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# What Google says are the best and worst times to drive during Thanksgiving week

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SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

**A golden retriever poked his head out during traffic on the Massachusetts Turnpike last month.**

**By Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 16, 2016

Worried that traffic is going to gobble up lots of your precious time this Thanksgiving?

Here are some tips that may help you carve some time off your pre- and post-Turkey Day commutes.

The advice comes courtesy of Google Maps, which has produced a series of recommendations for drivers in Boston and more than 30 other major cities nationwide based on traffic conditions during last year's Thanksgiving week — which the company said it defines as running from the Sunday before the holiday through the Sunday after.

Google Maps said it was able to measure roadway congestion based on anonymized, aggregated location and speed data it collected from Android phone users with location services enabled.



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Here are the tips it gave for Boston-area drivers:

### Best day to leave



## Officials tell motorists to plan ahead when traveling for the holiday

Officials urged people to be flexible in choosing when to leave their homes.

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“Sunday before Thanksgiving: Leave the Sunday before Thanksgiving at 6 a.m. for a smooth trip,” Google Maps says. “Avoid traveling around 3 p.m. when traffic is at its worst.”

### **Worst day to leave**

“Day before Thanksgiving (Wednesday): If you have to leave on Wednesday, your best bet is to hit the road at 7 a.m. and avoid driving around 3 p.m.,” the company says.

Then again, in a similar analysis ahead of last year’s Thanksgiving, Google Maps showed that the Tuesday before the holiday was the worst day for Boston-area traffic between 2012 and 2014, followed by Wednesday.

### **Best day to return**

“The day after Thanksgiving (Friday): If you can leave the day after Thanksgiving, your best bet is to hit the road at 6 a.m. Avoid traveling around 4 p.m. when traffic is at its worst.”

### **Worst day to return**

“The Saturday after Thanksgiving: If you have to return on Saturday, leave by 6 a.m. and avoid traveling around 4 p.m. when traffic is at its worst.”

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Google Maps provided some additional advice that it said generally holds in major cities nationwide: “Traffic on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving is heavier than usual, but the traffic peaks follow the same patterns as normal weekday traffic. If you need to hit the road on Monday or Tuesday, midday is the best time to leave.”

The company also noted in its analysis from a year ago that traffic in the Boston area tends to be lightest on Thanksgiving Day itself, particularly if you’re on the road before 11 a.m. or after 1 p.m., as people dig into their meals. Locally, traffic was also relatively light on Black Friday between 2012, and 2014.

State transportation officials said last year that no matter which day you’re driving, traffic should be lightest in the nighttime after 8 p.m. or in the early morning.

The busiest highway exits have historically been on the Massachusetts Turnpike at Exit 9 at the interchange with Interstate 84; Exit 11A for Interstate 495; Exit 14 for I-95 and Route 128; and Exit 24 for I-93 North and South, state officials have said.

How the Turnpike will flow this year now that the toll plazas are being removed (replaced by all-electronic tolling) is unclear. Officials have reported no major tie-ups so far. The first phase of toll plaza demolition was expected to be completed this week, ahead of schedule.

AAA [said this week](#) it projects 48.7 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home during the stretch between the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and the Sunday after, which would be the most since 2007 and an increase of about 1 million travelers over last year.

The vast majority of those travelers, more than 89 percent, will be on the road.

The company attributed the rise in travel to improvements in the economy during the second half of this year coupled with relatively low gas prices.

State officials have previously suggested using mobile device apps that can help drivers avoid traffic jams.

Ideally, state officials have said, use public transportation instead of driving, if you can, and no matter how you travel, allow extra time.

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- **Officials tell motorists to plan ahead when traveling for the holiday**

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