WESTCHESTER AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Travel Time Isn’t the Problem. Uncertainty Is: A Data Study of NYC Airport Access to Westchester

February 21 – March 21, 2026

9 Routes · ~6,264 Data Points · Hourly Sampling

Executive Summary

This white paper analyzes real-world travel times between the three major New York City airports — John F. Kennedy International (JFK), LaGuardia (LGA), and Newark Liberty International (EWR) — and three key Westchester County destinations: White Plains, Scarsdale, and Yonkers.

The analysis draws on approximately 6,264 hourly data points collected between February 21 and March 21, 2026, normalized to New York local time. Nine distinct routes were evaluated across four primary metrics: average travel time, baseline (no-traffic) travel time, traffic impact, and peak-hour variability.

Key Findings

- LaGuardia consistently provides the fastest, most stable, and most predictable access to all three Westchester destinations.
- Newark exhibits the highest structural friction — longer baselines, greater traffic sensitivity, and the widest variability bands in the dataset.

- JFK occupies a mid-range tier but shows significant volatility during peak hours, with worst-case events exceeding 107 minutes against a ~53-minute baseline.
- Average travel times are stable and manageable. Peak-hour variability is where operational risk is concentrated.
- Under peak conditions, travel times on JFK and EWR routes can more than double compared to baseline expectations.

> **Core Insight: Airport selection has a greater impact on travel reliability than traffic conditions. The system you choose matters more than the congestion you encounter.**

Methodology

This analysis is based on a controlled, structured mobility dataset with the following characteristics:

- Timeframe: February 21 to March 21, 2026 (28 days)
- Sampling frequency: Hourly observations
- Timezone: UTC, normalized to New York local time (EST/EDT)
- Data points per route: approximately 696 samples
- Total data points: approximately 6,264 across 9 routes

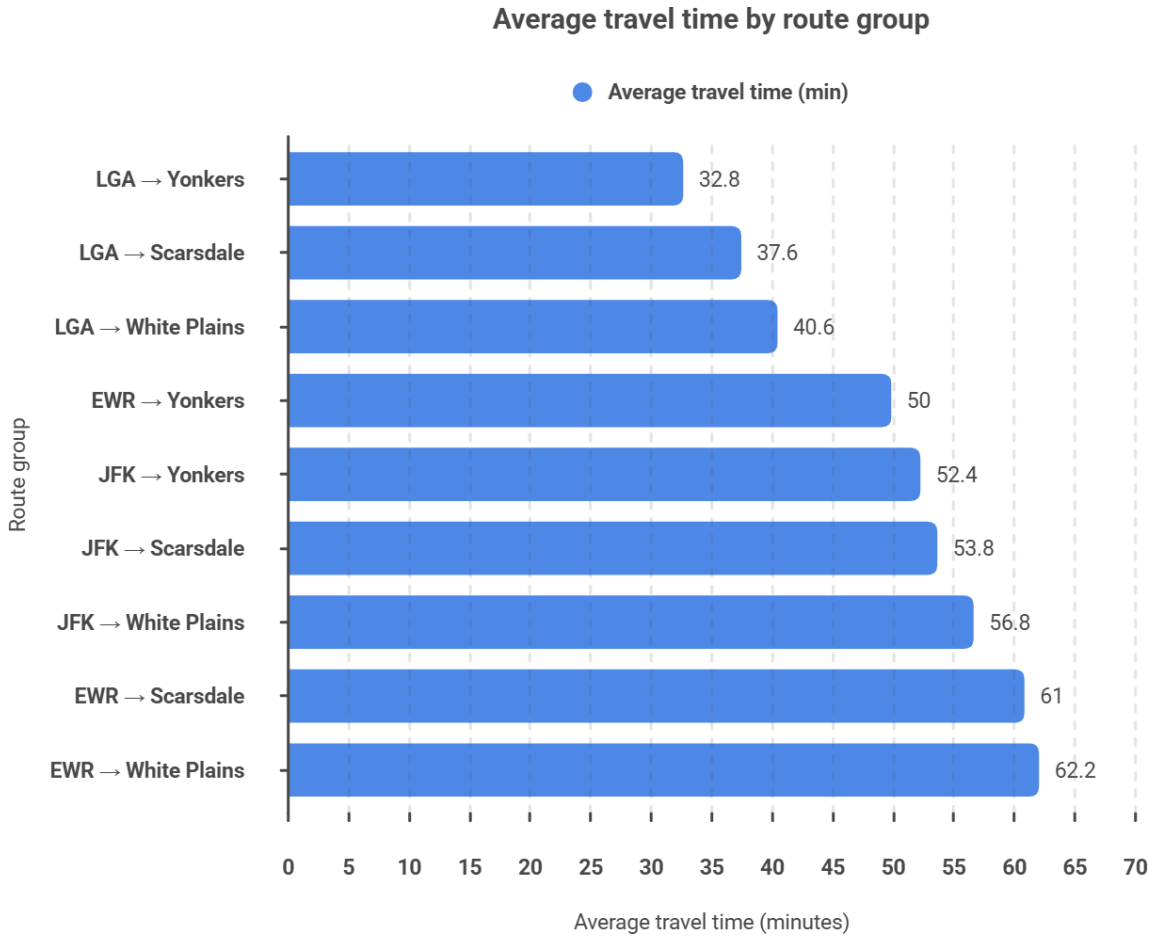
Metrics analyzed per route: travel time with traffic, baseline travel time without traffic, traffic impact (delta), hourly distribution, variability range, and worst-case event documentation. All data was extracted directly from a structured mobility database. No external estimations or assumptions were applied.

