



STATE OF MICHIGAN
RICK SNYDER, Governor



MACKINAC BRIDGE AUTHORITY

N415 I-75 ST. IGNACE, MICHIGAN 49781 PH: 906-643-7600 FAX: 906-643-7668

WILLIAM H. GNODTKE, CHAIRMAN
BARBARA J. BROWN, VICE CHAIR
BARBARA J. ARENS
PATRICK F. GLEASON
KIRK T. STEUDLE, P.E.,
DIRECTOR

R. DAN MUSSER, III
MATTHEW E. MCLOGAN
NICK KHOURI, TREASURER
ROBERT J. SWEENEY, P.E.
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONDAY, AUGUST 15, 2016

CONTACT: Bob Sweeney, Mackinac Bridge Authority, 906-643-7600

Late summer brings peak traffic, special events to the Mackinac Bridge

August 15, 2016 -- Most would agree that summer goes by too fast in northern Michigan. But August doesn't just mark the end of summer at the Mackinac Bridge; it's the annual peak of traffic with a host of fun events ahead.

Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) Executive Secretary Bob Sweeney believes this late-summer traffic spike is due to several factors.

"August is the beginning of prime vacation and special events conditions in the Straits of Mackinac," he said. "The weather is more mild here now than downstate's heat and humidity, and as we get into September and October, the warmer Great Lakes moderate the colder temperatures."

The MBA doesn't track exactly where most travelers are starting their journey from, but experience says most bridge customers are coming north from population centers south of the bridge. Traffic this time of year is pretty steady through the week, though northbound traffic is usually heavier Thursdays and Fridays, and southbound on Sundays and Mondays.

"The Upper Peninsula has always been considered the vacationland for the rest of the state, and the Mackinac Bridge is the gateway," Sweeney said. "Back when ferries brought vehicles across the Straits, the queen of the fleet was called 'Vacationland.'"

It's a busy time for traffic, and is only getting busier. The Mackinac Bridge just had its 20th straight month of increased traffic over the same month the prior year. In July 2016, traffic was up 6.7 percent over July 2015, and overall traffic is up 4.3 percent for the first six months of the year.

Because of the heavier traffic in summer, the Mackinac Bridge suspends special events that involve lane closures from mid-June until late August. While the summer weather makes for an attractive time for special events, the authority needs to balance the popularity with the need to maintain traffic.

Two events, Motorcycles on the Mac on Aug. 20 (sponsored by the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau) and the Corvette Crossroads on Aug. 27 (sponsored by the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce), get the special crossings season started. Most notable of upcoming events, of course, is the Annual Mackinac Bridge Walk on Labor Day, which draws tens of thousands of participants from throughout the state and beyond. Other upcoming events include:

- The 46th Dick Allen Lansing to Mackinaw Bicycle Tour (DALMAC), sponsored by the Tri-County Bicycle Association (www.biketcba.org, 517-882-3700), is on Sept. 4.
- The Antique Tractor Parade, sponsored by Owosso Tractor Parts (www.owossotractorparts.com, 989-729-6567), is on Sept. 9.
- Bike the Mighty Mac, sponsored by the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce (www.mackinawchamber.com, 231-436-5574), is on Sept. 11.
- The Law Enforcement Torch Run, sponsored by Statewide Law Enforcement Officers for the Special Olympics (www.somi.org), is on Sept. 14.
- The Truck Parade of Lights, sponsored by the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau (www.stignace.com, 800-338-6660), is Sept. 17.
- The Mighty Mac Bridge Bike and Run Race, sponsored by the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau, is Sept. 24.
- Trek the Mighty Mac, sponsored by the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau, is Oct. 1.
- The Fall Colors Bridge Race, sponsored by the Mackinaw Area Visitors Bureau (www.mackinawcity.com, 800-666-0160), is Oct. 8.

The Mackinac Bridge Authority has also participated in the annual Straits Area Lights Out Challenge, an event since 2013 where residents and businesses in Mackinaw City, St. Ignace, and Mackinac Island turn off lights to make the night sky more visible for stargazing. This year's challenge, expanded to Petoskey and Harbor Springs, was Aug. 12 and coincided with the peak for the Perseid meteor shower.

"This is a fun time of year at the Mackinac Bridge and the Straits," Sweeney said. "We're looking forward to another exciting season of special events."

###

Download MDOT's Mi Drive traffic information app: www.michigan.gov/drive | www.michigan.gov/drive | www.twitter.com/MichiganDOT | www.facebook.com/MichiganDOT