

ShopTalk

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Editor, Lisa O'Donnell Connors, x4-6803

Commuting Tips and Tales

Transportation reporter **Steve Ginsberg's** front page story last month "D.C. Area Traffic Heavier, Costlier," was followed a couple weeks later by another front page story written by **Lyndsey Layton**, headlined, "Breakdowns Rising, Delays Worsening on Metro Trains, Buses." Twice a week, **Ron Shaffer's** Dr. Gridlock column is a forum for readers to vent their commuting frustrations.

Traffic is getting worse, there are huge construction projects underway, Metro has increased fares and delays are a daily event. There's no good news for Post

employees commuting the metro area to get downtown to the Northwest Building, to the College Park and Springfield plants or to any of the Metro bureaus. However, many employees have come up with solutions on how to survive what studies show to be one of the worst traffic areas in the country. This issue of ShopTalk shares some of those solutions and tips from The Post's experts noted above. You'll also find some very helpful Web sites and

phone numbers on page 2.

Ryan Okumura, IT, travels to the Northwest Building from Greenbelt, Md. Here's how he saves money on his trip to The Post.

"I commute between Greenbelt and Farragut North Metro stations to get to work. To save money on my commute I buy the 7-Day Short Trip weekly Metro passes. The Short Trip weekly pass costs \$22 for seven days and allows unlimited trips with the following rule, trips up to \$2.20. The pass is unlimited travel during non-rush hours and weekends too! You can buy the Short Trip Weekly pass at the Pass/Fare Machines or at Metro Center. On the Pass/Fare machines you can pay by cash, credit card, or Metrocheck. I get my Metrochecks in \$20 increments, so I use one card and add an additional \$2 cash. You can only use one trade-in fare card! Otherwise, you have to go to Metro Center to trade in all your Metrochecks.

I also participate in The Post's MetroChecks program to get the Metro fare with pre-tax deductions."

Look for information on the Short Trip weekly pass on www.wmata.com, click on "Metrobus/Metrorail Passes" under "Fare." For more information on the MetroChecks program, contact



Liane Cooper, Accounting, is a former Virginia "slug," who now takes the Metro from Vienna.

Mary Fong, Benefits, at x4-6463.

Liane Cooper, Accounting, for three years used Virginia's successful "slug" system of catching a ride at designated spots to enable drivers to take the faster HOV lanes. She now takes the Metro from Vienna, but has a good story about the unique carpool system when she slugged a few years ago from the Orange Hunt section of Springfield.

"One morning, as I strolled up to the bus stop, I found one of my new neighbors weeping. "Good heavens, what's wrong?" I asked.

"We just moved in (sob) and we thought this was such a nice neighborhood!" said the neighbor. "Two guys just pulled up and asked me if I



Ryan Okumura, IT, saves money with Metro's short trip weekly passes.

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Expert Advice

The Post's three transportation writers, **Steve Ginsberg**, **Lyndsey Layton** and Dr. Gridlock columnist **Ron Shaffer**, provide their own tips on commuting around the Metro area below. They also share traffic pet peeves – either their own or what they've heard



from readers and what they consider to be the best Web sites for traffic information.

Steve Ginsberg covers roads and local airports:

Tips

- Leave extra time. It always takes longer than you think and when it doesn't it's fun to marvel about how easy it was.
- Check the Web before you get in the car, it's much more reliable than listening to radio updates. If there's a backup on your route, you can usually find another where you'll at least be moving. (The GW Parkway is often a better bet to Tysons Corner than I-66, for example. It's also prettier.)
- Find the streets that suit your route. It's worth going a block or two out of the way if you can get on a street with timed lights or if you can find a left turn signal. Try a couple of different routes and figure out which make your commute work best.
- Work around obvious backups. Every day, and especially on Fridays, New York



Lyndsey Layton and Steve Ginsberg

Avenue heading to Maryland backs up for a couple miles and it usually takes over half an hour to get out of the city. It's pretty easy to avoid this if you just scoot over a block or two and take some other city streets.