System Overview: All Nine Routes

Performance Rankings

Three distinct performance tiers emerge across all nine routes:

The following chart provides a consolidated view of average travel times across all nine routes, revealing a clear performance hierarchy between airport corridors.



The separation between LaGuardia, JFK, and Newark is not incremental. It is structural. Routes from LaGuardia consistently operate below the 50-minute threshold, while JFK and Newark routes exceed it across most destinations.

This distinction is not driven by isolated traffic events. It reflects underlying corridor efficiency, infrastructure design, and routing complexity.

Fastest Routes — LGA Corridor

Route	Avg Time	Baseline	Traffic Impact	Peak Risk
LGA → Yonkers	32.8 min	31.1 min	+1.7 min	Low
LGA → Scarsdale	37.6 min	36.3 min	+1.3 min	Low
LGA → White Plains	40.6 min	39.4 min	+1.3 min	Low

Mid to High-Friction Routes — JFK and EWR

Route	Avg Time	Baseline	Traffic Impact	Peak Risk
EWR → Yonkers	50.0 min	45.4 min	+4.6 min	High
JFK → Yonkers	52.4 min	48.2 min	+4.2 min	High
JFK → Scarsdale	53.8 min	50.3 min	+3.5 min	High
JFK → White Plains	56.8 min	53.0 min	+3.8 min	High
EWR → Scarsdale	61.0 min	55.1 min	+6.0 min	Very High
EWR → White Plains	62.2 min	57.8 min	+4.4 min	Very High

> **Structural Insight: The airport tier ranking — LGA < JFK < EWR — is consistent across all three Westchester destinations. Geography and corridor design are stronger determinants of travel time than congestion alone.**

Traffic Dynamics and Peak Hours

Traffic impact differs structurally by airport corridor, not by destination:

- LGA routes: approximately +1 to +2 minutes added by traffic
- JFK routes: approximately +3 to +4 minutes added by traffic
- EWR routes: approximately +4 to +6 minutes added by traffic

Peak congestion windows are consistent and repeatable across all nine routes:

- Morning peak: 07:00 – 09:00 — structured escalation, significant delay, moderate variability
- Afternoon peak: 15:00 – 17:00 — highest averages, highest variability, greatest unpredictability
- Optimal window: 00:00 – 05:00 — lowest friction, most predictable, times approach or fall below baseline

The afternoon peak is consistently more operationally dangerous than the morning peak — not because delays are necessarily larger, but because variability and unpredictability are greater.

