



Maine Turnpike News

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Favorable weather and lower gas prices will boost Labor Day Weekend Traffic

MAINE--Maine Turnpike officials are expecting more than 720,000 vehicles to travel the highway from Friday through Monday this Labor Day weekend. Friday is expected to be the busiest day as tourist and commuters mix to bring nearly 240,000 vehicles to the highway. The heaviest traffic hours on Friday are expected between 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Fewer vehicles, about 170,000, are expected to travel the highway on Monday, but a large share of them will be exiting the state between noon and 8:00 p.m., making for heavy traffic conditions in the southbound direction.

The traditional final weekend of summer looks like a solid end to a very good summer season, as measured by Turnpike traffic volumes, according to Dr. Charles Colgan of the University of Maine System Center for Tourism Research and Outreach (CENTRO).

Incoming traffic at the York toll plaza this Labor Day weekend will be up slightly compared with last year's levels, according to the CENTRO forecast. Slightly lower gas prices than last year and a better weather outlook should boost inbound traffic over the weekend by about 2%.

CENTRO projects that outbound traffic will increase appreciably over 2006. The traditional Labor Day peak southbound traffic at York Toll Plaza is expected to increase by 6% compared with 2006. The southbound increase reflects a very active August for the Turnpike. Preliminary data up to last weekend shows that York Toll Plaza traffic is up more than 5% over the month compared with 2006, and that August 2007 may be the busiest month on record in trips per day on the Turnpike.

August traffic overall has been up more than the July CENTRO forecast had predicted as gasoline prices have been much more favorable than anticipated. New England average prices for unleaded regular gasoline peaked around Memorial Day at \$3.11 per gallon, but prices fell steadily through the summer to \$2.73 in the most recent survey, a drop of more than 12%.

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