

Busy holiday weekend expected

AAA is projecting 35.5 million people in the U.S. will take to the roads and skies Labor Day weekend.

That calculates to \$13.5 billion travelers will pour into the economy – up 2 percent over 2014. Each person taking a trip for the long weekend is expected to spend an average of \$380 on goods and services, according to a survey and analysis released by the U.S. Travel Association.

The survey, conducted for U.S. Travel by the firm TNS, found that even among those who plan to travel this weekend, 8.7 percent will stay fewer days and 9.1 percent will travel shorter distances due to concerns over road congestion and flying headaches. Factoring in those shortened trips, the total Labor Day economic cost of hassles due to infrastructure rises to \$1.7 billion.

Trip spending by auto travelers is expected to average \$270, according to U.S. Travel's survey. With AAA projecting 30.4 million travelers by car, that totals out to \$8.2 billion – an increase of 0.5 percent over 2014. The fact that the spending figure will increase at all is significant, say U.S. Travel Association researchers, given that gasoline is considerably cheaper than a year ago.

Expected trip spending by air travelers is significantly higher at \$1,090 on average, for a total weekend spending figure of \$2.9 billion – a year-over-year increase of 4.9 percent – based on AAA's projection of 2.6 million air travelers.

The remaining \$2.4 billion in predicted Labor Day spending will come from the 2.5 million Americans expected to travel by "other means."