News

Not much relief from pain at pump

BY MATT ROCHELEAU FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE Saturday, July 19, 2008 1:13 AM EDT

The gas sign at the Hess Station in Bakers Corner, Seekonk read $3.93.9. (Staff photo by Tom Maguire)

Area drivers say they think the most recent dip in prices for gasoline only temporary

ATTLEBORO - Motorists generally find the cheapest gas prices in the area along a stretch of Pleasant Street that is home to six gas stations - from the Super Petroleum downtown to the Ray Getty a mile away.

Yet, even the bargains of the Attleboro Gas Mile, where gas prices have fallen below $4 a gallon, combined with generally falling gas prices elsewhere are doing little to ease the pain at the pump for most drivers.

Sarah Doucette of North Attleboro was glad prices dropped slightly this week, though she said it really hasn't made much of a difference.

"I have to get gas either way," said Doucette, who was filling up at Ray Getty. She said prices will not really begin to make a difference for her unless they go back to $3 a gallon.

And most motorists say prices below $4 per gallon are not here to stay. "It's not going to last," said Daniel Pare of Attleboro. "A penny here, two cents there, it doesn't matter."

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Though the penny-saving price drop has not made a difference yet for Bob Alves, he was optimistic.

"It's a good trend," said Alves, who added this week's three-day, 11 percent, drop in crude oil prices could have an impact on fuel costs.

That trend was short-lived, however, because oil prices rebounded Friday above $130 a barrel.

In the meantime, operators say the relative bargain on Pleasant Street is because of the concentration of stations along a short stretch of road.

"We are all in competition with each other, all looking for customers," said Roger Winsor, owner of Super Petroleum.

Ray Deiri, owner of Ray Getty, said the competition is there but he tries not to focus on it.

"Whenever I can pass a buck to my customers, I'm willing to do it. They are all hurting," Deiri said.

That's a practice that might get tougher, as big oil companies squeeze the greatest profit from the gas crisis.

Pleasant Street Shell owner Cindy Karol said this has been the worst year for business since her family started in 1981, and the competition is jeopardizing the station's future. Prices for regular unleaded along Pleasant Street were all below $4 Friday with the exception of Shell and Mobil. The lowest was Cumberland Farms at $3.93, although later in the day the price rose to $3.99.

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