

MEMORANDUM TO: Tow and vehicle storage sector

FROM: Jennifer Elliott
Director
Ministry of Transportation

DATE: March 22, 2024

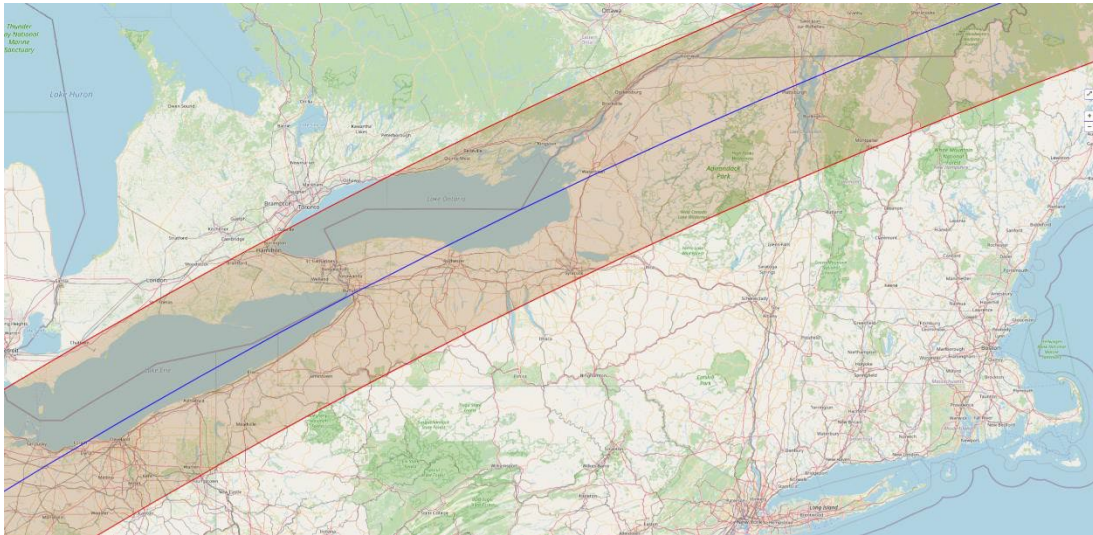
SUBJECT: **April 8, 2024, Total Solar Eclipse – Potential for
Significant Delays and Traffic Congestion**

This memo is to inform you of the potential for significant delays and traffic congestion on the QEW, Highway 401, Highway 403, at border crossings in Southern Ontario, and on all roadways within the solar eclipse path of totality on Monday, April 8, 2024. This is due to the mass movement of people expected to come into the area to view the total solar eclipse.

A total solar eclipse will occur over parts of Canada, the United States, and Mexico on Monday, April 8, 2024. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. Within the area known as the “path of totality” (where the Moon’s shadow completely covers the Sun), the sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk for between 2-4 minutes. The Canadian Space Agency has called this “a rare celestial event”, as the last total solar eclipse to occur over Ontario was in 1979 and the next total solar eclipse won’t happen over Ontario until 2079.

Below is an image showing the path of totality across Southern Ontario. More information about the solar eclipse, including a link to an interactive map, can be found on the Government of Canada’s website at: <https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/astronomy/eclipses/total-solar-eclipse.asp>.

In Ontario, the eclipse will occur on April 8, 2024, between 2:00pm and 4:30pm EST, during which the parts of Southern Ontario that are within the path of totality will experience darkness, including complete darkness for a short duration. The entire eclipse will last for 2.5 hours.



Transportation officials across North America are preparing for a significant influx of astronomers, amateur stargazers, and enthusiasts from around the world who are expected to travel to ideal viewing locations within the path of totality to watch the eclipse. Early estimates in the Niagara Region indicate that approximately one million people may move towards the Niagara area to experience the eclipse.

Ministry of Transportation (MTO) staff have met with the United States Departments of Transportation that experienced significant traffic congestion during the August 2017 total solar eclipse, which occurred over the continental United States. During the 2017 eclipse, traffic congestion resulted in queue lengths of up to 113 kms and delays of up to 13 hours.

Based on the rarity of this event over Ontario and the traveler projections that are being reported, especially in the Niagara area, MTO is preparing for larger than normal traffic volumes at border crossings in Southern Ontario and significant traffic congestion on the QEW, Highway 401, Highway 403 and all roadways within the path of totality on April 8.

Please share this information with members of your organization.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Elliott".

Jennifer Elliott
Director

c: Marg Verbeek
Manager, Emergency Management and Planning Office