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City, Noting Traffic Decrease, Continues Lone Driver Rules

By JAYSON BLAIR

The city's rules preventing most cars with just one occupant from crossing into Midtown and Lower Manhattan on weekday mornings did cut traffic congestion last week and will continue indefinitely, officials said yesterday.

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani said the restriction was warranted, "given the effect it appeared to have, particularly on Queens Boulevard," which is the main thoroughfare onto the Queensboro Bridge and the road that officials were most concerned about clearing.

After the World Trade Center was attacked on Sept. 11, the Holland and Brooklyn Battery Tunnels were closed, and security checks were instituted at other crossings. A result was backups lasting hours on access roads and bridges and through the other tunnels. To end the gridlock, limits on drivers without passengers began on Thursday on all crossings below 63rd Street. The ban is in effect from 6 a.m. to noon on weekdays.

Mr. Giuliani said the restrictions would continue for the foreseeable future, and he added that public transportation "would be the best and most sensible way to come into Lower Manhattan." He noted that ferries had been added between Manhattan and Brooklyn, and that buses now run to the Port Authority bus terminal in Midtown from park-and-ride areas that have been set up at the PNC Bank Arts Center on the Garden State Parkway and the Vince Lombardi rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike. The park-and-ride at Giants Stadium will not be available today because of a New York Jets football game tonight.

Extending a crackdown on cars carrying only one.

In support of continuing the ban, Giuliani administration officials released the first data on its impact. The data showed 26 percent less traffic on the Manhattan Bridge on Friday, and 38 percent less on the Queensboro Bridge.

The data showed that peak traffic backups on Queens Boulevard were reduced by more than 93 percent by Friday. On Tuesday, traffic was backed up as much as 4.1 miles from the bridge to 57th Street in Woodside; by Friday, the backup was only a quarter-mile from the bridge to Van Dam Street in Long Island City.

So far, police officers at the bridges and tunnels have only turned back lone drivers. Mr. Giuliani said that the officers were not issuing tickets because the regulations were relatively new and some people might be unaware of them.

The affected crossings will continue to be the Brooklyn Bridge, the Manhattan Bridge, the Queensboro Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel, officials said. The Holland Tunnel reopened on Friday only to cars leaving Manhattan, while the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel remains closed to all vehicles other than those making emergency calls or hauling debris.

City officials said that they expected today to be one of the busiest traffic days since the attack. The first week, much of Manhattan south of 14th Street was closed to traffic, and the following days were interspersed with Jewish holidays. But starting today, many schools and businesses in Lower Manhattan will be open, and employers are expecting most of their workers to return.

To avert potential problems, Mayor Giuliani asked employers to stagger working hours. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority will add new bus routes, beginning today, including service in the Wall Street area, where the No. 1 and 9 subway line has been suspended. Other buses will ferry residents of the northern part of Battery Park City from Rector Street to their apartment buildings. City officials said that a shuttle bus would begin running today for the benefit of Battery Park City residents who live in the southern part of the neighborhood.

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