

MEMORANDUM

To: Thom Sheridan, City Manager

From: Jody Roberts, Communications Manager; Jena Stasik Community Relations Manager

CC: Greg Hannan Community Development Director; Katie Behnke, Economic Development Manager

Date: October 31, 2023

Subject: Solar Eclipse Event and Emergency Management Planning

The Total Solar Eclipse

The upcoming total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024, will be visible across the western to northern regions of Ohio, ranging from a brief thirty seconds to an impressive five minutes, depending on the specific location within the area. For the City of Hudson, positioned within the southern boundary, the total solar eclipse is expected to occur at 3:14 pm, lasting approximately 3 minutes and 11.9 seconds. During that time, the sky will go completely dark, based on how close one is to the center line.

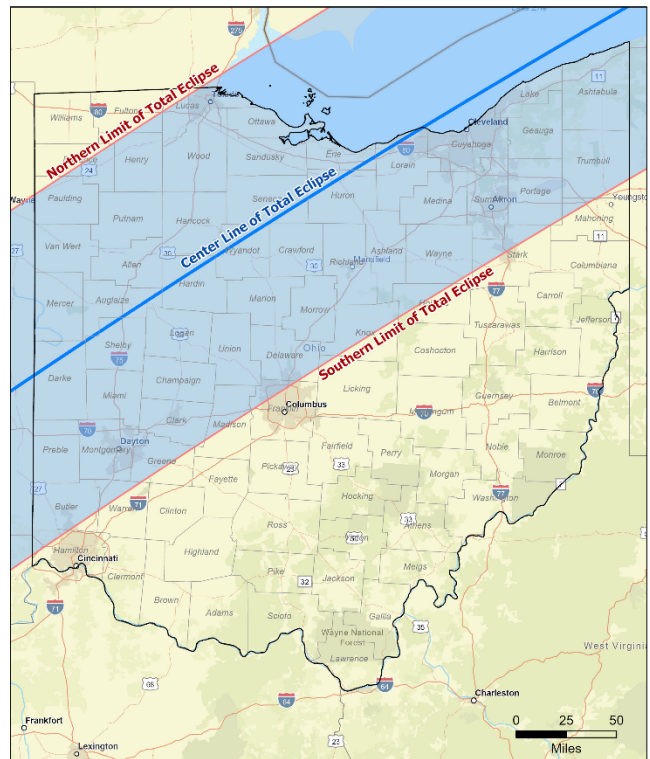
A total solar eclipse is rare, which lures individuals from all over the country into the eclipse path to view these rare events.

Even though Hudson isn't directly within the central path of the solar eclipse, City staff is preparing for a potential increase in visitors, traffic, and other concerns that may occur based on experiences from previous total eclipses.

It is crucial to emphasize the importance of not directly observing the eclipse to avoid potential eye damage. Detailed information regarding the acquisition of approved safety glasses for safe eclipse viewing will be provided closer to the event.

Potential Impacts

While Hudson does not fall directly on the center line of the solar eclipse, City staff is planning now for how we will handle the potential impacts on our community. Some planning considerations include:



**Total Solar Eclipse Path through Ohio
April 8, 2024**



September 30, 2021



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- The State of Ohio is within a one-day drive for 70% of the country’s population, therefore, a possible target destination for out-of-town visitors from around the country and world.
- As revealed in the after-action reports from previous total eclipse locations, traffic will have the largest impact before and after the eclipse.
 - Traffic will create increased demand and stress on local infrastructure, including law enforcement, fire/EMS, medical facilities, restaurants, gas stations, utilities, entertainment facilities, campsites, hotels, and parks. Northeast Ohio has limited freeway access with several interchanges located in or near Hudson, Ohio.
 - During the 2017 total solar eclipse, a 5.5-hour trip from Columbus, Ohio to a viewing site in Hopkinsville, Kentucky turned into a 17.5 trip on the way back due to traffic congestion.
- Previous events indicate travelers tend to arrive at a viewing location minutes before the eclipse and leave shortly after the event. The greatest traffic issues arise during this timeframe.
- Restaurants may run out of food and gas stations may run out of fuel as indicated from past eclipse events.
- Distracted driving for individuals on the road may be a concern during the time of the eclipse, adding the potential for more vehicle accidents.
- Vehicles may stop in any location as the eclipse occurs, including the shoulder at night, which can lead to blocked emergency access.
- During past eclipses, visitors “camped” anywhere, including parks, greens, parking lots, etc., even where camping is not permitted in these areas.

