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Traffic heavy ahead of Thanksgiving holiday

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CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Rush-hour traffic on Interstate 93 in Boston backed up Tuesday as Thanksgiving Day traffic added to the mix.

By Aimee Ortiz

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 24, 2015

The expected holiday traffic headaches began in earnest on Tuesday as multi-vehicle crashes on the Massachusetts Turnpike and Route 128 resulted in traffic backed up for miles and delays of hours, officials said.

In Wellesley, a box truck traveling on Route 9 westbound turned onto 128 and struck the cement barrier in the breakdown lane at about 2:30 p.m., forcing the closing of the left lane near Exit 20, State Police Trooper Paul Sullivan said. The truck then crossed the northbound lane and jumped the highway's cement barriers.

A second vehicle struck the truck, leaving one person with a minor injury, Sullivan said.

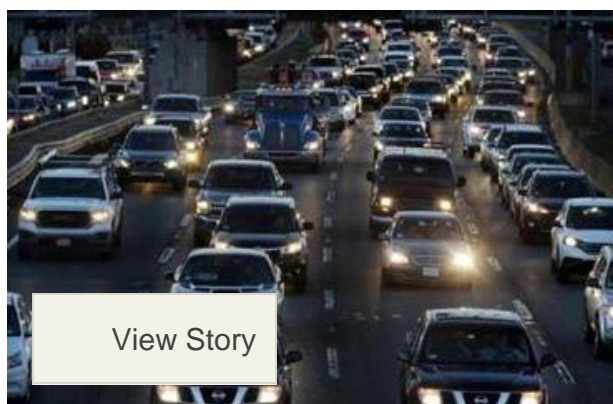
The crash caused a lane to be closed for 4½ hours and led to a long traffic backup, he said.

Another major incident occurred on the Mass. Pike in Oxford, where seven vehicles were involved in an accident that led to additional crashes, traffic backups, and delays, according to Sullivan.

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Travel advice for holiday week

An early start or a late one may be your best bet for keeping gridlock to a minimum.

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Thanksgiving week traffic around the Boston area in recent years has been at its worst on the Tuesday before the holiday, according to data analyzed by Google Maps. Boston was the only city of 21 studied by Google where Tuesday was the worst day to travel.

Michael Verseckes, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, said Tuesday that MassDOT was “anticipating a high volume of traffic on state highways and at Boston Logan International Airport” Wednesday and on Sunday after the holiday.

“In years past, the exits with the heaviest volume were on the turnpike at Exit 9 at the interchange with I-84, Exit 11A for I-495, Exit 14 for I-95 and Route 128, and Exit 24 for I-93 North and South,” he said in an e-mail. “For people traveling on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday, MassDOT is urging drivers to leave either after 8 p.m. or early in the morning.”

According to Verseckes, MassDOT will also stop work on state highway projects by noon on Wednesday and begin again on Monday.

The travel headaches also extended to public transportation on Tuesday.

According to the MBTA website, the [Red](#), [Green](#), and [Orange](#) lines all had moderate delays at one point on Tuesday. The [Blue](#) line had experienced some delays earlier.

In addition, several bus routes had service alerts [listed](#) on the MBTA’s website as they were running behind schedule because of traffic.

Tuesday also brought safety suggestions, however, as transportation officials advised motorists on ways to deal with the traffic during the holiday week.

Officials from the State Police and MassDOT said planning ahead is vital for drivers.

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Highway traffic will be heaviest between 4 and 8 p.m. during the holiday period, MassDOT Highway Administrator Thomas J. Tinlin said.

State Police Superintendent Colonel Richard McKeon, at a press conference with Tinlin, said, “Remember there will be increased volume on the roads. Leave extra time to get where you are going.”

Motorists are also encouraged to take advantage of that state’s many incentives for a safer ride.

As one incentive for drivers to set out early, the Allston/Brighton tolls will be free between 7 and 8 a.m. Wednesday, paid for by the Plymouth Rock Assurance insurance company.

MassDOT will also be offering free coffee at all service plazas between 10 p.m. Thursday and 5 a.m. Friday for late drivers.



WELLESLEY POLICE

A box truck was seen in the roadway on I-95 on Tuesday.

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