The following chart illustrates the hourly travel time distribution across the three airport corridors for the **White Plains route**, highlighting structural differences in congestion patterns throughout the day.

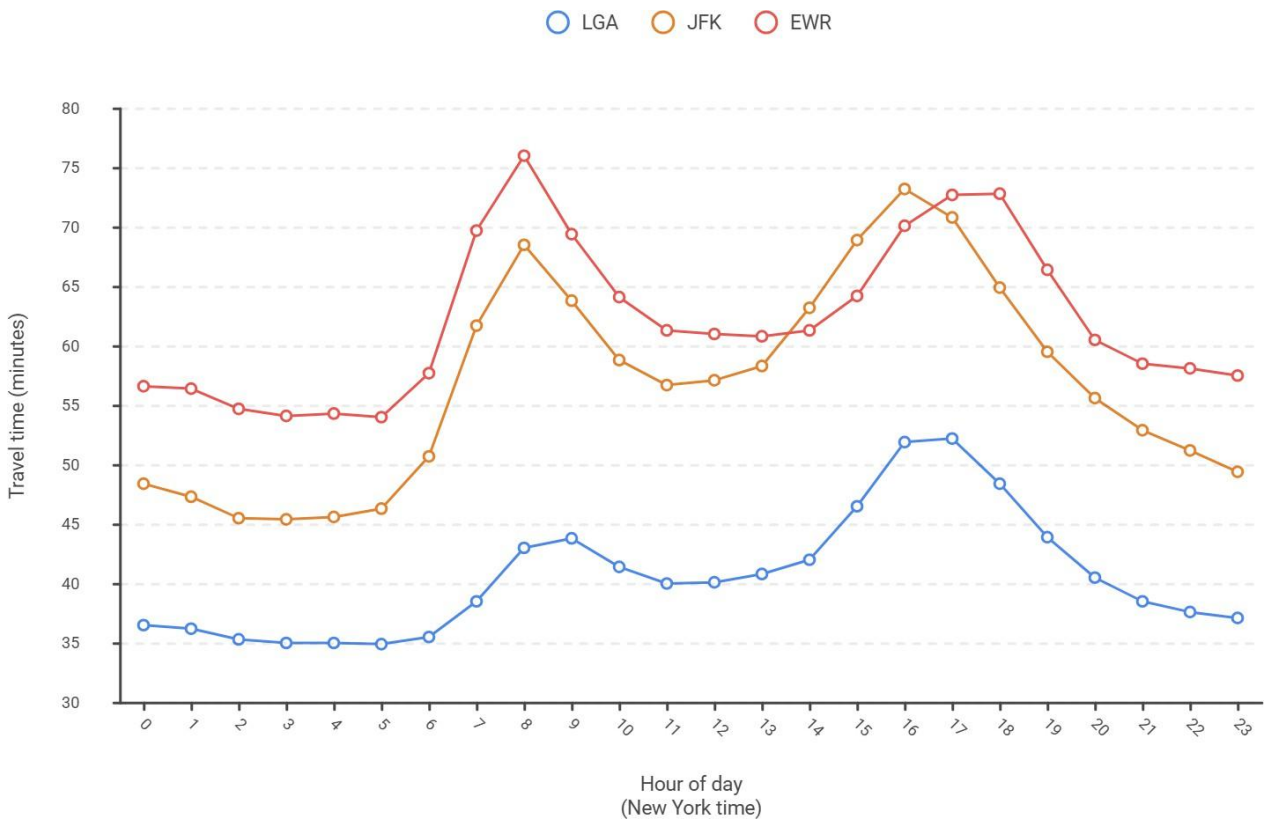


Figure 2. Hourly travel time distribution across airport corridors for the White Plains route (LGA, JFK, EWR). Data based on February 21 to March 21, 2026. All timestamps normalized to New York local time.

