

The Record

NORTH JERSEY'S TRUSTED SOURCE

\$1.00
SATURDAY
November 30, 2013

TODAY 37°/33°
Partly sunny and cold
TOMORROW 47°/34°
A morning shower or two, warmer



ELIZABETH LARA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Westfield Garden State Plaza on Friday. Some stores that opened on Thursday were a bit calmer than in past years.

Black Friday less crazy

Holiday openings softened the crush

By **JOAN VERDON,**
KATHLEEN LYNN
and **ANDREW WYRICH**
STAFF WRITERS

It was a North Jersey Black Friday with a new twist — shoppers saying they went to malls and stores Friday because they wanted to avoid the craziness.

While Black Friday still is expected to draw the most sales and

shoppers of the four-day weekend, the madness — the frenzied rush for door-buster deals — largely was pushed forward into Thanksgiving night, when more than a dozen major retailers opened their doors or began offering deals in the early evening.

As a result, the stores that opened on Thanksgiving were quieter and calmer on Friday, although stores and malls in Para-

mus — which delayed their openings until 7 a.m. Friday because of a borough ordinance restricting all-night shopping — still had lines of shoppers waiting for the doors to open.

Thursday night was when most of the incidents that usually give Black Friday a bad name occurred, with a combative shopper pepper-sprayed and arrested at the Garfield Walmart and scuffles re-

ported at several other Walmarts around the country.

The Walmart in Secaucus was also the target of worker-rights protests on Black Friday that led to arrests. Union representatives said there were peaceful arrests in nine cities. On Friday, a Walmart in White Plains, N.Y., was evacuated because of a bomb scare, and the Mall at Short Hills had a brief power outage about one hour before its scheduled 8 a.m. opening.

On Friday, shoppers at North See **SHOPPING** Page **A-6**

Bridge, tunnel tolls going up Sunday

Tolls across the Hudson River and into Staten Island will increase at 3 a.m. on Sunday for E-ZPass users in the latest phase of several toll increases through 2015.

Car drivers will now be required to pay \$11 during peak hours and \$9 during off-peak; both tolls are going up 75 cents. The toll for those paying cash remains \$13.

Truckers will feel the sting of the increase the most. A three-axle truck with E-ZPass will have to pay \$39 during off-peak hours, \$42 during peak hours, \$34.50 overnight and \$51 for a cash toll; all are increases of \$6.

Tolls for a six-axle truck will increase \$12 to \$69 overnight, \$78 during peak hours, \$84 during off-peak hours and \$102 for cash.

— Matthew McGrath

Worries remain over health website

The Obama administration has said the government's troubled healthcare.gov website will function smoothly by the end of today. Those paid to help enroll Americans in Obamacare remain doubtful.

The "navigators" designated to sign people up under the U.S. health care overhaul say that while the online federal insurance exchange has improved, outages and errors continue to prevent many from using it to buy their coverage.

The site is "kind of hit and miss," said one Florida-based navigator. Another, in Alaska, said, "It's got a long ways to go."

— Complete coverage on **A-8**

Tools that restrict and protect drivers

Auto safety regulators are pushing for new equipment to protect motorists from their biggest threat: themselves.

They're aiming to keep drunken drivers off the road with the help of onboard technology that immobilizes their cars. New vehicles may soon come with systems to help prevent collisions. And engines may not start unless occupants buckle up.

It's all part of a government push to use technology to reduce traffic fatalities.

The insurance industry and auto safety experts support the initiative. But some have reservations about the cost, glitches, and an encroaching nanny state.

— Complete story on **A-5**

\$9,000 raised to help Samaritan

More than \$9,000 has been raised for James Brady, three weeks after a fund was established for the onetime homeless man who lost benefits after turning in \$850 he found in the street.

None of the money has been spent yet, though, as the United Way works with Bergen County officials to determine what Brady needs and how to help him without further loss of benefits.

— Complete story on **L-1**

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Stay on top of breaking news throughout the weekend.

COMMAND CENTER KEEPS CARS MOVING



DON SMITH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

David Liebgold, Meadowlands Commission transportation chief, in the traffic control room in Lyndhurst.

High-tech traffic cops

By **CHRISTOPHER MAAG**
STAFF WRITER

It was a bad traffic accident in one of North Jersey's worst possible places.

At the height of the morning rush hour, a man in East Rutherford tried running across Route 3, was struck by a pickup and was critically injured. Police closed all westbound lanes. Traffic simply stopped.

What drivers didn't know was that two miles away, in a windowless room on the edge of a Meadowlands marsh, a 6-foot tower of Dell computers was clearing a path for their escape. Like a scythe swinging through tall grass, the computers turned lights from red to green on Route 120 up to Paterson Plank Road and over to Route 17, helping traffic escape the jam while holding vehicles from side streets at bay.

A traffic snarl that normally would have taken all morning to clear dissipated in less than an hour.

"We had all this traffic at 9 in the morning where we normally don't expect that, and the system handled it as if it was already programmed to do it," David Liebgold, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's transportation chief, said about the Meadowlands Adaptive Signal System for Traffic Reduction.

