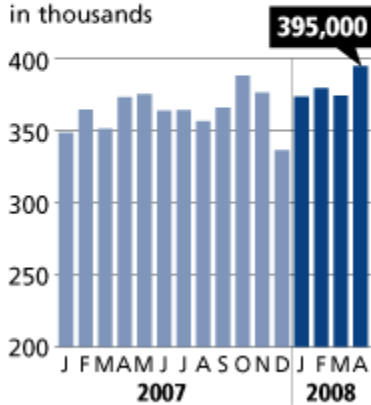
During the first few months of 2008, King County Metro Transit buses averaged 376,000 boardings per day, a 6 percent increase over a year earlier, said Metro Transit spokeswoman Linda Thielke. In April, there were 395,000 boardings -- a record.

BUS RIDERSHIP UP, GAS SALES DOWN

As gas prices have increased, gas sales have decreased and bus ridership has gone up. In April, King County Metro Transit saw more daily bus boardings, on average, than at any time in its history.

Bus ridership

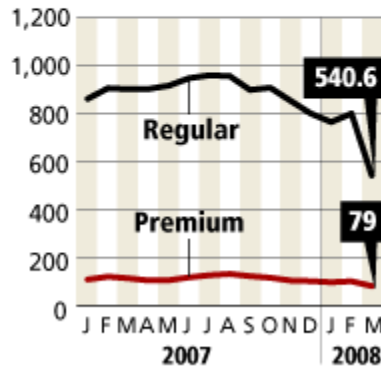
Average weekday boardings, in thousands



Sources: King County Metro Transit, Energy Information Administration

Washington gas sales*

Statewide, in thousands of gallons sold per day



*Refinery sales through retail outlets
SEATTLE P-I

And officials are expecting even more people to start taking buses, said Mantill Williams, an American Public Transportation Association spokesman. He believes we've already hit a tipping point with high gas prices. Transit systems started seeing more riders as gas prices passed \$3 per gallon in 2005, Williams said.

--Excerpt from "Gas prices killing your budget? Why not hop on the bus instead?", Moises Mendoza, Seattle P-I, June 10, 2008