Peak congestion occurs consistently at 08:00 and again between 16:00 and 17:00 across all corridors, with afternoon conditions showing higher sustained travel times.
LaGuardia maintains a structurally lower and more stable profile throughout the day, while JFK and Newark exhibit significantly higher sensitivity to peak-hour traffic conditions.

Key structural insights

- LGA is not just faster. It is structurally more stable.
- JFK does not fail on average. It fails under pressure.
- EWR does not collapse randomly. It degrades predictably at peak hours.
- Variability scales with corridor complexity, not distance.

Three-Tier Airport Comparison

The following table consolidates performance across the three airport families:

Metric	LGA — Tier 1	JFK — Tier 2	EWR — Tier 3
Avg: White Plains	~41 min	~57 min	~62 min
Avg: Scarsdale	~38 min	~54 min	~61 min
Avg: Yonkers	~33 min	~52 min	~50 min
Traffic Impact	~1–2 min	~3–4 min	~4–6 min
Worst-Case Observed	~66 min	~107 min	~104 min
Peak Variability Spread	~29 min	~51 min	~52 min
Reliability Rating	High	Medium	Low

Critical Finding: Variability — not average time — is the primary risk metric. Planning based on averages is systematically misleading for schedule-sensitive, peak-hour travel.

Route Analysis: White Plains Cluster

JFK to White Plains

Average: ~56.8 min | Baseline: ~53 min | Traffic impact: ~3–4 min

At a surface level this route appears stable. Deeper analysis reveals three distinct behavioral phases:

- Low variability window (00:00–05:00): Travel time holds between 45–48 minutes. Most predictable window.
- Morning escalation (07:00–09:00): Climbs from ~61 min at 07:00 to ~68.5 min at 08:00. Structured increase.
- Afternoon volatility (15:00–17:00): Peak average reaches ~73.2 min at 16:00 with a variability spread of 46–61 minutes.

Worst-case observed: 107.5 minutes at 08:00 — more than double the 52-minute baseline. Multiple 90+ minute events at 15:00–17:00.

To better understand how this variability unfolds throughout the day for the JFK to White Plains corridor, the following figure shows the full range of observed travel times across each hour.