The name is a mouthful, but the system itself is elegant. And it may be especially useful on holidays, when its monitoring system can detect unexpected surges in traffic — into shopping malls, say, or approaching accidents — and divert drivers to quicker routes.

By the time the \$12.5 million project is done in 2015, it will knit together 128 intersections across 40 square miles, coordinating traffic lights owned by 15 towns, Bergen and Essex counties, NJ Transit, the state Transportation Department and a handful of private

See **TRAFFIC** Page **A-4**



R.L. REBACH/STAFF ARTIST

Statins to prevent breast cancer?

Cholesterol found to feed tumors

By **JAY PRICE**
McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

Studies have long shown a link between obesity and breast cancer, and now scientists may have found one important explanation: a byproduct of cholesterol that fuels tumors in some of the most common forms of the disease.

This could point the way to simple methods to reduce breast cancer risk, like using cholesterol-lowering drugs such as statins and eating a healthier diet. It also suggests that using statins could make regimens for treating many breast cancers more effective.

Results of the study at Duke Cancer Institute in North Carolina, which are considered early because the study relied on mice and cancer tissue, were published in Friday's edition of the journal Science.

Obesity is implicated in a number of human cancers, and the See **CANCER** Page **A-4**

Two plans to reform system for alimony

Could allow an ex to ease payments

By **COLLEEN DISKIN**
STAFF WRITER

Two competing legislative proposals seek to change New Jersey's alimony law, which critics say is a relic of the past in need of major overhaul but supporters call a protective measure that merely requires fine-tuning.

The first proposal, introduced last spring, would end the so-called permanent alimony awards that judges can approve in cases in which one spouse earns significantly more than the other. The second proposal, introduced this week, seeks a less significant overhaul, revising the law to make it easier for the spouse who pays alimony to have it reduced or dis-

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Traffic: Computerized system adjusts signals, eases jams

From Page A-1

companies. The effort was led by the commission, which signed formal agreements with the other public entities, said commission spokesman Brian Aberback.

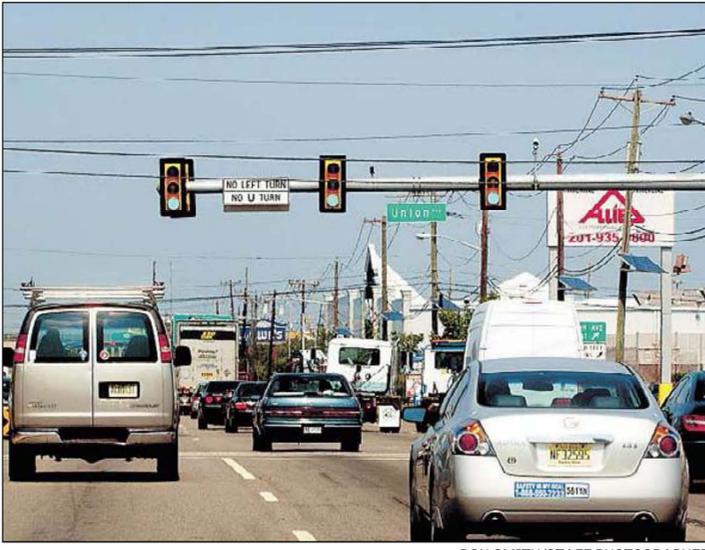
For individual drivers, it will mean 40 percent fewer stops and a 20 percent reduction in average travel time, Liebgold said. Regionally it means the 400,000 vehicles passing through the area every day will burn 1.2 million fewer gallons of gasoline annually, emit 11,000 fewer tons of greenhouse gases and save drivers at least \$200 million over the next 20 years.

Until recently, most signals in the area operated almost independently of each other. Many dated from the 1970s and '80s, so they had no ability to detect or respond to current traffic conditions. The result was teeth-grinding, obscenity-hurling gridlock.

The new system will not get rid of gridlock, Liebgold cautions. But it already is helping to clear jams faster and move traffic more efficiently, Liebgold said.

"It's constantly making recalculations so it doesn't waste a single second," Liebgold said. "There is no traffic management system in the world more advanced than this."

The project won \$10 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation. From nearly 1,000 applicants, the adaptive signal system was one of 42 construction projects funded by the department's TIGER II program, which is aimed at supporting "the best projects from around the country," according to the department. In the middle of one of the most congested traffic corridors in the country, the system "is an innovative and inexpensive way to alleviate conges-



DON SMITH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Traffic lights and monitoring equipment on Route 17 in Rutherford. The Meadowlands signal system synchronizes lights at many intersections.

tion within an existing transportation network without having to resort to expensive road widening," the department wrote in its review of the project in 2010.

Top-notch technology

While many major cities across the U.S. are investing in complex traffic management systems to squeeze maximum use from existing roads, what's different about the Meadowlands system is the sophistication of its technology and the sheer number of government and private entities it ropes together, said Doug Noble, director of management and op-

erations at the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

It's the only system of its kind in New Jersey. It's made possible by the Meadowlands Commission, one of three regional planning bodies in the state, which has the authority to implement land use and transportation improvements across multiple jurisdictions.

