

New York Daily News - <http://www.nydailynews.com>**City's highways flunk road test**

BY ADAM LISBERG

DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Friday, February 18th, 2005

The highways to hell are narrow, crooked and slow - at least in New York City

That's according to the Automobile Club of New York, which yesterday named the city's four worst roads - busy, congested, poorly designed stretches that give motorists miles of misery

The very worst is the ramp from the northbound Major Deegan Expressway to the George Washington Bridge. At the end of a steep spiral ramp where two lanes merge, trucks must cross two busy lanes in a quarter mile to reach the bridge.

It's guaranteed gridlock, said trucker Sherwood Wilson, 35, who crawls along that ramp in his rig every afternoon.

"There's always a wreck up there," he said yesterday as he braced himself for the drive. "Trucks try to leave a lot of room so they can stop - but [cars] take it up."

The other treacherous three are the Gowanus Expressway from the Belt Parkway to the Prospect Expressway, the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway from Hamilton Ave. to Tillary St., and the Goethals Bridge, connecting Staten Island and New Jersey.

Trucker Duffy Schultz, 66, drives to New York every week from Reedsburg, Wis., and says the Goethals is the narrowest bridge in the entire 1,000-mile journey.

"What hurts us guys is that we're wider than the cars, and the road is so narrow that you have to run right up against the drains in the side of the road," he said. "With a car you can kind of shoot around a bit."

With merging traffic, narrow lanes and no shoulders, the overwhelmed roadways invite drivers to crash - and ensure that even a tiny fender-bender will lead to massive delays, said Auto Club spokesman Robert Sinclair.

"If you look at this list, the roadways in most urgent need of repair are ones that mix a lot of cars and trucks," he said. "It's going to take some serious planning and some substantial money, and we need to start doing that now."

Trucker Manny Vitale, 58, of Brooklyn, sees it four times a day as he drives the BQE and the Gowanus.

"If there's an accident, there's really no way to clear it out," he said. "You just have to wait it out, and there's no way getting around it."

But Vitale said he has learned to be patient and look on the bright side.

"I'm a union driver, and I'm on the clock," he said. "So when I get stuck, I'm making money."

