

Report: Maryland interstate highways second most congested in U.S.

By Patti Borda Mullins
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Staff Photo by Dan Gross
Tuesday evening rush hour traffic on I-70 westbound seen from New Design Road. Interstate 270 was on a list of congested roads long before a national transportation group [reported](#) Monday about Maryland's level of interstate congestion.

But the group reinforced what most Frederick County motorists know. Only California has worse urban interstate traffic congestion than Maryland, according to The Road Information Program, or TRIP, a Washington-based national transportation organization. TRIP found that 75 percent of Maryland's urban interstate highways are congested during peak hours, the second-highest rate in the nation. California was at 85 percent.

"That's really no surprise," said Charlie Gischlar, Maryland State Highway Administration spokesman.

TRIP reported that the 10 states with the greatest share of their urban interstate highways considered congested are California, Maryland, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Delaware, Massachusetts, Hawaii, Connecticut, Florida and Minnesota.

TRIP is a 35-year-old nonprofit coalition whose members are made up of insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, businesses involved in highway and transit engineering, and labor unions.

Life choices affect traffic flow

Given Maryland's location in the middle of the Mid-Atlantic, its proximity to the nation's capital, and abundance of tourist destinations, some congestion is to be expected, and the State Highway Administration is working on it, Gischlar said.

Maryland's interstates also have the second-highest rate of daily vehicle travel per urban lane mile in the U.S., the TRIP report found. That, too, is understandable, given people's choice to buy homes in more rural places such as Frederick County, and working in jobs close to D.C. and Baltimore, Gischlar said. "Then they commute," he said. "Like your Frederick effect." Kevin Boyer, of Hagerstown, takes Interstate 70 to Baltimore frequently, and finds the commute a mixed bag. "Well sometimes it sucks on I-70;

sometimes not," he said in a Facebook message to *The News-Post*. Nontraditional commuting options, such as telecommuting, carpooling and four-day workweeks, can help ease congestion, Gischlar said. Meanwhile, the agency tackles maintenance and new construction needs with a budget of about \$2 billion a year. Gischlar said the SHA keeps an eye out for innovative solutions. For example, the bidding process has already begun on a \$100 million project to improve I-270. Gischlar said the open-ended request asked bidders to come up with a plan "to move the most vehicles the fastest and farthest."

The solution that emerges may be ready for design and building next spring, he estimated.

"That is innovation that will help the problem of congestion," Gischlar said.

Numbers keep going up

TRIP's report, "The Interstate Highway System Turns 60: Challenges to Its Ability to Continue to Save Lives, Time and Money," came out the week that the Interstate Highway System turns 60. The highway system faces unprecedented levels of travel — particularly by large trucks — and insufficient funding to make needed repairs and improvements, TRIP concluded.

Still, TRIP credits interstates with higher levels of safety than roads built with fewer, narrower lanes and no median. Nationwide, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on the interstate in 2014 was .54, compared with 1.26 on non-interstate routes. In Maryland, the non-interstate fatality rate was more than three times as high as the interstate fatality rate: .99 versus .32. TRIP estimates that the Interstate Highway System saved 5,359 lives nationwide in 2014 and 114 lives in Maryland. The Interstate Highway System represents 2.5 percent of lane miles in the U.S., and yet carries 25 percent of the nation's vehicle travel. "[A]n aging Interstate system will increasingly require more long-term, costly repairs," TRIP stated.

Economic health comes into play too, according to Jim Russ, president of the Maryland Transportation Builders & Materials Association, who issued a statement via TRIP.

"The functioning of Maryland's Interstate Highway System is absolutely critical to the health of Maryland's economy," Russ said. "Future transportation investment levels in Maryland must be adequate to make further improvements to the state's most vital highways, which will improve personal and commercial mobility in the state."

The Interstate Highway System needs \$189 billion in repairs, estimated by the U.S. Department of Transportation. TRIP estimated that the nation's current transportation investment is less than two-thirds of the amount

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Police: Sheep nabbed after night on the lam

By ARMY ARK
A pack of sheep was nabbed by police officers near a road in Frederick County after being reported missing by a local farmer. The sheep were found in a field near the road and were taken to a local farm. The farmer said he was worried about the sheep because they were worth a lot of money. The sheep were found in a field near the road and were taken to a local farm. The farmer said he was worried about the sheep because they were worth a lot of money.

Council erupts during talks about county landfill policy

By DANIELLE S. JONES
The Town Council erupted in a heated debate over the county's landfill policy during a meeting Tuesday night. The council members argued over the proposed changes to the policy, which would affect the way the county handles its waste. The meeting was held in the council chamber and was attended by several members of the public. The council members argued over the proposed changes to the policy, which would affect the way the county handles its waste.

CALL FOR SCORES
Maryland Wind Festival brings rhythm to summer music events, education

By JENNIFER SHERMAN
A Maryland Wind Festival is set to bring a new level of music to the state. The festival will feature a variety of wind instruments and will be held in a beautiful setting. The festival will be held in a beautiful setting and will feature a variety of wind instruments. The festival will be held in a beautiful setting and will feature a variety of wind instruments.

Report: Md. interstate highways second most congested in U.S.

By PATTI BORDA MULLINS
A new report from a national transportation group has found that Maryland's interstate highways are among the most congested in the United States. The report found that 75 percent of Maryland's urban interstate highways are congested during peak hours, the second-highest rate in the nation. California was at 85 percent.

Good morning! Where words fail, music speaks — Hans Christian Andersen

Business	C5	Fun & Police Station	B2	Neighbors	C4	TV Best Seats	B5
Classifieds	B1	Local	B1	Opinion Letters	B3	Weather	B7
Comics	B3	Local	B1	Opinion Letters	B3	Weather	B7
Dear Abby	B2	Local	B1	Opinion Letters	B3	Weather	B7