- Get satellite radio. Sometimes music and talk without ads is the only thing that works.

Pet Peeves

- Hogging the left lane, especially when giant SUVs do it. It's irritating and slows down traffic.
- Honking out of spite. What's worse, making a traffic blunder that impacts the handful of cars behind you or making an entire city block listen to your horn just because you're mad? (Honking to get someone's attention or to avoid an accident is allowed.)
- Cars that take up more than one lane or don't pull forward so you can get around them while they're waiting to turn.
- Getting stuck behind someone because they neglected

to use their turn signal.

- Turning drivers who cut in front of people trying to cross the street.

Lyndsey Layton covers public transportation, including Metro, MARC, VRE and buses:

Tips

- When you enter a Metro

station, walk down the length of the platform and board toward the end - it increases the chances you'll get a less crowded rail car.

- If you're even a semi-regular Metrobus rider, invest in a SmarTrip card. The new fareboxes on the buses have hyper-sensitive dollar bill readers and feeding cash through these devices is a time-consuming, frustrating task.
- Don't load value onto your SmarTrip card on a bus because the new fare machines don't give receipts. If it malfunctions and doesn't load properly, you'll have no proof of how much you paid. A better idea is to use the SmarTrip machines inside Metro stations to load value to your card - and get a receipt.

Recommended Web Sites:

www.washingtonpost.com (click on traffic on the upper right-hand corner)

www.commuterpage.com (an Arlington page, links to all transportation).

www.wmata.com or www.metroopensdoors.com (has "The Ride Guide", which is a trip planning device that can tell you how to get anywhere in the region using Metro and other forms of public transportation.)

www.trafficland.com

www.nuride.com (a carpool service that gives users rewards.

Go to Washington Post Company under company list)

www.wilsonbridge.com

www.marylandroads.com

www.springfieldinterchange.com

www.slug-lines.com

Phone Numbers for Information:

District: (202) 727-1000

Maryland: 1-800-323-6742

Virginia: (703) 383-VDOT

Pet Peeves

- Metro escalators which are either broken or out of service
- Train delays
- Poor information about the true extent of those delays on the Metro system
- Bad sound quality on the speaker systems inside stations, so even if announcements are made, you can't hear what is being said



Ron Shaffer

Ron Shaffer has been writing the Dr. Gridlock column since 1986. The column appears Sunday in Metro and Thursday in the Extras:

Tips

- Log on to *washingtonpost.com*'s online traffic chat every Monday with your commute and ask for alternatives. Often, someone knows about the commute and will provide suggestions. Log on to *www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline* between 1 and 2 p.m.
- Try every alternative. Don't travel one way

and assume its the best for you.

- Call 1-800-745-RIDE if you are interested in carpooling. This is run by the Metropolitan Council of Governments, a free service that can match you up with like-minded commuters.
- Consider public transit; log on to *www.wmata.com* or *www.metroopensdoors.com* for route and price information.

Pet Peeves

- The bad driving habits of others, such as left-lane cruising; inattention to the road (reading magazines, shaving/putting on makeup, changing diapers, reading maps, playing musical instruments while driving); tailgating; line-cutting; failure to allow merges; failure to use turn signals.
- HOV violators. Infuriates those in compliance.
- Metrorail service, or lack thereof, from overcrowded trains to lack of air-conditioning/heating to bad habits of other passengers.
- Failure to enforce traffic laws, especially illegal parking in curb lanes during D.C. rush hours.
- Bad signage, especially in Northern Virginia. ■

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wanted A RIDE!! (sob)."

"Choking back my laughter, I tried to console her..." Then, I explained. 'It's what we do. We have HOV-3 on 395, which means drivers need two riders — and they go to the Pentagon from here. So the next car that comes by — we'll both jump in! OK?'"