City staff will attempt to mitigate the above concerns for the safety and security of residents and best prepare local business and restaurant owners for the potential influx of traffic by providing informational resources and communication.

Special Event Planning

Some cities in Northeast Ohio have considered holding special events to coincide with the Solar Eclipse. City staff met to determine if City-sponsored event could be safely managed and held in Hudson on April 8, 2024.

Neighboring Communities. According to Summit County EMA Director Tom Smoot, Copley Township, the City of Cuyahoga Falls, and the National Parks are the only jurisdictions to date with an intention to host a publicized Solar Eclipse event. Stow Parks Director Linda Nahrstedt stated in an email on October 23, 2023, the City of Stow has not finalized plans to host an event and may reconsider. In Portage County, the City of Kent has committed to host a large community event, but has indicated challenges, such as traffic concerns, population increase, and availability of resources.

Local Businesses. In recent conversations, Destination Hudson, Fairmont Properties, and the Hudson Chamber of Commerce do not plan to host a public event related to the solar eclipse. The Hudson Library will host solar eclipse-related programming leading up to the event. The library does not plan to distribute glasses to the general public. To date, Community Relations has not received any Temporary Special Event Applications for the Total Solar Eclipse and does not anticipate any public events to be hosted within the City by outside organizations.

Recommendation. As the Total Solar Eclipse phenomenon nears, the decision to hold a temporary

special event must be determined by City Council. After thoroughly assessing the potential implications of the upcoming Solar Eclipse on Hudson and the surrounding region, and considering the available resources, locations, and safety measures required for hosting an event of this scale, Police Chief Tabak and Fire/EMS Chief Varnes, along with City staff, are recommending against holding a special event on April 8, 2024 (see letter accompanying this report). Our concerns about holding a City event that day include:

- Publicized an event would attract and influx out-of-town visitors, which has the potential to place an even greater strain on City resources that day.
- Previous eclipse events have documented appreciable traffic impacts during and immediately after an eclipse, which may require expanded staffing resources.
- It is challenging to accurately gauge anticipated attendance and the level of City resources needed. With other neighboring cities also experiencing impacts, mutual aid and outside resources may not be available.
- Public safety members remain concerned about the level of staffing and availability of resources if the City were to host an organized event.
- The parks throughout Hudson do not have an abundance of parking.
- It is important to consider the level of coordination a large-scale event requires, such as the fireworks event. As it currently exists, the fireworks event only utilizes one park and requires public safety resources from outside of the city and local business cooperation. In addition, we use outside officers to ensure safety at that event.
- Opportunities do exist to partner with the schools and library on educational programming leading up to the event and for individual businesses to pursue promotions.

Instead of hosting an event, staff would focus on preparations to mitigate traffic and other physical impacts and concerns, as well as implementing a communications campaign encouraging individuals to stay home and enjoy the event from their backyards.

Emergency Preparedness

City staff members are actively working with the Summit County and Ohio Emergency Management Agencies (EMA) to identify vulnerabilities and critical impact areas based on the information available and after-action reports from previous solar eclipses. Our goal is to prepare for traffic issues, getting emergency vehicles through the City with traffic, and other potential problems that will impact the community during this time.

Areas of considerations include, but are not limited to:

- **Review and Plan City Response Capabilities** – Plan for Law enforcement and fire response availability, emergency medical services, utility impact (trash, electric, water, etc.), cellular/internet service.
- **Review and Plan City Logistics**
 - Identify area construction projects, road and bridge availability, water and sewer capacity, nearby medical facilities, and parks/greens capacity to address impacts.
- **Identify Large Parking Lots/Viewing Areas**
 - Maintain a list of parks and large parking lots that may be a target for visitors and plan for a response if people camp/park in these areas.
- **Coordinate with Area Hospitals**



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- **Coordinate with Schools and Daycares**
 - The City of Hudson School District, Hudson Montessori, Western Reserve Academy, and Seton Catholic have not committed to early dismissal or no school during the event. If they are in session, there will be buses rolling during the eclipse time.
- **Continue Monitoring Special Events**
 - Keep an updated list of any local events and ensure this is communicated to Solar Eclipse Planning Group.
- **Encourage Residents to Stay Home**
 - Minimize road congestion by encouraging residents to view the eclipse from the comfort of their homes or nearby open spaces whenever possible.
 - The City may provide Solar Eclipse Kits as a method to encourage residents to stay home.
- **Monitor the Weather**
 - Severe weather in Northeast Ohio (or another viewing region) may entice visitors to the City of Hudson.
- **Encourage the Use of Safety Glasses**
 - The City may purchase safety glasses for staff and residents as part of its communications campaign.

