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Spring break gives drivers a breather

By [Jamie Gumbrecht](#)

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Deep, cleansing breath, everyone: It's spring break, one of metro Atlanta's easiest weeks for commuting.

The sense of calm on the road and the minutes shaved off your journey is real — not just in your head.

The evidence? Thirteen metro area counties had hundreds fewer crashes during the past five spring breaks than in the weeks immediately before and after, Georgia Department of Transportation cars parked in 15 downtown and Midtown Central Parking lots. Even MARTA reports a slight decrease in ridership during spring break weeks the past two years.

When schools in Atlanta and Fulton, Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb and Gwinnett counties shut down this week, most of the after-school activities for their half-million students will stop, too, cutting trips. School buses are off the roads and plenty of parents take time off work — and their regular commute — to be with family.

It all adds up to one of the best weeks on the road for everyone else.

"People kind of look forward to it. There's a little more flexibility in your life, which we can all use," said Catherine Ross, director of Georgia Tech's Center for Quality Growth and Regional terms of timing when they leave."

A spring break traffic break isn't unique, but because Atlanta is ranked No. 2 for congestion, even a slight improvement can feel dramatic. Suburban counties feel the change, too, on streets

David Montanye, director of transportation in Cobb, intentionally schedules short road work projects during spring break. He expects to shave about five minutes off his commute from east

Just don't get too excited — summer break for schools is the real break for drivers. Spring break? Just an oasis in an asphalt desert.

"You get lulled into a sense of driving entitlement," Ross sighs. "Then Monday hits."

JEMAL R. BRINSON / Staff
SPRING BREAK CRASHES

The number of crashes in 13 metro Atlanta counties during the week of spring break for the past five years was lower than during the weeks before and :

2004
Week before Easter
..March 29-April 2.....2,743
Week of Easter
..April 5-April 92,397*
Week after Easter
..April 12-April 162,859

2005
Week before Easter
..March 28-April 1.....3,091
Week of Easter
..April 4-April 82,442*
Week after Easter
..April 11-April 152,830

2006
Week before Easter
..March 27-March 312,813
Week of Easter
..April 3-April 72,470*
Week after Easter
..April 10-April 142,937

2007
Week before Easter
..March 26-March 302,892
Week of Easter
..April 2-April 62,452*
Week after Easter
..April 9-April 13.....2,904

2008
Week before Easter
..March 31-April 4.....2,701
Week of Easter
..April 7-April 11.....2,013*
Week after Easter
..April 14-April 182,520


Note: 13-county metro area: Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, Rockdale

*Week of spring break

Source: Department of Transportation

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