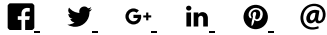




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## Police target drug trade near highways

By Mike LaBella mlabella@eagletribune.com Apr 22, 2016



HAVERHILL — Police said drug dealers from this area continue to attract buyers from New Hampshire, whom they meet just off Interstate 495 in places such as Westgate Plaza.

They said buyers from out of state are drawn to the Lawrence and Haverhill area because of the lower cost of drugs such as heroin.

The Westgate Plaza area consists of restaurants, gas stations, hotels and shopping plazas. Police said this is where numerous narcotic arrests have taken place and have resulted in seizures of drugs, money and automobiles.

Police said that in the case of an incident that occurred on Friday, a dealer left drugs inside a car he parked at Westgate Plaza and while taking a walk through the plaza, his buyer entered the parked vehicle, retrieved the drugs from the vehicle's center console and left a stack of cash.

Police charged Xavier Navarro-Rivera, 26, of 24 Foster St., Lawrence, with trafficking cocaine in excess of 36 grams but less than 100 grams, and conspiracy to violate drug laws.

Navarro-Rivera was arraigned on the charges on Tuesday in Haverhill District Court. He was represented by defense lawyer Murat Erkan of Andover.

Erkan told the court that his client has no criminal record and questioned the fairness of the commonwealth's request for high bail, saying the case is "circumstantial" at best.

Assistant District Attorney John DePaulo said he had not heard of this type of drug transaction before, where a dealer parks his car and leaves drugs inside for the buyer then returns to find cash.

DePaulo asked that Navarro-Rivera be held on \$50,000 cash bail, noting there have been many heroin overdoses and overdose deaths in this area and that "here's one of the people who come to Haverhill to dispense it."

Judge Patricia Dowling ordered Navarro-Rivera held on \$50,000 cash bail and issued a 90-day warning, meaning, if he is charged with another offense while his case is pending he could be ordered held for up to 90 days without bail.

Erkan said the case against Navarro-Rivera depends upon the word of another individual charged with the identical offense and who faces the identical penalty and who was in possession of the drugs, "yet he was released by police at the scene," Erkan said.

According to a police report on file in Haverhill District Court, on Friday at approximately 7:15 p.m., Haverhill police undercover officers were conducting surveillance in the Westgate Plaza area when they noticed a couple in an older model blue Honda Accord with New Hampshire plates park their car near the Burlington Coat Factory store.

Police identified the driver as Gregory Perron, 31, of Dover, N.H.

Police noted that various local and federal agencies have been conducting drug investigations involving residents from the Dover area driving to the Lawrence and Haverhill area to meet dealers in places close to the highway, such as Westgate Plaza, to purchase drugs.

Police said Perron walked over to an unoccupied green Honda Accord and got into the driver's seat. Perron exited the car a short time later then got back into his vehicle, with his passenger, whom police later identified as Callie Reeves, 29, of Dover.

Police followed Perron out of the parking lot and stopped his vehicle. Police said Perron and Reeves began to tremble while being questioned.

Perron told police he had purchased the drugs for a friend who paid him \$100 to drive to Haverhill and that he's done that before.

Perron said his friend had given him a stack of cash in a black band to give to the dealer.

Police seized 38.2 grams of heroin from Perron, who provided them with a description of the dealer.

Detectives stationed inside the plaza observed a man they later identified as Navarro-Rivera return to his green Honda and start it up. Police approached the vehicle and Navarro-Rivera exclaimed, "What I do wrong?"

A police officer who is fluent in Spanish was called to the scene to assist in the investigation. Police seized \$1,050 in cash from the Honda's center console and a cell phone found on Navarro-Rivera, who told police the money they seized was his.

Police said Reeves and Perron were informed they would be summonsed to court on charges of trafficking in heroin and conspiracy to violate drug laws.

Perron told police that although Reeves knew what was going on, she was not involved in the immediate drug transaction.

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LOL

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