

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2016

EDITORIAL

It's no fun

Imagine spending two weeks stuck in your car

If you are one of the 15,000 or so motorists who regularly drive through Cresaptown each day, you probably are not fond of transiting the section of U.S. Route 220 between the traffic lights at Winchester Road and Warrior Drive during the rush hour (which actually can be at different times of the day).

At its worst, traffic can be backed up from somewhere in Bel Air on the south side of Cresaptown to somewhere around the prisons on the north side. The rest of the time, it's not so bad.

Even when it's at its most aggravating, this still isn't one of what the national transportation research group TRIP says are the 30 worst traffic bottlenecks in Maryland. It's not even close. All 30 are in the metro area and six of the top 11 are around Baltimore.

TRIP's Rocky Moretti said Maryland drivers spend 82 hours a year stuck in traffic. "It's like losing two weeks of vacation," he said.

Maryland transportation Secretary Pete Rahn said "Congestion, at some point, will dissuade people from wanting to live in Maryland because they simply will refuse to put up with the traffic that we have."

The list of the Top 30 bottlenecks in Maryland includes the average time certain sections of road are bottlenecked and the size of the congested area.

One 6.33-mile stretch of Maryland 295 North is bottlenecked each day for an average of 169.5 minutes. A 10.3-mile part of the Inner Loop section on Interstate 695 is bottlenecked for 159.25 minutes.

How, you may ask, is this possible?

If you have seen — as we have — four lanes of traffic bumper-to-bumper going one way and four more lanes going bumper-to-bumper the opposite way, and traffic is moving about as fast as the Tim Conway's little old man on the Carol Burnett Show could shuffle, or isn't moving at all, you wouldn't have to ask.

Also, anyone who wonders where all the air pollution comes from would do well to see this. Except for buses and occasional work vehicles, most of them are occupied by only one person — the driver. (Who else would it be?)

The State Highway Administration said the worst bottleneck is on the Inner Loop of the Beltway at the I-270 spur, where six lanes of traffic funnel down to five, and then to four, to three and finally to two. This 12.3-mile spur is congested for an average of 168.75 minutes each day.

How long it actually would take to go from Point A to Point B on each of these strips, we don't know, nor do we wish to find out.

There are many places worth visiting in the metro area. We decided a long time ago that the best to do this is in an air-conditioned bus that has a restroom.