Communications Campaign

- The Mayor, City Council, and the community will be kept informed as we prepare for the Solar Eclipse.
- Determine appropriate social media platforms to best reach citizens with “stay at home” messages. We would tie into the State of Ohio’s campaign which is “Come early, stay late.”
- Create a webpage with resources and information. Keep citizens informed about what is happening, safety concerns, and other issues as they arise. Provide links to resources, purchase of glasses, etc.
 - Web page to be in place by mid-November.
 - Launch aggressive campaign in January.
- Create safety messages about eclipse viewing.
- Consider how and when to use Code Red for important messages.
- Create Solar Eclipse kits that would including safety glasses and educational materials that could be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

Resources and References

General Emergency Planning

- Summit County. <https://co.summitoh.net/pages/2024-Solar-Eclipse.html>
- Ohio EMA. <https://ema.ohio.gov/media-publications/ohio-total-solar-eclipse>
- [2024 Local Eclipse Planning Guide.](#)
- [Solar Eclipse 6 Months Out.](#)
- Eclipse AAS.Org: <https://eclipse.aas.org/eclipse-america-2024>
- Eclipse 2024.Org: <https://eclipse2024.org/https://eclipse2024.org/>

- White Paper on Community Eclipse Planning: <https://eclipse.aas.org/sites/eclipse.aas.org/files/Russo-White-Paper-Community-Eclipse-Planning.pdf>
- [We're All Going to be Overwhelmed](#). Columbus Dispatch article, September 2023.

Lessons Learned from the 2017 Eclipse

- Kentucky Lessons Learned in 2017. <https://transportationops.org/case-studies/kentucky-lessons-learned-2017-solar-eclipse#downloads>
- Solar Eclipse 2017 Oregon. https://www.oregon.gov/oem/Documents/2017_Eclipse_AAR.pdf
Solar Eclipse After Action Report 2017 Colorado. https://transops.s3.amazonaws.com/uploaded_files/After%20Action%20Report%202017%20Eclipse%20Colorado%20DOT.pdf
- Solar Eclipse Planning Resources Health and Human Services. <https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-solar-eclipse-resources.pdf>
- Solar Eclipse After Action Report 2017 Natrona County. https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/casper/Public_Heath_After_Eclipse_Report_4b914969-3d12-4573-8329-04f727dc9272.pdf
- Solar Eclipse Resource Guide. <https://go.everbridge.com/rs/004-QSK-624/images/Solar%20Eclipse%20Resource%20Guide%20WP%20208-17.pdf>
- Solar Eclipse 2017 After Action Report Idaho. <https://idahootwork.com/2017/09/22/idaho-after-great-american-eclipse/>

Resources for the Public Information Campaign for 2024 Event

- Tips for Individuals During an Eclipse FEMA. <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20230425/fema-provides-tips-how-plan-ahead-aug-21-solar-eclipse>
- Ohio Department of Education Info for 2024. <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Science/Resources-for-Science/2024-Solar-Eclipse>
- Oregon.gov. <https://www.oregon.gov/oem/hazardsprep/pages/2017-total-solar-eclipse.aspx>
- NASA. <https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/future-eclipses/eclipse-2024/>

City Webpages on the 2024 Eclipse

- Westfield, IN. <https://www.westfield.in.gov/egov/apps/document/center.egov?view=item&id=8555>
- Avon Lake, OH. <https://www.avonlake.org/our-community/avon-lake-eclipse>
- This is Cleveland, OH. <https://www.thisiscleveland.com/2024-solar-eclipse>
- Cleveland Metroparks. <https://www.clevelandmetroparks.com/parks/education/education-programs/2024-solar-eclipse>
- Dublin, OH. <https://dublinohiousa.gov/eclipse/>
- Destination Mansfield. <https://destinationmansfield.com/ohio-total-solar-eclipse/>
- Findlay, OH. <https://www.findlayohio.gov/community/2024-total-solar-eclipse>