

# DC region’s rush hour traffic is back

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Drivers may have noticed that they are starting to hit the brakes more often on what were once non-congested D.C.-area roads. But the days of cruising during the pandemic era are likely over — rush hour is back.

And it’s not just [heading into Memorial Day weekend](#), the unofficial summer kickoff.

WTOP traffic reporter Dave Dildine said traffic on the Capital Beltway near the American Legion Bridge last Friday peaked at the highest level since March 2020, surpassing the 2019 daily average.

“What that tells us is that not only was last Friday, a bad (afternoon) rush hour, it was slightly worse on the whole than your average old rush hour,” and drivers may need to readjust their expectations, Dildine said, because the “days of daylong free flow are pretty much over.”

The data is fairly representative of regional trends, he said.

The preliminary data from a Maryland Department of Transportation recorder also indicates that the rush hours are still somewhat different.

“They start later; they end earlier; and there’s more midday traffic, so they’re more compressed,” Dildine said.

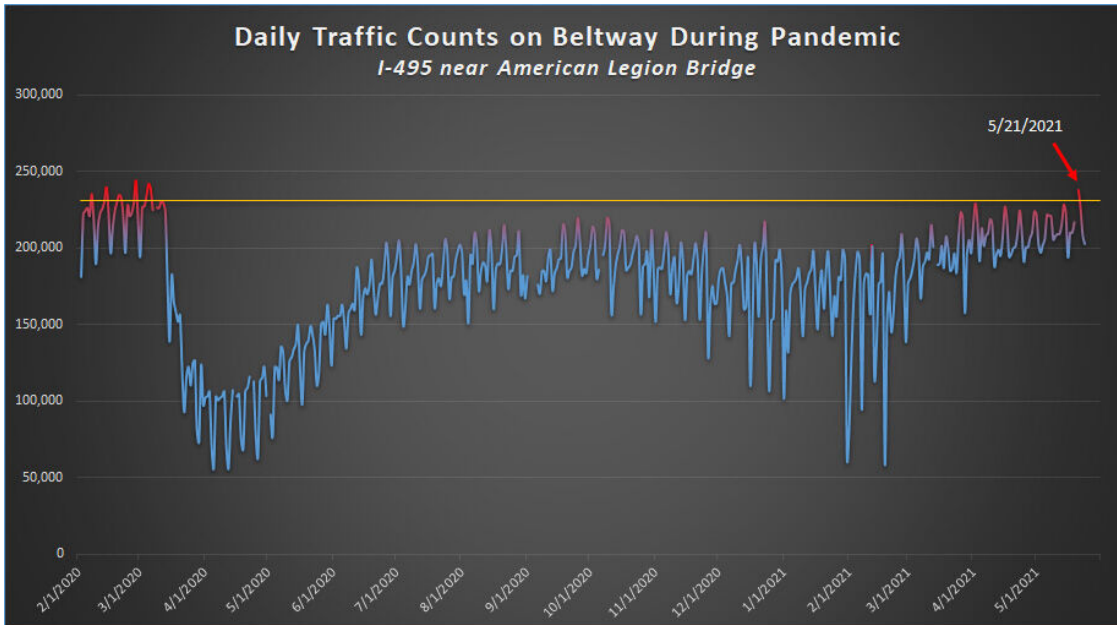
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Planning Data and Research Program Director Tim Canan [said last week](#) that this appears to be especially true in outer suburbs, such as Loudoun and Prince William counties in Virginia, and Charles and Frederick counties in Maryland.

The MWCOG has been collecting traffic data since the start of the pandemic and detailing it in monthly reports.

“Other roads, downtown areas still behind because a lot of federal workers are still teleworking, but most area roads are up close to 100%,” Dildine said.

A separate report released Wednesday by transportation research nonprofit TRIP found the nation’s vehicle traffic had rebounded to just below April 2019 levels by March 2021, following a slow recovery after bottoming out last April.

“While vehicle travel and congestion were drastically reduced in the early stages of the pandemic, by early Spring 2021, evening rush hours had largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, while morning rush hours continue to be reduced and midday traffic volumes remain higher than before the pandemic,” TRIPS said in a news release.



(Source Maryland Department of Transportation)