

Predictions for Planes, Trains & Automobile Traffic in 2017: Cameron on Transportation

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Everybody writes “year in review” stories, but not me. Instead, I’m going to predict the future and tell you what’s going to happen in transportation in the coming year!

Metro-North: The new M8 cars will perform well in the winter, but the aging tracks, switches and catenary (overhead power lines) will continue to suffer breakdowns, causing delays. Ridership will continue to climb, causing further rush-hour crowding until new railcars start arriving in 2019.

Gasoline Prices: The party’s over, folks. Gasoline prices will continue to rise as OPEC gets its act together to limit oil production. These rising prices will nudge American drillers and producers back in the game, but

it may be months until resumed domestic consumption matches reduced imports.

Stamford garage: As I predicted last year, the state Department of Transportation finally pulled the plug on its 3+ year unsigned deal with private developer JHM Group to demolish the old station garage and build a mixed use office / condo / hotel building. But the DOT vows to revisit the P3 (public private partnership) concept, only this time I predict they will have learned their lesson and will find ways to engage and inform the public in their planning.

State takeover: They've been quietly working toward this for years, but I predict that the DOT will finally announce they plan to takeover all rail station parking on the New Haven line, standardizing rates and permit wait lists. Expect a huge fight from the towns, but the state will win. Doesn't it always?

Flying: It's the beginning of the end for the 747, especially with fuel prices increasing. Fewer of the jumbos will be flying, replaced by much more fuel efficient mid-sized craft like the 787. Even the mega-jumbo A380 double-deckers may have seen their day. Ironically, in 2017 there will be renewed interest in a commercial supersonic jetliner to save time for the ultra-rich who are willing to pay.

Interstate 95: Traffic will only get worse on I-95 as the legislature hems and haws over Gov. Malloy's call for its widening. Despite a 2004 study that said that using break-down lanes for rush-hour traffic was unsafe and would yield little traffic improvement, the CDOT's new \$2 million consultant study will, (surprise!), support the scheme. But budget cuts may kill the plan, for now.

Let's go CT: Governor Malloy's \$100 billion transportation scheme will remain stuck, just like his political career. (Hillary didn't get elected and he didn't get plucked from his budget-balancing woes in Hartford to serve in her administration.) Still, the Governor will continue to criss-cross the state, ballyhooing the need for transportation spending. But without a legislative "lock box" on transportation dollars, none of his funding mechanisms (tolls, vehicle-miles and sales taxes) will be embraced by lawmakers.

Trump money: This is the real wild card which, like the President-elect himself, is hard to predict. "Donald the Builder" has spoken about spending \$1 trillion to rebuild America's roads, rails, airports and ports. But he has to get a reluctant Congress to find and then agree to spend that money. If he does, expect even the bluest of states like Connecticut to be clamoring for their share. And maybe, just maybe, Connecticut will get some, meaning the Malloy transportation "plan" (being "shovel ready") will find new life.

No guts, no glory. Those are my predictions for the year ahead!

By the way, to see last year's predictions, [go here](#).

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