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Five sections • 50 pages

Holiday travelers face higher prices, fewer options

Fuel costs nudge prices for car, bus and air trips upward.

BY MICHAEL YEOMANS
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

A cluster of college students camped out on the floor of the

teeming Amtrak station Downtown, waiting for an eastbound train to get a jump on their Thanksgiving break.

Pointing out the many young faces in the crowd, weekend traveler and University of Pittsburgh anthropology professor Robert Hayden predicted several empty classroom seats today and Tuesday.

Holiday travelers taking to the roads, rails and skies around Pittsburgh will find fewer options and slightly higher costs this year than last.

AAA East Central spokeswoman Bevi Norris said the number of people traveling more than 50 miles nationwide will increase less than 1 percent this Thanksgiving to about 37.3 mil-

lion. That would be the smallest increase since travel for the holiday fell 6 percent in 2001, after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

According to AAA, Thanksgiving 2004 had 3.1 percent more travelers than Thanksgiving 2003.

Local travelers will find higher tolls on the Pennsylvania

Turnpike and higher fares for Amtrak train and Greyhound bus service, while US Airways has reduced the number of destinations with nonstop flights from Pittsburgh International Airport.

Those driving to Grandma's or the in-laws this week will pay an average of \$2.17 per gallon of gasoline, according to AAA.

That's about 25 cents more than this time last year but down sharply from the average of \$3.06 per gallon in the first week of September.

With gas at \$2.17, a 200-mile round trip for a vehicle averaging 22 miles per gallon will cost about \$2.25 more than last year.

SEE TRAVEL • A7

Maddox in a funk



PHILIP G. PAVELY/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Dejected Steelers quarterback Tommy Maddox heads back out to the field Sunday during the fourth quarter at M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore. Starting in place of injured teammates Ben Roethlisberger and Charlie Batch, Maddox was sacked six times during the game as the Steelers gave the Ravens a 16-13 overtime victory. Linebacker Clark Haggans described the loss, which ends the Steelers' 11-game road winning streak, as "funky" and "strange." **Full coverage, C11-15.**

Sharon quits Likud Party he founded

Israel's prime minister will start a new party for upcoming elections.

BY MARK LAVIE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took back the initiative from the rejuvenated Labor Party, quitting the Likud Party he founded in 1973 and striking out on his own — a daring pre-emptive strike before elections set for days after his 78th birthday.

Fed up with internal Likud opposition after he completed his withdrawal from Gaza, Sharon informed Likud leaders late Sunday that he was leaving to set up his own movement. It was the latest turnaround for the former general, hawk and settlement builder who jettisoned his record



ARIEL SCHALIT/AP

The new leader of Israel's Labor Party, Amir Peretz (second from right), is greeted by supporters upon his arrival at a convention in Tel Aviv, Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon informed Likud leaders late Sunday that he was leaving to set up his own movement.

of decades and gave Palestinians control of part of their territory this year.

Sharon's master stroke came

hours after Labor, following the lead of its fiery new chairman, Amir Peretz, voted to leave the coalition government it entered

in January to assure support for the Gaza withdrawal.

The prime minister's exit leaves Likud as a bastion of hard-line opponents of compromise with the Palestinians. Weekend polls show that position will erode support for Likud, while Sharon's new party would do well in the upcoming vote, as would Labor under its new leadership.

Advancing Israel's election from the original November 2006 date likely would sideline Mideast peace moves and counter whatever momentum was gained from the withdrawal from Gaza and part of the West Bank, completed in September.

Sharon is expected to take several prominent Likud Cabinet ministers with him into his new party, along with some from Labor — possibly including the ousted Chairman Shimon Peres.

SEE ISRAEL • A7

U.S. forces seal house in gunfight

Heavy resistance was given from those inside

That suggests a high-level target such as al-Zarqawi was trapped inside.

BY ROBERT H. REID
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD — U.S. forces sealed off a house in the northern city of Mosul where eight suspected al-Qaida members died in a gunfight — some by

Inside

■ Rep. John Murtha makes a withdrawal prediction. **A8**

qawi was among the dead.

Insurgents, meanwhile, killed an American soldier and a Marine in separate attacks during the weekend, and a British soldier was killed by a roadside bomb in the south.

On Saturday, police Brig. Gen. Said Ahmed al-Jubouri said the raid was launched after a tip that top al-Qaida operatives, possibly including al-Zarqawi, were in the house in the northeastern part of the city.

During the intense gunbattle that followed, three insurgents detonated explosives and killed themselves to avoid capture, Iraqi officials said. Eleven Americans were wounded, the U.S. military said. Such intense resistance often suggests an attempt to defend a high-value target.

Trent Duffy, a White House spokesman, said reports of al-Zarqawi's death were "highly unlikely and not credible."

SEE IRAQ • A7

Bush cools tone on war debate

BY TERENCE HUNT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING — After fiercely defending his Iraq policy across Asia, President Bush abruptly toned down his attack on war critics Sunday and said there was nothing unpatriotic about opposing his strategy.

"People should feel comfortable about expressing their opinions about Iraq," Bush said, three days after agreeing with Vice President Dick Cheney that the critics were "reprehensible."

The president also praised Rep. John Murtha, D-Johnstown, as "a fine man" and a strong supporter of the military despite the congressman's call for troop withdrawal as soon as possible.

Bush brought up the growing Iraq debate when he met reporters after inconclusive talks with President Hu Jintao about friction in U.S.-China relations. Bush ran into stiff resistance from the Chinese to his call for expanding religious freedom and human rights.

He also reported no breakthroughs toward reducing China's massive trade surplus, overhauling its currency system or protecting intellectual property rights.

SEE BUSH • A8

MORNING BRIEFING

Weather

54-36



Chance of rain this afternoon and tonight. **A12**

Nation/World

■ Hundreds of right-wing demonstrators make stiff-armed fascist salutes and shout insults against gays, Muslims and immigrants at a rally to mark the 30th anniversary of the death of dictator Gen. Francisco Franco. **A2**

■ The views that Samuel Alito expressed on reapportionment in a 20-year-old document could jeopardize his Supreme Court nomination and provoke

a filibuster, a leading Democratic senator says. **A3**

■ A gunman opens fire at a shopping mall in Washington state, wounding at least six people and taking three people hostage before being captured by police. **A4**

Opinion

■ Dimitri Vassilaros questions state Sen. David "Chip" Brightbill's apology. **A10**

City & Region

■ One man dies, another is wounded during a fight on the property of the Pittsburgh North Golf Club in Richland. **B1**

■ Employers in Western Pennsylvania are shifting more health care costs to employees, a study finds. **B1**

Money

■ Financial experts believe market returns during the next few decades won't match previous decades. **B8**

Will there be puppy love?

You be the judge on a new comic strip that is making its audition during the next few weeks in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. "Dog Eat Doug" follows the developing relationship between a puppy named Sophie and her new competition for attention — baby Doug. **See page D4.**



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