



Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Action Plan

for Total Solar Eclipse August 21, 2017

Overview

The total eclipse is truly a once-in-a-lifetime event. According to NASA, any given point on the planet will only experience a total solar eclipse about once every 375 years. Ten western Kentucky counties are bracing for an influx of anywhere from 100,000 visitors up to a half-million or more starting about four days before the eclipse on August 21st.

Kentucky will be a favored travel destination for the eclipse. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and our emergency services partners are working diligently to ensure our visitors can safely experience this benchmark event.

According to weather experts, Kentucky and Tennessee have the least likelihood of cloud cover that might block eclipse viewing opportunities.

We anticipate that a majority of the visitors will filter into the 10-county region over the 3 or 4 days before the eclipse.

Over the weekend of Aug 19 and 20, and on Eclipse Day, Aug 21, visitors and local residents alike can expect heavy traffic, long lines at grocery stores, restaurants, and at convenience store/service stations.

Once the eclipse is over at about 3 p.m., CDT, on Monday, Aug 21, expect traffic issues akin to what Louisville faces before and after the Kentucky Derby or Thunder Over Louisville. Motorists are advised to plan ahead before traveling to or through the region the day of the eclipse.

Increased visitors in the area create a potential for gridlock along the 93-mile Interstate 24 corridor through Kentucky and along KY 91 between Princeton and Hopkinsville. Expect local roadways to become heavily congested as well. In an effort to minimize traffic delays, KYTC is partnering with local law enforcement, Kentucky State Police and emergency planning agencies to assist with traffic control before, during and after the event.



Local and state officials are asking visitors who plan to travel to view the eclipse and people who live within the eight counties in the total eclipse zone to be fully prepared for what they will encounter.

Background

- The first total solar eclipse in the continental U.S. in 38 years
- First eclipse event driven by social media
- Once in a lifetime experience as Total Solar Eclipses are rare
- August 21st Event covers parts of 14 states and stretches 93 miles across Kentucky
- The eclipse will be viewable as a *partial* eclipse from anywhere in the U.S.
- The path of totality—where the moon completely blocks the sun—is 67 miles wide and touches parts of 10 Kentucky counties (McCracken, Livingston, Marshall, Crittenden, Hopkins, Lyon, Caldwell, Trigg, Christian, and Todd).
- Another 11 Kentucky Counties will have potential traffic impact due to visitors traveling to and from the eclipse zone
- The eclipse in Kentucky is expected to last from about 12 Noon to about 3 p.m., CDT with totality of just over 2.5 minutes along the main path

Potential impact

- NASA estimates of the number of visitors coming to Kentucky range from 100,000 to 500,000. GreatAmericanEclipse.com estimates 65,000 to 100,000. Using the median NASA estimate, the eclipse could realistically bring 300,000 visitors to the region.
- Large crowds are expected to gather along the path of totality. One venue along KY 91 has raised their original estimate for the Sol-Quest event from 8,000 participants to the 15 to 20 thousand range. That free event alone would create the potential for gridlock along this rural 2-lane highway.

Goals

Our intent is to fully prepare visitors and eclipse zone residents for a positive and safe eclipse experience. To accomplish this we should focus on the following items:

- Prepare visitors and local residents for impact of traffic & crowds
- Possible traffic, food, fuel, & service issues
- Importance of being prepared
- Importance of taking actions suggested by KYEM and KYTC to assure a safe experience
- Promote the state's safety and preparedness messages for the eclipse.

- Assure KYTC employees fully understand their role and responsibilities in responding to and communicating about eclipse traffic issues
- Assure KYTC personnel can effectively coordinate with emergency management, as well as city/county/law enforcement agencies, to inform and protect the traveling public
- Assure KYTC can provide timely accurate information to the public and media on traffic conditions before, during, and after the eclipse

KYTC will monitor awareness and message performance factors via Survey Monkey.

Audiences

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| 1) Area Businesses | 6) Partner agencies |
| 2) Area Citizens | 7) Cross-Country Travelers such as |
| 3) Eclipse viewers/visitors | Truck drivers/Companies, general |
| 4) Regional & National News media | vacationers, motorcyclists, bicyclists |
| 5) KYTC & other state employees | and pedestrians |

1) Area businesses

Local business should prepare for congestion and traffic jams

- Consider flex work schedules to avoid expected difficult travel conditions.
- Encourage employees to have a full tank of gas prior to the time visitors begin to arrive in the area as lines for fuel may occur. This will impact both visitors and area residents.
- Some suppliers already have a strategy to maintain critical supplies of fuel and basic items. KYTC should communicate with food and fuel suppliers to consider early delivery, and overnight delivery of critical supplies due to expected traffic snarls. Stores should also consider increasing inventory of basic items prior to the eclipse.

