



Ohio Turnpike Prepares for Solar Eclipse

BEREA, Ohio (March 12, 2024) – Ohio residents and visitors within a 124-mile area of the state will experience a total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. Viewers outside the path of totality will experience a partial eclipse.

A solar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth.

The last total solar eclipse visible in Ohio was in 1806. The next total solar eclipse visible from Ohio will occur in 2099.

Out-of-state travelers planning to view the eclipse in Ohio are encouraged to “arrive early” and “stay late” to help reduce traffic congestion across the Ohio Turnpike and other state roadways.

How is the Ohio Turnpike preparing for the eclipse?

The Ohio Turnpike – a 241-mile toll road designated as Interstate 80, I-90 and I-76 that runs east and west along the state’s northern corridor – was designed to manage large volumes of both passenger and commercial vehicle traffic safely and efficiently.

Staff from Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission are accustomed to handling heavy traffic volumes on the toll road. Just like all peak travel days with an expected increase in traffic, the toll booths, 14 service plazas, and eight maintenance buildings will be staffed accordingly in anticipation of a high-volume traffic event.

“Toll operations will function as it normally would for a peak travel event,” says Laurie Davis, director of toll plaza operations for the turnpike commission. “Toll operations staff will be able to accommodate an increase in traffic volume through a combination of *E-ZPass* lanes, staffed toll booth lanes, and automated toll payment machines.”

The Ohio Turnpike’s safety services and maintenance operations staff work year-round with emergency response agencies in proximity to the 241-mile toll road. The Ohio Turnpike’s communication’s center (radio room/dispatch) will be fully staffed around the clock as it is normally.

Troopers from the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) – which operates three posts on the Ohio Turnpike – will be highly visible and ready to assist motorists in the days leading up to, during, and following the eclipse.

In addition, the Ohio Turnpike will be patrolled by tow truck personnel providing roadside assistance to stranded motorists 24-hours a day.

How much additional traffic is expected in Ohio for the eclipse?

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency estimates between 150,000 and 575,000 travelers will visit the state for the solar eclipse.

What is the typical traffic volume on the Ohio Turnpike?

In 2023, an average of nearly 139,000 passenger vehicles and commercial trucks traveled on the Ohio Turnpike per day, and that number increases significantly during peak travel times over the holidays.

For an additional perspective, over a five-day period (Wednesday to Sunday) during the Thanksgiving holiday in 2023, more than 592,000 trips were completed by the Ohio Turnpike's passenger vehicle customers alone, an increase of about 3% from 2022.

Will any construction on the Ohio Turnpike be paused that day?

"To keep traffic moving as smoothly as possible, lane closures, typically set for construction work zones and other maintenance projects, will not be permitted prior, during, or after the eclipse," says Chris Matta, chief engineer for the turnpike commission. "Currently, a long-term work zone was set for the Tinkers Creek bridge project both eastbound and westbound on the Ohio Turnpike at milepost 185.6 in Summit County. Two of the three lanes will be open in both directions."

Portable message signs will be placed at various locations along the toll road to keep travelers informed about traffic incidents, driving conditions, or to provide other roadway safety messages.

Are the service plazas prepared to handle an influx of travelers?

The Ohio Turnpike's 14 service plazas (seven eastbound and seven westbound) provide travelers with comprehensive services and amenities, including overnight parking for recreational vehicles (RV) and travel trailers, electric vehicle (EV) charging locations, restaurant options, and more.

"All 14 of our safe and convenient service plazas, located about 30 to 50 miles apart, will be available for fuel, food, and comfort stops 24 hours a day for travelers heading to and from their eclipse viewing locations," says Drew Herberger, director of service plaza operations for the turnpike commission.

"Participating restaurants at the Ohio Turnpike's service plazas will extend their hours of operation and increase staffing and supplies, and gasoline and diesel fuel deliveries will be increased," Herberger added.

For more information about the Ohio Turnpike's service plazas, restaurant choices, and locations by milepost, [click here](#).

What can motorists do to keep the roadways safer?

The OSHP – which operates three posts on the Ohio Turnpike – recommends that motorists:

- Do their part to contribute to traffic safety through planning, preparation, and patience.
- Find a safe location to view the eclipse. Do not stop on the roadside along the Ohio Turnpike, any interstate, roadway or at an exit/entrance ramp.
- Maintain a full tank of fuel and include an emergency vehicle kit and a cell phone charger.
- Remain patient on the roadways before, during and after the eclipse. An increase in traffic volume will likely result in travel delays.
- Focus on driving. Do not get distracted during the eclipse.
- Turn on their headlights during temporary darkness caused by the eclipse or for other weather-related conditions decreasing visibility.
- Dial 911 or #677 in Ohio for emergency assistance, to report unsafe drivers, or to assist stranded motorists.

Can *E-ZPass* reduce my travel times?

Travelers without an *E-ZPass* should consider getting one to save money on tolls and reduce travel times.

E-ZPass customers with passenger vehicles (Class 1) can save an average of about 33% on Ohio Turnpike tolls compared to customers who pay by cash or credit card. In addition, *E-ZPass* is accepted by tolling agencies in another 18 states.

E-ZPass toll rates are calculated and deducted electronically from prepaid account balances. To compare the savings on tolls with *E-ZPass* to tolls paid by cash or credit card, check out the Ohio Turnpike's [Fare Calculator](#).

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