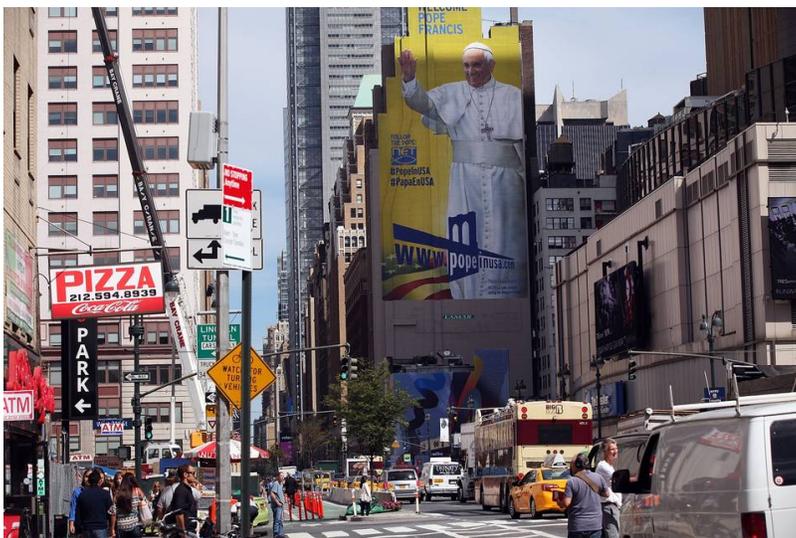


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## Ahead of Pope Francis' Arrival, NYC Braces for Crowds, Traffic Jams

Transportation officials have one suggestion: Don't drive



A completed mural of Pope Francis is viewed on the side of a building in midtown Manhattan in September. *PHOTO: SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES*

By **ANDREW TANGEL**

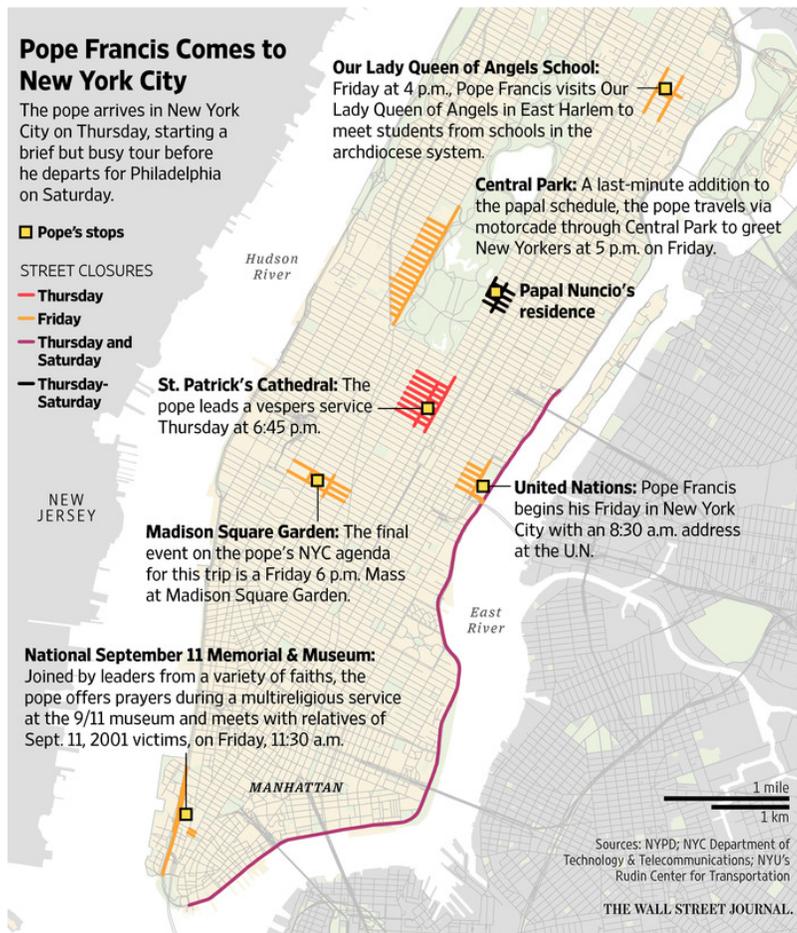
Updated Sept. 22, 2015 8:16 p.m. ET

When Pope Francis visits New York City this week, he will attract tens of thousands of the faithful clamoring for a glimpse of him.

But many other New Yorkers will be doing everything they can to steer clear of the pontiff to avoid clogged roadways, crowded sidewalks and packed trains.

For commuters trying to get to work or back home as painlessly as possible, transportation officials have one suggestion: Don't drive.

“Please use mass transit if you can,” said Polly Trottenberg, the city’s transportation commissioner, who predicted “very difficult” traffic given the road closures planned.



But even mass transit could have drawbacks. New Jersey commuters may face stuffed trains, buses and stations, especially if one of Amtrak's two aging Hudson River rail tunnels breaks down.

Electrical problems in the tunnels in the past few months have led to extensive delays for NJ Transit commuter trains. Amtrak blamed a faulty cable in one tunnel for triggering more disruptions last week.

An Amtrak spokesman said three of four cables that power trains through the tunnels will be operational during Pope Francis' visit. The railroad's

engineers were confident the available power supply would prove "enough to meet the demand," the spokesman added, but Amtrak would have extra employees ready to respond to disruptions.

In the five boroughs, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has suggested that New Yorkers take the subway during the pontiff's visit; MTA officials noted the system routinely moves big crowds to and from concerts and sporting events.