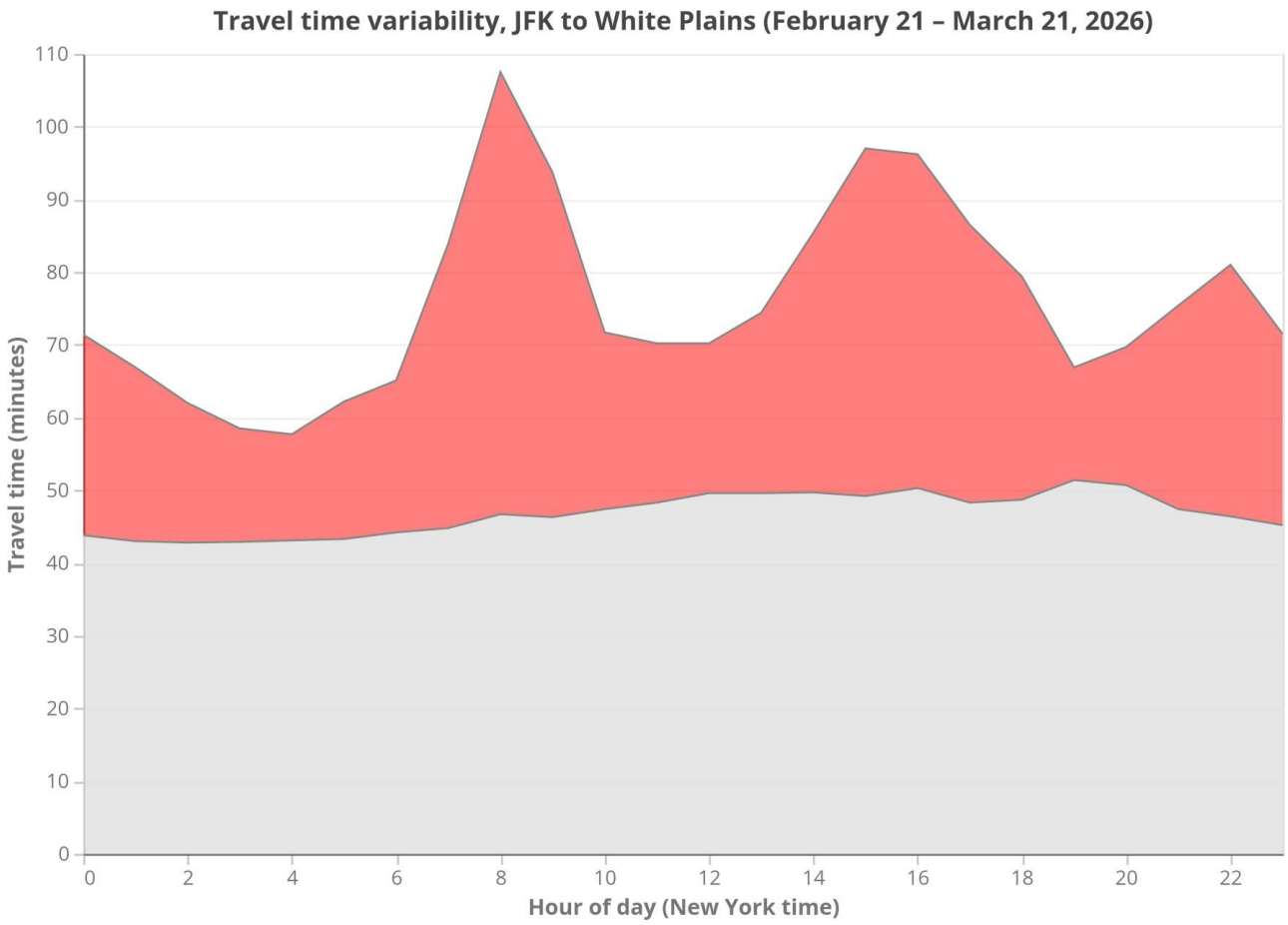


Figure 3. Hourly travel time variability for the JFK to White Plains corridor. The shaded area represents the range between minimum and maximum observed travel times between February 21 and March 21, 2026.

The chart shows a stable baseline travel time of approximately 45 to 50 minutes under low-traffic conditions. However, during peak periods, particularly at 08:00 and between 15:00 and 17:00, the variability band expands significantly, with observed travel times reaching up to 107.5 minutes.

This confirms that the primary risk of the route is not average travel time, but variability, with peak-hour conditions capable of more than doubling baseline expectations.

EWR to White Plains

Average: ~62.2 min | Baseline: ~57.8 min | Traffic impact: ~4.4 min

The heaviest corridor in the nine-route system. The route is not just slower — it is structurally more fragile. Even in optimal overnight conditions (03:00–05:00), travel times remain around 54 minutes. The route never achieves a truly efficient window.

Five worst-case events exceeding 97 minutes were recorded at 08:00 on separate dates (March 12, March 5, March 10, February 25, March 4). This clustering demonstrates repeatable structural destabilization — not random disruption.

- Peak variability at 08:00: 52.4-minute spread
- Peak variability at 07:00: 45.6-minute spread
- Peak variability at 09:00–10:00: 44–45-minute spread

> **Worst-case observed: 102.1 minutes at 08:00 against a 56.5-minute baseline — an expansion of roughly 45 minutes over reference conditions.**

LGA to White Plains

Average: ~40.6 min | Baseline: ~39.4 min | Traffic impact: ~1.3 min

The most efficient White Plains corridor. The gap between ideal and real-world performance is structurally small. Even during the afternoon peak (16:00–17:00), averages reach only ~51–52 minutes — below the worst-case averages of other airports during their favorable windows.

