**Define the Issue**

A total solar eclipse will be visible over 300 miles of Missouri on Monday, Aug. 21, 2017. A total solar eclipse is a rare planned special event. One hasn’t been visible over the United States in hundreds of years. The next one visible in the United States will be in 2024, but it will be visible in fewer states than the 14 states that will see the 2017 total solar eclipse.

**Background**

A solar eclipse happens when the moon casts a shadow on Earth, fully or partially blocking the sun’s light. In the area of the path of the total solar eclipse, daylight will fade like dusk, go to darkness and then have a dawn like experience in the middle of the day. People standing in the path of total eclipse will have up to 2 minutes and 40 seconds when they can actually see the details of the sun.

The lunar shadow enters the United States near Lincoln City, Oregon, at 9:05 PDT with totality beginning there at 10:16 a.m. PDT. The total eclipse will end in Charleston, South Carolina, at 2:15 p.m. EDT with the lunar shadow leaving that location at 4:09 p.m. EDT. This path covers 14 states.

The path of the viewing in Missouri will cover more than 300 miles of the state. Totality enters Missouri as it crosses the Missouri River into St. Joseph at 1:06 p.m. CDT. It will follow a diagonal line crossing over Columbia and Jefferson City and exit Missouri as it crosses the Mississippi River near Perryville at 1:21 p.m. CDT.

Approximately 200 million people (a little less than 2/3 the nation’s population) live within a day’s drive of the path of the total eclipse.

Hotels and campgrounds across the state are already filling up. Areas are predicting double to triple their population Aug. 19-21. Concerns with major traffic impacts from congested highways could occur especially after the eclipse is over and viewers head home or drive back to the major airports in St. Louis and Kansas City. There is also concern about driver safety during the time of the eclipse when Missouri will experience nighttime in the middle of the day.

Total solar eclipse path on Aug. 21, 2017. The Greatest Duration (GD) and Greatest Eclipse (GE) markers are shown on the map. Source: [**http://eclipse2017.nasa.gov**](http://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/)



States in chronological order under the path:

Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming,

Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois,

Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina,

Georgia and South Carolina

**OBJECTIVE**

* Educate drivers in Missouri to plan ahead for their viewing of the eclipse and to prepare for safety and congestion concerns related to the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse.

**Audiences**

**Internal**

* Senior Management Team
* Construction, maintenance and traffic employees who may be affected by the extra traffic
* All employees

**External**

* Citizens who plan to go to viewing locations
* Drivers on the roads on the day of the eclipse who are not participating or not aware of the eclipse
* TV and radio meteorologists to promote driver safety in their discussions on the eclipse
* Media in general

**Messages**

**High level Speaking points**

* Over 300 miles of Missouri from St. Joseph to Perryville will provide a total solar eclipse viewing from 1:06 p.m. to 1:21 p.m. Monday, Aug. 21.
* Events are planned across the state for this extremely rare event.
* Missouri expected to receive large crowds from out of state and even out of the country coming here to attend weekend festivals and watch the Monday solar eclipse.
* Motorists are advised to plan ahead if you want to view the eclipse. Know where you want to be and make your accommodations as early as possible.
* Motorists are also advised to expect heavy traffic on Missouri’s interstates and all roads inside the area of the total eclipse on Monday, Aug. 21.
* Extreme congestion is expected once the eclipse passes in the afternoon.

**detailed Speaking points**

* Heavy traffic congestion is expected on Aug. 21 for the solar eclipse
* Plan ahead to avoid travel if possible
* If you want to go to a location to view the eclipse, plan ahead allowing extra time.
* Consider where you want to be and if it’s more than an hour away plan early for accommodations
* If you plan to watch the eclipse, you will need proper safety glasses.
* If you are working, you can use a break to go outside and view the eclipse. Don’t forget to use proper safety glasses for viewing or us a pinhole through a piece of paper/cardboard to view the reflection on another piece of paper/cardboard.
* Driving tips during solar eclipse and traveling to and from viewing the eclipse:
* Don’t stop along the interstate and no parking on the shoulder.
* Please exit the highway to stop and view and/or photograph the solar eclipse.
* Don’t take photographs while driving.
* Turn your headlights on and do not rely on your auto headlights.
* Watch out for extra pedestrians along smaller roads. People may be randomly parking and walking alongside roads in the hour before the total eclipse to get the best viewing.
* Prepare for extra congestion especially on the interstates in the path on the day before, day of and day after the eclipse.
* Don’t wear “eclipse glasses” while you’re driving.
* Avoid travel during the eclipse or in the area of the main path if you can.
* Check traffic conditions on MoDOT’s Traveler Information Map at <http://traveler.modot.org/map/> also available as a free app at MoDOT Traveler Information.

**Communication Tactics & timeline**

December 2016 – April 2017

* Solar eclipse team attend SEMA meetings to begin preparations
* Communications Division staff kickoff AASHTO task force meetings with other states regarding public information options
* Total solar eclipse discussed at DOMInno
* ***Prepare communications plan***

May

* Solar eclipse team attends SEMA meetings to begin preparations; reach out to SEMA PIO to coordinate public information efforts.
* Communications Division staff continue leading AASHTO task force meetings with other states regarding public information options.
* Debrief SMT on MoDOT planning at May 15 meeting
* Hold statewide video call for awareness and understanding of MoDOT’s plan for this event. Districts need to designate point person for contact.
* ***Share talking points with Communications and Customer Service statewide***
* ***Article in Connections and in weekly ppt***

June

* Solar eclipse team attends SEMA meetings to begin preparations; work with SEMA PIO subteam on public information efforts.
* ***Issue statewide news release on preparing for the eclipse and traffic concerns***
* ***Communications managers reach out to local TV and radio meteorologists to ask them to discuss travel planning and safe driving issues when they hype this from a cool science perspective.***
* Communications Division finalize AASHTO task force of ideas
* ***Article in Connections and in weekly ppt***

July

* Solar eclipse team attends SEMA meetings to begin preparations.
* ***Article in Express Lane to warn people to plan ahead***
* ***Article in Connections and in weekly ppt***

August

* ***Post plan ahead and safety messages on statewide social media channels***
* ***Post safety messages on DMS***
* Stand up statewide and district EOCs on Aug. 21 to manage traffic and assist SEMA requests for assistance. (MoDOT will have a presence at SEMA)

**Proposed DMS messages:**

Week Before:
Solar Eclipse Solar Eclipse
Aug 21 Aug 21
Plan Ahead Heavy Traffic

Day Of:
Solar Eclipse Solar Eclipse Solar Eclipse Solar Eclipse
No Parking Don’t Photo Today No Parking
On Highway While U Drive Headlights On Exit to View