I don't know if she ever recovered; I never saw her on the route again."

For information on "slugging," go online to *www.slug-lines.com*.

Kay Coyte, L.A. Times-Washington Post News Service, has a great tip for commuters in Alexandria, southern Fairfax County and Prince George's County affected by the Wilson Bridge construction.

"When construction began on the new Wilson Bridge, the Wilson Bridge Project offered to subsidize commuters who must drive through the construction area. The idea is to reduce traffic through construction zones by encouraging commuters to take public transportation. The carrot: \$50 a month in Bridge Bucks. The transaction is handled efficiently through payments to a SmarTrip card, which can be used on most buses and Metrorail. I signed up last winter and I don't think the project has yet reached its limit of 1,000 participants (500 in Maryland and 500 in Virginia). You are eligible whether you drive over the bridge or through an affected interchange (in my case it's the George Washington Parkway over I-495) to sign up go to *www.wilsonbridge.com* and go to the Bridge Bucks/Keep you Moving page, or call 877-463-6992."

Melinda Ford, Springfield/Production, **Tom Oliver**, Style and **Dawn Salvan**, IT, have



Kay Coyte, L.A. Times-Washington Post News Service, uses "Bridge Bucks" to pay for her SmarTrip card.

incorporated exercise into their commutes.

"After ten years and more hours than I care to count, I sold my home in Stafford last year and relocated right here in Springfield. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made. Perhaps I shouldn't let it out, but living smack-dab in Springfield means I can drive, walk, or pedal to work. I love it!," said Ford.

Oliver wrote, "I live in the North Cleveland Park neighborhood, four subway stops from The Post. But I usually take the subway for only two of them, and walk the remaining distance. It's a brisk 45-minute walk and wonderful exercise. I recommend it for anyone who lives a 45-minute walk or less from a subway stop (provided there are sidewalks, of course)."

"During the summer time I rent a bike locker at the Odenton (Md.) MARC and ride my bike back and forth at my leisure to the train and catch the later trains that are less crowded. With the rented bike locker, I'm guaranteed a parking space for my bike. My bike commute to and from the train is about 10 miles round trip up and down some steep country hills so it provides me with a good workout," explained Salvan, who has commuted to The Post for 18 years. ■

College Park Meeting Rescheduled

The Nov. 2 open enrollment information meeting at the College Park Plant has been rescheduled for Monday, Nov. 1 from 8 p.m. to midnight. The information will be presented by Benefits Department staff in the first floor conference room.

Post Hosts Credit Association

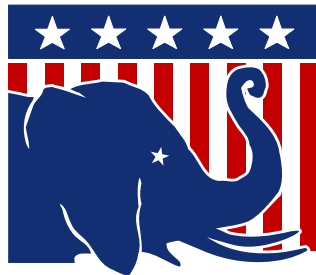
The Post hosted a reception and dinner for the Advertising Media Credit Executives Association on Tuesday, Oct. 19 in the Northwest Building's auditorium. The Post was the host paper for the Association's annual meeting held in Crystal City last week. Publisher **Bo Jones** spoke at The Post reception, and Presi-

dent **Steve Hills** and Vice President/Controller **Peggy Schiff** both spoke at the conference. Credit and Contact Manager **Grace Carter** is on the board of directors and several staff in the Accounting Department are members of the association.

Print and Online Election Coverage

Undecided and decided voters can find a wealth of information on the presidential and local elections in The Post and on washingtonpost.com.

The Post's comprehensive 2004 election coverage will include an emphasis on voter turn out and what happens in



the battleground states, according to Deputy National Editor **Maralee Schwartz**. Post reporters will be deployed to eight to 10 of the battleground states.

Bob Barnes, Metro editor, reports that Metro will cover local presidential voting, security measures and the new touch voting systems. Coverage will also include results of important ballot issues, the state-wide race in Maryland and the possible return of Marion Barry to elected office in the District.

