NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2001

More Crowded Cars Bring Less Crowded Crossings

By ALAN FEUER

The conversation among the four uniformed patrolmen on the Brooklyn side of the Manhattan Bridge caught the relative gracefulness of yesterday's morning commute. They talked about Roger Clemens, Michael Jordan and Osama bin Laden. There was hardly a word about Hondas, Fords or Chevrolets.

"I guess people wised up and rode with their neighbors," one officer said as traffic passed behind him in a rapidly flowing stream. "And we haven't caught anybody riding with inflatable dolls. At least not yet."

The city had been bracing for a round of automotive agony ever since Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani announced on Tuesday that most vehicles with single occupants would be banned from crossing into Midtown and Lower Manhattan from 6 a.m. to noon weekdays. While drive time may have been a little more annoying than usual, commuters and transportation officials said that, by and large, traffic was not the muddle it could have been.



Angel Franco/The New York Times

Victor Santiago, a traffic agent who was working near the Queensboro Bridge yesterday morning, turned back drivers who were headed into Manhattan alone.

"I've done this commute solo for seven years now and I treasure the time alone," said William Kearney, who crossed the Manhattan Bridge with a friend, Carson McClure. "But to make things easier for the police and for the city I don't mind taking a co-worker in the morning. Everything is different now, so my life has to change."

There were few problems at the tunnel and bridges affected by the new restrictions, said Tom Cucola, a spokesman for the city's Department of Transportation. Unlike on other weekday mornings since the terrorists attacked and security checks began at the river crossings, traffic remained relatively unsnarled, he said, because fewer cars were on the road during the Yom Kippur holiday and because many commuters chose to ride subways, buses and trains.

New Jersey Transit officials said their train and bus ridership had increased by double digits on some lines. While the Long Island Railroad, Metro-North and the subways had heavier than expected ridership, it was not overwhelming because of Yom Kippur, officials said.

Yesterday's ban on solo drivers covered

CITY_21MC100_011830302

NYC-WTC_000412880

NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

the Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg and Queensboro Bridges and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel. This morning, the ban will be extended to the Lincoln Tunnel.

"We expect that tomorrow will be a very crowded, crowded day," Mr. Giuliani said. "So, you can make life easy for yourself, for us and for everyone if you use public transportation."

To deal with potential problems, Mr. Giuliani also asked employers to stagger hours for their workers and New Jersey Transit plans to open park-and-ride areas at Giants Stadium, the PNC Bank Arts Center on the Garden State Parkway and the Vince Lombardi rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike, with bus service into Manhattan.

"People can park their cars and board a charter bus direct into Port Authority," said Jeffrey A. Warsh, the agency's executive director. "Notice I said 'direct,' however, and not 'express.' "

Commuters were faced with an odd sight as they pulled up to their regular city crossings yesterday: small platoons of yellow-vested officers standing near orange-and-white traffic barrels peering into their windows to make sure they were not alone. Many drivers obeyed the new rules and brought along a friend.

The new restrictions seemed to divide people into three distinct categories: the patriots, the skeptics and the uninformed.

"I think this is a good idea," said Blanche McIver of Brooklyn, a clear patriot, who was driving with a coworker toward the Brooklyn Bridge. "The city is swelling with pride and people have been coming together every other way. So why not with the commute?"

Manuel Gomes was headed toward the Manhattan Bridge to work — alone — and was surprised when the police stopped his car to inform him that he needed a companion to cross before noon. "But that's four hours from now!" he shouted. "I had no idea about this. I turned off the news because I was tired of seeing all the bad stories, but it looks like I have to pay attention again."

Estelle Joseph was trying to pass through the Queens-Midtown Tunnel to Manhattan in order to get her dog, Bridges, to a veterinarian in Chelsea for stomach surgery. The handsome gray mutt, however, did not pass muster as a passenger. This made Ms. Joseph, a 34-year-old computer programmer, into a hardcore skeptic.

"It's a bad idea," she said, banging her steering wheel. "I just want to go to Manhattan. My dog is sick. It's doing nothing but making a bad situation worse."

But after hearing her story, one police officer took pity on Ms. Joseph and her pet, providing them an escort into the city.

CITY_21MC100_011830303

NYC-WTC_000412881