

## Nearly 8 million Texans to hit the road this weekend

HOUSTON -- It's the time of year when people gather with family to reflect on the end of the year and to prepare for the new year ahead.

AAA Texas forecasts nearly 7.7 million Texans will leave home to celebrate the Year-End holidays - an increase of 2.4 percent over last year.

The Year-End holiday travel

period is an 11-day travel period, the longest of the year.

AAA defines travel during this period as round trips of 50 miles or more beginning Sat., Dec. 22 through Tues., Jan. 1.

The Year-End holidays are different from holidays earlier in the year in that it is a much longer travel period.

With a wider window for

travel, individuals are willing to journey longer distances and spend a little more to share the last days of the year with family.

Overall travel during this holiday season will be up slightly across the state and nation despite the long and slow economic recovery. Market analysts say the improving economic

conditions across the country are fueling the travel growth.

AAA Texas forecasts travel volume by automobile will be up and continue to be the primary mode of transportation during the Year-End holiday period. AAA figures include:

- Automobile - 7.1 million Up 2.0%
- Air Travel - 346,585

Up 6.4%

- Other Travel (Trains, Buses, Cruise Ships) - 246,954 Up 9.8%

"As much as AAA Texas wishes everyone a happy holiday season we also wish them safe journeys," said AAA Texas Vice President Branch Operations, Rhonda Wilson. "Since most people will drive to their destinations, we remind them to map out their trips ahead of time, obey the speed limits, wear their seat belts and avoid distractions while behind the wheel."

Texas travelers plan to log an average of 749 miles round-trip during the upcoming holiday period. People surveyed in the Lone Star State expect to spend an average of \$744. Families will be spending most of their budget, about 22 percent, on shopping.

AAA offers travel planning resources:

- eTourBook guides for top North American destinations are free to members at AAA.com/ebooks.
- AAA Mobile app for iPhone and Android devices uses GPS navigation to help travelers map a route, find current gas prices

and nearby member discounts and access AAA roadside assistance. Travelers can learn about the AAA Mobile app and AAA Mobile Web at AAA.com/mobile.

On AAA.com, travelers can find thousands of AAA Approved and Diamond Rated hotels and restaurants using AAA's TripTik Travel Planner or the searchable Travel Guides at AAA.com/Travel.

To decrease the likelihood of a breakdown, AAA recommends motorists have their vehicle serviced regularly based on the manufacturer's recommended schedule.

Look for the AAA Approved Auto Repair sign at local auto repair facilities, or search for a nearby AAA Approved Auto Repair shop online at: www.AAA.com/repair.

AAA's projections are based on economic forecasting and research by IHS Global Insight.

The Boston-based economic research and consulting firm teamed with AAA in 2009 to jointly analyze travel trends during the major holidays.

AAA has been reporting on holiday travel trends for more than two decades.



Wellman-Union's 4-H Club chapter collected 45 toys for the Terry County Goodfellows. Representatives included (back row, left to right) Jose Jimenez, Cat Gonzalez, Breck

Faught, Conner Faught, (middle row) Jonathan Olivas, Daniel Garcia, (front row) Kaitlyn Alvarado, Serena Fisher and Valic Laureles.



Lorena Tovar, left, recently graduated from Brownfield High School and was recognized at Monday night's school board meeting. Brownfield Education Center graduates (left to right) Jesse Rey Ramirez, Viviana Mendoza, Juan Medina, Phillip

Jacquez, Anthony Engelke, Alen Driver and Dillon Booth were also recognized. Not pictured is BEC graduate Oscar Cisneros.

### Obama to send Congress gun proposals

WASHINGTON (AP) — Declaring the time for action overdue, President Barack Obama promised on Wednesday to send Congress broad proposals in January for tightening gun laws and curbing violence after last week's schoolhouse massacre in Connecticut.

Even before those proposals are drafted, Obama pressed lawmakers to reinstate a ban on military-style assault weapons, close loopholes that allow gun buyers to skirt background

checks and restrict high-capacity ammunition clips.

Gun control measures have faced fierce resistance in Congress for years but that may be changing now because of last week's violence. Since then, Obama has signaled for the first time in his presidency that he's willing to spend political capital on the issue and some prominent gun-rights advocates on Capitol Hill — Democrats and Republicans alike — have expressed willingness to consider new measures.

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