The program will expand to include the Pulaski Skyway, which will close in 2014 for up to two years of reconstruction. The state Transportation Department asked the Meadowlands Commission to enlarge the signal system to cov-

er the detour around the Pulaski, Aberback said. Plans to tackle other congested roadways, such as Route 46 in Passaic County, would require formal requests and funding from other government bodies, Aberback said.

"What's unique here is you have so many local agencies participating. It's probably a little more complex endeavor," Noble said.

The existing morass is best explained on a mile-long stretch of Paterson Plank Road in Secaucus, Liebgold said. Starting at the eastern end by Routes 1&9, drivers pass a signal owned by Bergen County, then a state-owned signal, then a few more owned by the county, another state, and finally two more owned by the county. Before the system started, none of those signals worked together, Liebgold said.

In the same stretch lie the ramps to and from Routes 1&9, Route 3 and the eastern turnpike spur; driveways to Home Depot and Best Buy; and an entrance to Harmon Meadow Mall, which handles 50,000 cars a day.

The new traffic management system has eased congestion along this crowded corridor somewhat, Liebgold said. Every second, the system's cameras monitor traffic in every lane on every approach to every intersection. Those data are relayed to computers at the Meadowlands Commission, which analyze it for variables including the gaps between cars and the time it takes big groups of cars — called platoons — to pass through a light. The computers then send instructions back to the signals, giving priority and longer greens to the thoroughfare with the heaviest traffic.

"It almost brought tears to my eyes," Liebgold said, pointing to the spot on a

map. "These poor people are waiting three, four cycles to get through this light. Now, everyone gets served on every green."

Located at the Meadowlands Commission's headquarters in Lyndhurst, the system's control room looks like something NASA might build to operate a spacecraft on Mars.

Its walls are covered with flat-screen TVs that display data in charts resembling Himalayan mountains and argyle socks. These visualization tools help managers view traffic volumes, and stretch or scrunch light cycles as needed.

Most of the time, however, the control room is unstaffed, since the system runs itself. Alerts are sent directly to Liebgold's smart phone.

"Instead of having to staff this center 24 hours a day, seven days a week ... I can keep the whole center in my pocket," he said.

That's a sea change from the previous method for changing signal times, still prevalent in North Jersey and across the country, which starts with hiring people to manually count cars. Engineers use that data to create timing sequences with only a few settings for morning and evening rush, midday and late night, for example. This method costs up to \$5,000 per light, Liebgold said, which explains why some lights go a decade or more without an update.

"So you spend all that money, and the light still doesn't know the traffic happening in front of it, and it still doesn't synchronize with the next traffic light above it," Liebgold said. "The entire idea of the system is to optimize traffic signals to the benefit of the majority of people."

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Cancer: Cholesterol found to foster growth of breast tumors

From Page A-1

data linking it to breast cancer in post-menopausal women are particularly strong, said Donald McDonnell, chairman of the Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology at the Duke University School of Medicine and senior author of the paper.

But until now, there was no understanding of the mechanism involved, so it was hard to know how to attack the problem, McDonnell said.

The researchers wondered how large a role was played by the high cholesterol levels often associated with obesity.

Using human tumor cells and mice bred to be especially vulnerable to breast cancer, they found that a molecule called 27-hydroxycholesterol or 27HC, which is converted from cholesterol in the body, fuels the growth and spread of tumors.

"But if you inhibit the conversion of cholesterol to this mole-

cule, nothing bad happens," said McDonnell.

They also determined that raising cholesterol levels raised risk, and that reducing cholesterol had an effect similar to suppressing its dangerous byproduct, resulting in tumors that grew at significantly slower rates.

Also, the study data suggest that tumors aren't reliant on the presence of 27HC in the blood. They are capable of producing large amounts of an enzyme that

converts cholesterol to 27HC.

That means that the tumors can essentially feed their own growth.

The molecule appears to mimic effects of the hormone estrogen on the cancers. About 75 percent of breast cancers are at least partly fueled by estrogen.

McDonnell said a startling moment in the research came when the scientists discovered that preventing formation of 27HC in the special breast cancer mice de-

layed the appearance of their first tumor by 50 days, and that after the first tumor formed, the mice lived an average of 40 percent longer than those that could still make the molecule.

"That really got our attention," McDonnell said.

The next steps include studying data that have already been generated in a large, long-term study of humans to see how high cholesterol levels and the use of statins may have affected breast

cancer among the women enrolled, McDonnell said.

Also, the researchers want to know how adding statins to the current therapies for breast cancer patients might affect the outcome of treatment.

Another avenue to explore, he said, is potential links between 27HC and other cancers, such as that of the uterus.

The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense.

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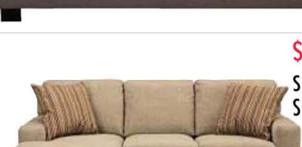
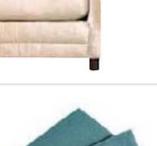
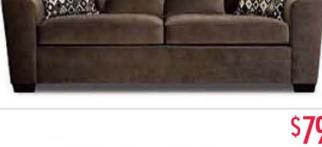
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