2) Area citizens

Local citizens must be prepared to deal with the large number of visitors to their area—groceries, gasoline, and travel impact. Stock up early! August 21st may not be the best day for Grandma to travel 50 miles across the region for a doctor appointment.

3) Eclipse Viewers/Visitors

- ❑ **Arrive early.** Expect crowds everywhere. Plan to reach a specific location (hotel, campground, park, ball field, or other facility with restrooms and concessions) well before the day of the eclipse. Many communities and businesses along the eclipse path will be holding weekend events and festivals for early arrivals. Event info is available at: <http://www.kentuckytourism.com/eclipse/eclipseevents.aspx>
- ❑ **Stay put.** Due to heavy traffic in and around the eclipse zone, travel in the days before the eclipse, the morning and evening of the eclipse, and the day after is likely to be difficult. A normal one hour trip could easily become a 3 or 4 hour trip. Be prepared for traffic snarls and delays. Fill your gas tank early as fuel suppliers may have difficulty getting trucks into the area due to traffic congestion.
- ❑ **Leave late.** Heading home immediately after the eclipse will put you on the road with thousands of other visitors. The longer you can wait to leave to more traffic will dissipate.

General recommendations for eclipse watchers:

- Choose a specific place to watch the eclipse. If you stop randomly along area highways, you can be issued a citation for impeding traffic. Parking along right of way restricts traffic flow and creates a number of hazards for you and others.
- Restroom facilities will be at a premium. Pick a viewing location with appropriate restroom facilities.
- Bring an ample supply of food and water for the duration of your planned stay. Pick a viewing spot where concessions are available.
- Have a specific place to stay before you arrive- Either a hotel room or appropriate campsite.
- Be prepared for traffic delays. Thousands of visitors may create traffic gridlock at some critical intersections and interchanges, particularly along the I-24, I-69, and KY 91 corridors.
- Be prepared for crowds, lines and traffic. Be patient. Service stations and convenience stores will top off their fuel tanks ahead of the eclipse. However, delivery trucks may have difficulty restocking tanks if there is traffic gridlock.
- Have snacks, water and first-aid supplies on hand for crowds/lines/traffic jams. Just like fuel trucks, restaurant and grocery suppliers may have difficulty restocking locations within the prime eclipse observation areas.
- Have an ample supply of drinking water, as well as an emergency kit and an emergency plan. Be sure to bring sun screen, insect repellent, wet wipes, and other emergency items.
- Make sure family members or friends back home are aware of your avenue of travel, your specific destination and your schedule. The information will be useful if something happens along the way.
- Don't stop along the highway. Stopping on highway right of way slows passing traffic and creates a number of safety hazards for you and for others. Parking in grassy areas along roadways can create field fires.

- Be aware of the weather. In mid-August, Kentucky commonly has temperatures in the 100 degree range with high humidity, making heat stroke and other heat-related health issues likely. Mid-August can also bring severe thunderstorms, so a rain poncho or a temporary shelter should be a part of your emergency kit. Whatever your eclipse observation point, try to be near appropriate shelter should severe weather develop.
- Get on a reputable website well in advance of the eclipse to become knowledgeable about eclipse viewing safety. Good information is available from NASA at <https://www.nasa.gov/content/eye-safety-during-a-total-solar-eclipse>.

4) Regional & National News Media

KYTC messaging will include the importance of preparing each of the audiences above to deal with the expected traffic congestion and possibly delays. Emphasis will be on safety, being prepared, and expecting delays and congestion on all roads in the days before and after the eclipse. We will be available to regional news media for live broadcast opportunities with updated assessment of various traffic issues. Regional news media and media from outside the region should be prepared for slow cell and data service due to high demand. This may impact their ability to report from the eclipse corridor in a timely manner.

5) KYTC personnel and other state employees

Does the state expect state employees to show up for work Monday morning in the areas most affected by large expected increases in traffic? KYTC personnel will be scheduled to cover weekend hours on Aug 19 & 20 on a volunteer basis. There will be an all hands on deck approach to transportation staffing the day of the eclipse.

6) Partnering Agencies

KYTC is coordinating its efforts—both operationally and in communications—with other state agencies, local governments and local law enforcement. KYTC and KYEM are seeking to establish a common radio frequency for inter-agency communication. KYTC will have several satellite phones to supplement normal communications channels.

