



## Joyce King: Our traffic woes aren't as bad as others'

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On a recent weeknight, I found myself in a long line of unhappy motorists trying to navigate the State Highways 121/114 detours through Grapevine's Main Street and William D. Tate corridors. It looked like Christmas in July with red brake lights visible for miles, adding an extra hour to a trip that usually takes 25 minutes.

Anyone who's driven through the \$1 billion D-FW Connector construction can relate and is probably a little less stressed now that the Texas Department of Transportation monster project is about 65 percent complete and a year ahead of schedule.

Sadly, the color orange and reconfigured narrower lanes on other roads and freeways have made driving in and around Dallas-Fort Worth the most challenging I've seen it in my 25 years living here. That's part of the reason I avoid rush-hour traffic, stalled cars and construction.

But for the masses who work or go to school, rush-hour traffic is not something that can be avoided. It can only be tolerated as the long hot summer continues. I pray that any futuristic road rage is limited to lip-synching in cars as thousands strive to control the movement of middle fingers and the temptation to ride offending bumpers.

It may help to know D-FW motorists are not alone.

According to a new study by Tom-Tom Navigation Service, the average driver in America and Canada spends 20 percent more time traveling during rush hours than in off-peak times. We didn't need a survey to tell us we're spending more quality time in our vehicles. What was surprising to me, though, was that Dallas-Fort Worth did not even make the top 10 worst areas. I was not surprised — especially having driven there — that the worst traffic city was Los Angeles.

The nine others, in order, are Vancouver, Miami, Seattle, Tampa, San Francisco, Washington, Houston, Toronto and Ottawa. New York City was 15th, with D-FW cruising in at No. 18.

Lists aside, I have a pretty good idea at how other motorists felt that night inching along in Grapevine, a half-mile every few minutes.

I might've been out of my vehicle and home much sooner had the detour exit sign for Highway 121 North been a little bigger and not in conflict with another exit that steered traffic to the airport. The first time around, I missed the sign, and my detour

exit, completely.

Larger signs, more advance information on detours and well-lit pockets could help with the new lane assignments and construction woes. Just imagine how visitors and inexperienced young drivers must feel. I have peered over into the vehicles and faces of motorists who are truly lost and appear intimidated by the gargantuan floodlights, the endless machinery and how best to navigate detours. It can be quite stressful just to drive from point A to B on any given freeway or to simply change freeways more than once to reach your destination. Rush-hour traffic or nonpeak times, it is painful and time-consuming to be trapped in our cars.

For months, going back and forth through Grapevine has been frustrating and challenging. Maybe the fact that the end is in sight will inspire the architects of the LBJ project and I will still have some of my hair by the time all the orange and white dreaded barrels are gone and that mission is completed.

Until then, fellow motorists, we must arm ourselves with extra patience, cold water, and GPS to pinpoint where all the Starbucks bathrooms are along the daily routes.

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