- Morning peak (08:00–09:00): ~43–44 minutes — controlled and predictable
- Afternoon peak (16:00–17:00): ~51–52 minutes — manageable
- Worst-case observed: 66.0 minutes — the route stretches but does not collapse

> **System Insight: Same destination, three completely different behavioral profiles. Airport selection — not destination — determines the travel experience.**

Route Analysis: Scarsdale Cluster

JFK to Scarsdale

Average: ~53.8 min | Baseline: ~50.3 min | Traffic impact: ~3.5 min

Slightly more stable than JFK to Yonkers, but inherits the same structural vulnerability at peak hours. Off-peak hours (02:00–05:00) hold near 45–46 minutes with near-zero friction.

- Morning peak: climbs to ~65–68 minutes at 08:00
- Afternoon peak: reaches ~70+ minutes at 16:00
- Worst-case observed: ~98–100 minutes against a ~50-minute baseline

EWR to Scarsdale

Average: ~61.0 min | Baseline: ~55.1 min | Traffic impact: ~6.0 min

The highest traffic sensitivity in the Scarsdale cluster. The afternoon peak is particularly severe, with average travel times reaching 75–82 minutes between 15:00 and 17:00 — entering structural stress conditions. Variability bands of 50+ minutes are observed at peak windows.

- Morning peak at 08:00: ~70+ minutes average
- Afternoon peak at 16:00: ~80+ minutes average
- Worst-case observed: ~100–104 minutes

LGA to Scarsdale

Average: ~37.6 min | Baseline: ~36.3 min | Traffic impact: ~1.3 min

One of the most efficient routes in the entire system. Morning peak adds only 5–8 minutes at most; afternoon peak reaches a manageable ~52 minutes. Worst-case events remain near 60–65 minutes. The route never approaches the extreme events observed in JFK or EWR corridors.

> **Key Insight: Airport choice has a larger impact on travel time than destination distance within Westchester County.**

Route Analysis: Yonkers Cluster

LGA to Yonkers

Average: ~32.8 min | Baseline: ~31.1 min | Traffic impact: ~1.7 min

The fastest route in the entire dataset. The gap between baseline and real-world performance is minimal — congestion has limited structural influence. At afternoon peak (16:00–17:00), averages reach only ~51–52 minutes. Worst-case observations reach approximately 70 minutes. The route stretches under load but does not collapse.

JFK to Yonkers

Average: ~52.4 min | Baseline: ~48.2 min | Traffic impact: ~4.2 min

A clear step down in reliability from LGA. Early morning hours (02:00–04:00) hold near 40 minutes, but peak-hour escalation is sharp and significant:

- 08:00: ~64.5 minutes average
- 16:00: ~72.7 minutes average — the daily peak
- Worst-case observed: 101.0 minutes at 15:00 — multiple 90+ minute events documented

> **Variability at 16:00 exceeds 50 minutes spread. The same route can deliver dramatically different outcomes within a single hour.**

EWR to Yonkers

Average: ~50.0 min | Baseline: ~45.4 min | Traffic impact: ~4.6 min

Structurally slower than LGA and significantly more exposed to congestion. Inter-state corridor complexity — crossing New Jersey, Hudson River crossings, and Bronx entry — contributes to elevated baseline friction that persists outside peak windows.

- Afternoon peak (15:00–17:00): 67–73 minutes average
- Variability at 16:00: ~50-minute spread
- Worst-case observed: ~93–100 minutes against a ~45-minute baseline

> **System Pattern: Travel time risk increases when crossing inter-state corridors. EWR routes compound distance, corridor complexity, and peak-hour instability.**

Cross-Route Insights

The Variability Problem

The most important finding in this dataset is not about average travel times. It is about variability.

Average travel times across all routes are stable and largely predictable. What is not predictable is the range of outcomes around those averages — particularly during the two daily peak windows. For JFK and EWR routes, worst-case events during peak hours can exceed baseline travel time by more than 100%.

A 50-minute trip can become a 100-minute journey. The data shows these events occurring repeatedly across multiple dates, on the same routes, at the same hours. This is not anomalous disruption — it is structural behavior.