Mark Stencel, Continuous News senior editor, shares some election highlights on washingtonpost.com:

Election Survival Guide -

Post stories on both candidates, key speeches, positions on key issues and more.

Local Voter Guides -

Details on local races and issues by county in Maryland and Virginia. District guide includes information on council and board of education races.

Tracking Poll -

look for latest poll results released every day at 5 p.m. up to the election.



PHOTO - JULIA EWAN

Bob Kaiser
will anchor
election night
online chat.

Election Night Coverage -

includes live election returns, updated news stories throughout the night and a running online chat anchored by Associate Editor **Bob Kaiser**. ■

Marketplace

ISO CARPOOL: Moving to Westminster, Md. and would love to find a carpool to join. I work at the Northwest Building and would be coming from Westminster, near Rt. 97 and Nicodemus Rd. My hours are 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. four days a week. Flexible about carpooling to a Metro or bus stop or even to the Frederick Marc train, whatever we could arrange. Call Donna at x4-6437.

FOR SALE: All brick 3-levels, 3 BRs, 1FB, townhouse, well located at the junction of Carroll Ave. and Piney B. Rd. Close to shopping & public trans. Mins. to Beltway and Takoma Metro, 2-year-old roof and CAC. Hardwood flr., Gas heat and cooking. Contact Denise x4-7137 or (301) 445-5208.

FOR SALE: 300 gallons of heating oil with the oil tank, \$250. Ask for Tajul or Wahida at (703) 271-4240, or x6-1229 (College Park).

FOR RENT: Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's at the beach in a four BR house, 1 block from the beach in Corolla, NC. Sleeps 10. Located in a wild pony sanctuary. Sports club that has a fitness area, indoor swimming pool/jacuzzi, indoor tennis and walleyball. Championship golf course three miles away. Also two BR condo across from beach and on golf course on Seabrook Island, SC. Call Larry or Barbara at 843-768-6697 or email foxl@erols.com for rates, info.

FOR SALE: 1985 30' Catalina sailboat, tall rig. New sails, includes spinnaker, autopilot, sleeps seven. Includes terrific slip w/view on bay, 20 minutes from D.C., paid through May 2005. Asking \$33,000. Call Dave or Debra at (703) 494-0565 or e-mail daubeda@washpost.com.

FOR SALE: Oriental carpet, brown and blue pattern, 8' x 11', \$85. Will deliver. Call Caryle at x4-7572 or (202) 237-6037.

FOR RENT: Apt. in Park Tower avail. Nov. 1 at 2440 16th St./Kalorama St. Open for viewing 1 - 4 p.m. on Sat/Sun 10/23 and 10/24. 1BR/1BA w/great sunlight with w/d, cac, cable ready. \$1,200 + utils., \$600 deposit required. Refs/Credit checked. Beautifully managed, secure & quiet building! 24 hr. front desk. Sorry-no smk'g/no pets. Call Victoria at x4-5759 or call (202) 518-7696.

FOR SALE: Washington Post t-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, umbrellas, bags, mugs, books and more! Shop online at: www.washingtonpost.com/store. Enter POST in coupon code during checkout for 10% discount

FOR RENT: Single family home, 3BR, 2BA, fireplace, new CAC, new hot water heater, gas heat, carport, large storage shed. Three miles from Springfield plant, walk to Accotink Park. No smoking/pets. \$1,350 month. Call Thoi Tran at (703) 425-3523.

FOR SALE: '92 Honda Civic EX, sunroof, original owner, great in-town car, 141k miles, \$1,800. Call Marty at x4-7384 or (301) 871-8640.

MARKETPLACE DEADLINE: Noon Fridays. Please include your name, extension and home phone number. Ads are for Post Employees only. Send ads to Shop Talk, 7th floor, or call x4-6803. To send ads via fax dial x4-4963; via e-mail send to shoptalk. Ads run two issues unless otherwise requested. One ad per employee, please.