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**INTERSTATE JAMS COST EACH DRIVER \$615 ANNUALLY REPORT PUTS  
PRICE TAG ON SAVINGS TO MOTORISTS FOR UNCLOGGING TRAFFIC AT I-25  
/ I-225 INTERCHANGE**

**Source:** April M. Washington  
News Staff Writer

Unclogging traffic at the confluence of **Interstates** 25 and 225 will save the average workday commuter \$615 yearly in time and fuel, according to a transit study released Thursday.

Altogether, the benefit to motorists of expanding the highway at the bottleneck will be about \$4.5 billion - \$700 million **annually** - over 27 years, according to the study by the American User Highway Alliance, a Washington, D.C.-based research group. The sum stuns Leslie Modesitt, 52, who goes out of her way to avoid the interchange she calls the ``death trap."

``Oh, my god," said Modesitt, an executive assistant who works and lives near the Denver Tech Center, after learning the financial downside of traveling the Denver Tech interchange. ``It's the worst spot to drive through. I live off of Belleview. I'm afraid every time I have to cross over oncoming traffic just to get to the exit."

The study measures lost time in traffic **jams** at \$6 per hour for commuters and \$48 an hour for businesses; wasted gasoline and diesel fuel at \$1.40 per gallon; accidents at an average \$95,000 per crash; and pollutants belched into the air in the tons.

The upside: Denver is better off than several major U.S. cities.

``In the case of Denver, you're lucky because you have a project under way," said Bill Buff, spokesman for the highway users group.

``A lot of other cities aren't so lucky because they have nothing on the drawing board to address the problems. We hope the study shows the time is to act now because the **costs** in lost time, fuel and traffic accidents caused by congestion are staggering."

The report is the second part of a study the alliance released in November that ranked the I-25 / I-225 as the 14th-worst bottleneck in the country, worse than bottlenecks in Houston, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

Daily traffic **jams** suffocating motorists at the I-25 / I-225 interchange **cost** at least 11.2 million hours of delay every year, according to the study.

“I think this is the first attempt to put figures to determine a bottleneck like Denver Tech Center's real **cost** to society," said Norm Sherbert, executive director of the Colorado Highway Users Conference.

The state plans to attack the problem beginning next summer when cone zones will begin dotting I-25 southeast of Denver and major construction will get under way. The work will last for seven years and **cost** \$1.6 billion.

When it's over, I-25 will be widened to 10 lanes at the Tech Center and light rail will be expanded 19.6 miles from south Broadway in Denver to Lincoln Avenue in Douglas County, with a 4.5-mile spur from I-225 to Parker Road.

“If you're going to save \$4.5 billion on one project, it sounds to me that the return on investment is positive, said Tom Norton, executive director of the Colorado Department of Transportation.

The study projects that the improvements will result in 4,600 fewer crashes, saving 18 lives. It also will shave 14 minutes off driving time during rush hours and cut smog-causing emissions by 35 percent by 2027.

The findings were based on data gathered between 1997 and 1999 on 167 bottlenecks along highways in the nation's 30 most congested cities. The study was conducted by Thomas F. Hogarty, an adjunct professor in the Graduate Program in Economics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Motorists nationwide would reap more than \$336 billion in economic benefits were the nation's worst bottlenecks improved, according to the study.

## INFOBOX

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### BENEFITS OF UNCLOGGING I-25 AT I-225

The annual savings to a Colorado commuter traveling twice per workday through the Denver Tech Center interchange is an estimated \$615 in time and fuel.

Here is a breakdown of savings over 27 years, according to the American Highway Users Alliance:

\* Personal time - \$2.4 billion, at \$6 an hour.

\* Commercial time - \$1 billion, at \$48 an hour, not including fuel.

\* Fuel - \$370 million, based on a \$1.40 per-gallon average of gasoline and diesel fuel prices.

\* Safety - \$440 million, based on an average **cost** per crash of \$95,000.

\* Carbon dioxide - \$190 million, calculated on \$75 a ton for carbon.

\* Air pollution - \$82 million, based on emissions of carbon monoxide (25 cents a pound), nitrogen oxides (\$1.50 a pound) and volatile organic compounds (50 cents a pound).

Total - \$4.5 billion in benefits

Source: American Highway Users Alliance