> **Planning based on average travel time systematically understates operational risk. Variability is the operative metric for any schedule-sensitive decision.**

Universal Peak Hour Structure

Despite differences between routes, airports, and destinations, peak congestion follows a consistent and repeatable daily structure across all nine corridors:

- Morning peak (07:00–09:00): Structured escalation, significant delays, moderate variability
- Afternoon peak (15:00–17:00): Highest averages, highest variability, greatest unpredictability
- Overnight window (00:00–05:00): Lowest friction, highest predictability, times approach or fall below baseline

The afternoon peak is consistently more dangerous than the morning peak — not because delays are necessarily larger in absolute terms, but because variability and unpredictability are structurally higher.

Infrastructure vs. Traffic

Traffic conditions alone do not explain travel time differences between airport tiers. Infrastructure characteristics — airport geography, corridor complexity, inter-state routing, and network density — account for the majority of structural variation.

This has a direct implication: optimizing departure time around traffic produces smaller gains than optimizing airport selection. The system you enter determines your baseline; traffic determines the spread around it.

> **Traffic adds minutes. Infrastructure adds structure. Airport selection is the highest-leverage variable in Westchester access planning.**

Strategic Implications

For Travelers

- Airport selection is the most impactful decision for Westchester access — more so than departure timing or real-time traffic applications.
- LaGuardia provides consistently lower travel times and higher predictability for all three Westchester destinations analyzed.
- Early morning travel (before 06:00) offers the highest reliability across all airports and routes.
- Afternoon travel (15:00–17:00) carries the highest risk. Acceptable average times can mask extreme variability.
- Buffer time should be sized around variability, not averages — especially for JFK and EWR routes during peak windows.

For Transportation and Hospitality Businesses

- Pricing models should incorporate variability bands, not just average travel times, to avoid systematic underperformance.
- Service guarantees and SLAs built around average conditions will reliably fail during peak windows.
- Proactive airport recommendation — favoring LGA where feasible — reduces operational friction and improves guest experience.
- Morning (07:00–09:00) and afternoon (15:00–17:00) windows require elevated capacity buffers and scheduling flexibility.

For Mobility and Infrastructure Planning

- Infrastructure constraints are the primary driver of performance differences between airport corridors.
- Peak congestion windows are structurally predictable and repeatable — enabling systematic intervention planning.
- Variability, not mean travel time, is the appropriate metric for evaluating corridor reliability and service quality.
- Inter-state routing introduces compounding friction that single-corridor analysis systematically underestimates.

Conclusions

This analysis of nine airport-to-Westchester routes over a 28-day study window produces a clear and internally consistent model of travel behavior. The dataset shows no contradictions or anomalies — patterns repeat across routes, airports, and destinations.

Three conclusions can be stated with full data support:

1. Airport selection determines your baseline. LGA, JFK, and EWR represent three structurally different tiers of Westchester access. That difference is persistent, measurable, and consistent across all destinations studied.
2. Peak hours are universal and predictable. The 07:00–09:00 and 15:00–17:00 windows introduce elevated delay and variability across all nine routes without exception. The structure is repeatable date over date.
3. Variability is the primary risk, not delay. Average travel times are stable. The risk lies in the spread of outcomes — particularly the repeated worst-case events that can double baseline travel times during peak windows.

> **Final Insight: Travel time is not the problem. Uncertainty is. Any system, service, or decision built on this corridor must account for that reality.**

About the dataset

- Data source: proprietary mobility monitoring system
- Collection method: automated hourly sampling
- Validation: multi-day pattern consistency
- Coverage: 9 routes, 3 airports, 3 destinations

About WestchesterRide and this analysis

WestchesterRide is an independent mobility intelligence platform focused on real-world transportation performance across airport and suburban corridors in the New York metropolitan area.

This report is based on proprietary data collected through continuous route monitoring across nine airport-to-Westchester routes.

More insights and full route analysis available at:

Westchester airport transportation analysis

Explore all transportation guides on WestchesterRide

Route-specific breakdowns:

JFK to White Plains transportation

LaGuardia to White Plains transportation

Newark to White Plains transportation

This analysis reflects real-world travel behavior based on observed route performance, not estimated averages.

Prepared by WestchesterRide mobility analysis team.