7) Truck Drivers, Trucking Companies & Cross-Country Travelers

KYTC public information is working with WAZE, AAA, TripAdvisor.com, and the KYTC Transportation Operations Center GoKY.Ky.Gov site to alert truckers, general vacationers, bicyclists, motorcyclist and others traveling through the region on August 21st to use caution. KYTC plans to work with Overweight/Over-Dimensional, ETrucker Magazine, The Truckers Report, Trucking Info, Truck Landline Magazine, TheTrucker.Com, Interstate 411, Kentucky Roads Web, and others to alert Motor Carriers who make regular deliveries along the eclipse path and who travel I-24, I-69, US 41, US 45, US 60, US 62, US 68, and parkways through the region to be prepared for expected traffic congestion and delays. The NET Alert System (Notify Every Truck) will be used to make truckers nationwide aware of possible traffic issues along the eclipse corridor.

Targeted Communication

Social Media

In a daily coordinated campaign that starts on Monday, August 14, and continues through Wednesday, August 23, KYTC personnel and coordinating partners will post regular messages on their main social media platforms to provide useful traffic information to the public.

Other partners will retweet/repost these messages to their own social media platforms to help increase distribution numbers.

Content-specific hashtags will be used: #Eclipse2017 and #KYEclipse2017

Webpage

KYTC will partner with KY Tourism to create a page accessible from our agency home pages with basic eclipses content. KY Tourism is offering event and entertainment info at <http://www.kentuckytourism.com/eclipse/eclipseevents.aspx>

About ¼ to ½ million people will visit Kentucky starting about 5-days prior to the August eclipse. Specific messages for those visitors:

- Your safety is our #1 priority
- State and national organizations are coordinating efforts
- Links to
 - GoKY.ky.gov
 - WAZE.com
 - National eclipse information from NASA & Great American Eclipse
 - <http://www.kentuckytourism.com/eclipse/eclipseevents.aspx>
- MAPS of the eclipse corridor color-coded with impacted highways
- Link to WAZE map that can illustrate traffic congestion in real time
- Additional signage pointing “To I-69” & “To I-24” will be posted along rural highways in the eclipse corridor to assist visitors as they leave the eclipse zone. This temporary signage will focus on getting visitors back to major arteries as quickly and as efficiently as possible.
- Targeted messages on permanent message board and portable message boards along key corridors in and around the eclipse corridor.

Additional Communication

Phone Communication

Due to the large number of people in the area attempting to use cell and mobile data services, we anticipate both cell and data delays and possible outages. KYTC personnel should rely mainly on land-line communications and on KYTC dedicated radio frequencies. KYEM is developing a joint frequency to allow KYTC radios to communicate with Kentucky State Police and other agencies. KYTC will have 4 Sat Phones to assist with critical communication. The TOC Communications Command Post trailer will have enhanced cellular capabilities.

Traffic Management

KYTC personnel will utilize tactics used at NASCAR tracks and other event venues to extend exit lanes. By placing cones down the center line of an interstate highway and designating the left hand lane for through traffic and the right lane for exiting/entering traffic, flow is maximized while improving safety for stopped traffic awaiting an opportunity to exit. KYTC personnel will be available to assist police with flagging traffic at critical locations. KYTC personnel will be on patrol to provide directions and assistance in rural areas along the eclipse path. Additional portable message board will be obtained from neighboring districts and, when possible, from contractors.

Contractor Activities

All construction and highway maintenance activities that might create lane restrictions or otherwise interfere with traffic flow should be halted, if possible, from Wednesday, Aug 16 through Tuesday, Aug 22, to assure maximum traffic flow in the 21 county region. KYTC engineers have initiated conversations with contractors in an effort to avoid having active projects with lane restrictions in the eclipse corridor

Conclusion

The total eclipse will arrive at 1:20 p.m. CDT on August 21. The partial eclipse will start about 90 minutes before the total eclipse and a partial eclipse will continue on until about 90 minutes after the total eclipse has ended. Let's be prepared.

Additional eclipse planning resources are available at these websites:

<http://www.kentuckytourism.com/eclipse/eclipseevents.aspx>

<http://www.starnetlibraries.org/EclipseGuide/>

<http://nationaleclipse.com/>

<https://www.greatamericaneclipse.com/>

<https://www.nasa.gov/content/eye-safety-during-a-total-solar-eclipse>

For up-to-date Kentucky traffic and travel information, visit www.goky.ky.gov or navigate traffic by downloading the free Waze app to your mobile device.

Additional helpful links and resources can be found on the KYEM website at: <http://kyem.ky.gov> where you can follow KYEMPIO on Twitter, like us on Facebook and sign up for mobile alert messages.