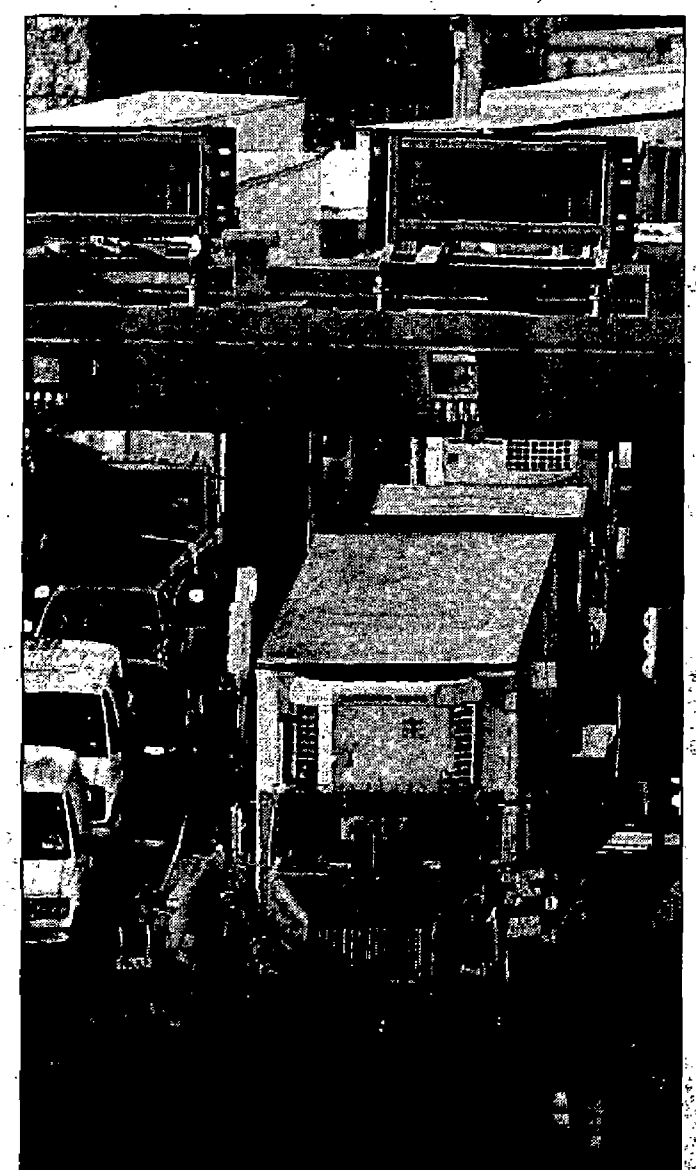
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DAILY NEWS, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2001

Key day in gridlock war



CHET GORDON

PATIENCE Police check truck entering Lincoln Tunnel in New Jersey on Friday. Single-occupancy vehicles face restrictions.

Rules face big test

By GREG WILSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The ban on single-occupancy vehicles at bridges and tunnels helped the city get a grip on gridlock Friday, but the real test could come tomorrow morning, officials say.

With more workers returning to their jobs every day, and the Jewish holidays over, bridge and tunnel officials are gearing up for major backups during the morning rush.

"People may have stayed home on Friday and made a long weekend of it," said Port Authority spokesman Pasquale DiFulco. "But Monday will be another test."

On Friday, the restrictions on single-occupancy cars and trucks greatly reduced the number of vehicles crossing into Manhattan. Traffic flowed without major delays, even though cops continued to search trucks and vans. In Manhattan, streets stayed relatively free of gridlock throughout the day.

The rule affects traffic coming into Manhattan between 6 a.m. and noon at the Lincoln Tunnel, and East River crossings including the Queensboro, Williamsburg, Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges and the Midtown Tunnel.

At those crossings, cars and trucks with only one occupant will be turned away at various checkpoints manned by police. The Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel remains closed to regular traffic.

Single-occupancy vehicles may cross into Manhattan via the George Washington, Henry Hudson and Triborough Bridges. The Holland Tunnel reopened Friday afternoon to New Jersey-bound buses and cars only. DiFulco said there are no imminent plans to reopen the the Holland to inbound traffic.

Mayor Giuliani pronounced Friday a success.

"It seems to me that it worked, and it worked well," Giuliani said, adding that mass transit ridership appeared higher.

In Manhattan, alternate side of the street parking rules remain suspended indefinitely, although parking meters must be fed. The West Side Highway remains closed below Canal St. and the downtown right lane is closed south of 56th St. for official vehicle use. The FDR Drive is closed to regular traffic south of the Brooklyn Bridge.

In addition to reducing traffic on Manhattan streets, the single-occupancy vehicle restrictions helped ease delays at bridge and tunnel entrances, where cops are searching trucks and vans. Several bomb threats have been made, and fears about a truck bomb forced officials to search all vans and trucks entering and leaving the city Tuesday.

The FBI is investigating 18 men of Middle Eastern descent who allegedly illegally obtained truck licenses to haul hazardous materials, prompting fears of a chemical weapons attack being trucked into the city.

Several men have been arrested, but FBI Director Robert Mueller has not ruled out the possibility that those still on the loose might have links to the hijackers.

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