

**MEDIA ALERT**  
**For Immediate Release**

From: Katie King  
EW Bullock Associates  
(850) 438-4015  
[katie@ewbullock.com](mailto:katie@ewbullock.com)



**Plan Travel to/from the Destin Community via the Mid-Bay Bridge  
around Peak Traffic Periods to Avoid Traffic Delays this Summer**

**Niceville, Fla. (May XX, 2017)** – The Mid-Bay Bridge Authority would like to remind Okaloosa County residents and Mid-Bay Bridge customers to expect heavy congestion on and around the Mid-Bay Bridge on Saturdays during the peak tourism season, generally lasting from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott says tourists are increasingly flocking to the state for vacations. Domestic visitors to Florida hit record numbers last year — nearly 113 million tourists in 2016 — and that trend is continuing in the first three months of this year.

A recent Visit Florida tourism survey determined that of the 4.1 million annual domestic visitors to Okaloosa County in 2015, 48 percent (or nearly 2 million people) traveled during the peak summer travel season.

The city of Destin is the No. 2 drive-to destination in the state, according to the Destin Chamber of Commerce. The Destin population grows by up to 85,000 people during its peak summer season, with the vast majority of visitors arriving and departing on Saturdays. This growth represents a 700 percent increase in population when compared to the size of the City of Destin.

The Mid-Bay Bridge Authority wants to remind Okaloosa County residents that as the peak tourism season approaches and with only three ways to enter the Destin community — US 98 from the east, US 98 from the west and SR 293 south via the Mid-Bay Bridge — travelers should expect delays and plan accordingly.

With most accommodation check-outs taking place on Saturday mornings, the northbound traffic across the Mid-Bay Bridge, and through the toll plaza, will become congested early in the morning and lasting until around noon.

Conversely, with most accommodation check-ins occurring on Saturday afternoons, traffic along all approaches to the Destin community will become congested and result in considerable delays. Motorists should expect the southbound lanes of the Spence Parkway approaching the Mid-Bay Bridge toll plaza to be saturated with traffic from approximately late morning until about 7 p.m. during Saturdays in the summer. Thus, if at all possible, travel to Destin should be made either before or after the peak period noted above.

The Mid-Bay Bridge Authority has and will continue to investigate various ways to improve traffic flow in the vicinity of the toll plaza, but unfortunately, the volume of traffic that merges into a single southbound lane on the bridge exceeds the capacity of the system.

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**About the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority**

The Mid-Bay Bridge Authority is a dependent special District of the State located in Okaloosa County, created in 1986 by the Florida Legislature to finance, build, and oversee a bridge across Choctawhatchee Bay along with roads connecting to it. The Authority has five voting members, appointed by the Governor and the District Three Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, or his/her designee, who serves as a non-voting member. An Executive Director and staff manage day-to-day administration of the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority. For more information, go to <http://www.mid-bay.com>.

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