Staten Island residents embarking for Manhattan are getting steered to the borough's ferry. MTA officials warned of major Manhattan disruptions for bus riders who could be stuck or diverted in prolonged tie-ups as the pope ventures out with his security detail in tow.

"Don't take the bus," an MTA spokesman said. "That's the message."

Up to 25 of the MTA's 311 bus lines could get rerouted in on portions of their routes because of road closures, the authority said. Stops also could get relocated, and there may be unannounced closures.

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Taxis and even Citi Bike travel are expected to be hindered. The operator of the shared bicycl

es network plans to temporarily deactivate or remove some stations near the papal itinerary, including the United Nations and Central Park.

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### Will the Pope's Visit Delay Your Delivery?

Tight security near New York, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia will slow or prevent deliveries this week, shipping companies said. We've compiled information from FedEx, UPS, the U.S. Postal Service and LaserShip. Enter your ZIP Code to see how you may be affected.

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Worries over traffic and transit for the pope's visit have led Mayor Bill de Blasio to suggest that residents work from home if they can.

But the mayor predicted New Yorkers could handle added inconveniences.

"I often think we worry a little more about these special events than we need to," Mr. de Blasio said. "The city always keeps going. Businesses will be open. The government will be open and functioning. Everything's going to go on as normal."

A report by New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management predicted only minor disruptions for the subway, calling it the "true safety valve from blocked streets."

Mitchell Moss, the center's director, said the pope's visit was likely to affect only pockets of Manhattan for brief periods.

“We can handle multiple big events simultaneously,” Mr. Moss said. “New York just knows how to do these things.”

The PATH train will add service on its 33rd Street lines on Friday and will have extra trains ready on its Newark-World Trade Center line, a spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey said.

Still, Pope Francis’ Mass at Madison Square Garden is set for 6 p.m., the height of rush hour for neighboring New York Penn Station.

The station is a hub not only for the Seventh and Eighth Avenue subway lines but two major commuter railroads: NJ Transit and the Long Island Rail Road.

NJ Transit said it would double service on some bus lines into and out of the Port Authority Bus Terminal on Manhattan’s West Side and others to PATH stations in Newark and Jersey City. Both the LIRR and NJ Transit are adding trains on Friday, as is the Metro-North Railroad, which connects to Grand Central Terminal.

“It will be business as usual,” said Patrick Nowakowski, the LIRR’s president.

But given the potential for crowds and barricades, Mr. Nowakowski offered a bit of advice for the LIRR’s Friday-evening commuters: “I would leave a little earlier that day.”

Some professional drivers were already adjusting their work schedules, if they could.

On Tuesday, Brian Krebs said he planned to make his Coca-Cola deliveries in the Madison Square Garden area before the pope arrives.

“I come down here three times a week, and I’m not coming Thursday or Friday,” said Mr. Krebs, who was sitting on his truck across the street from the arena.

Yellow taxi drivers may not be able to avoid papal traffic.

“We don’t have a choice,” said cabdriver Steve Victor. “I think he will bring us good luck, but it will make our lives miserable.”

— *Sonja Sharp contributed to this article.*

**Write to** Andrew Tangel at [Andrew.Tangel@wsj.com](mailto:Andrew.Tangel@wsj.com)

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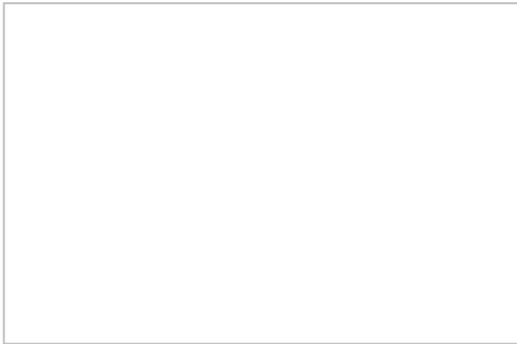
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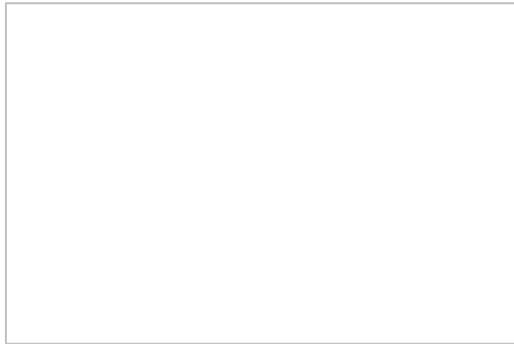
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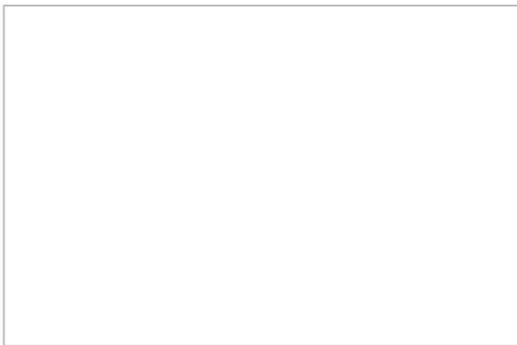
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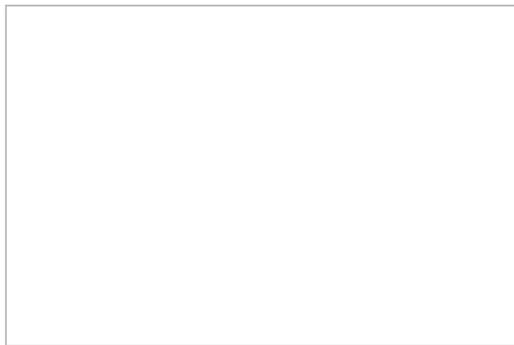
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