

Mackinac Bridge Crossings

During 2024, google search interest has declined for many places in the Upper Pensinsula. Last month, I investigated individual places level data and found that this decline wasn't limited to large or small search interest places or to certain geographic regions of the Upper Peninsula.

This month, I look at data for crossings of the Mackinac bridge, the bridge that connects the Upper and Lower Peninsulas. This metric is another good indicator for interest in the Upper Peninsula, specifically from those in the rest of Michigan.

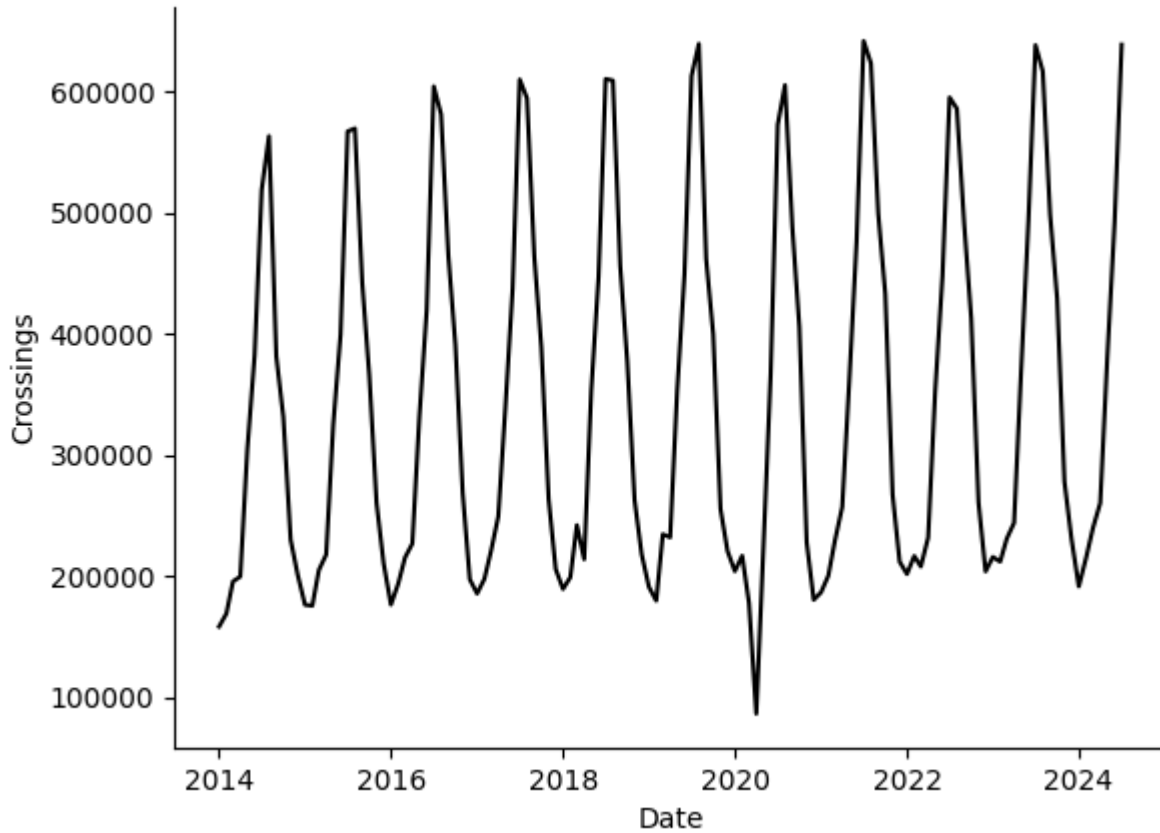
However, we found during the search interest project that much of the previous growth in Upper Peninsula search interest was coming from other places in the Upper Peninsula, not the Lower Peninsula. Further, there clearly isn't a 1:1 correlation between these metrics. Many people might visit the Upper Pensinsula without specifically Google searching the names of places found there. Also, many search for these places without actually visiting. Nonetheless, looking at this data is useful in understanding the decline in search interest.

The chart below shows Mackinac Bridge crossings from 2014-July 2024 (<https://www.mackinacbridge.org/fares-traffic/monthly-traffic-statistics/>). This data is a few months out of date, but usually July represents both the peak search interest and bridge crossings. In fact, seasonality for bridge crossings matches search interest seasonality quite well.

We see that bridge crossings showed the greatest trend upward from 2014-2017. The search interest data I produce starts in 2017. For the search interest data, the greatest upward trend is 2021-2023. This is not seen in the bridge crossing data. This provides more credibility to my previous finding that much of the increase in search interest during this time period was from areas within the Upper Peninsula not from below the bridge.

Finally, 2024 July bridge crossings are similar to 2023, despite the fact that search interest is much lower.

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Conclusion

There's any number of possible explanations for the decline in Upper Peninsula search interest this year ranging from data issues to changes in tourism due to gas prices. From the previous addendum, it does not appear that a single or small number of places are driving the trend. From this data, one could conjecture that interest from the Lower Peninsula might not be totally driving the reduction in search interest.