



Welcome everyone. I am honored to help kick off the conference and I want to thank you for making the trip to attend. If you are new to Arkansas, I would like to tell you a few of the many must see things you can do this trip or on your next visit.



I may be biased, but I think Arkansas is one of the most beautiful states in the nation.

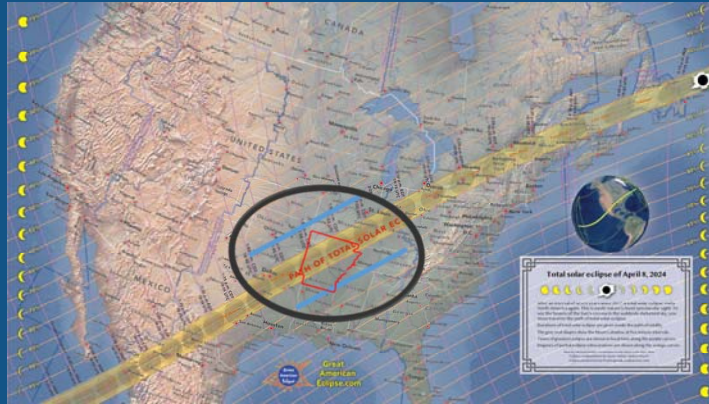
You can dig for diamonds at the Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro and experience the hot mineral springs in Hot Springs.

Crystal Bridges, situated in northwest Arkansas, is one of a few incredible museums across the state.

We have world class trout fishing on the White River up in northern Arkansas, and the Buffalo National River offers some of the most beautiful views in the state, drawing people from all over.

All of these things and more make it a great spot to view the Great North American Eclipse next April!

GREAT NORTH AMERICAN ECLIPSE



- April 8, 2024
- Arkansas in Path of Totality
- Parks and Tourism Expects 1.5 Million Out-of-State Visitors
- Safe and Efficient Traffic Management

Arkansas is going to be in the path of totality of the Great North American Eclipse, and we'll experience anywhere from 2 to 4 minutes of complete darkness in the middle of the day, depending on the part of the state.

Campsites have been reserved, and cabins have been booked – it's happening!

Right now, Parks and Tourism is estimating that 1.5 million visitors will come in from out of state for this event. From the data collected during the reservation process, we know there are folks coming from as far away as Washington state and California.

It seems unbelievable, but Arkansas is actually the closest viewing state for those folks out in Washington state.

So, we have been working with our on-call consultants and various agencies to make the exit as safe and efficient as possible for all travelers.

We would love to invite you all back for that this coming spring. But now for today's Topic.



ARDOT is the third largest state agency in Arkansas with approximately 3,700 employees.

The Dept. of Human Services is the largest agency with 7,400 employees – followed by the Department of Corrections with over 6,000 employees.

We are proud of the fact that we have kept our employment levels very consistent for the past 20 years.

We are responsible for managing approximately 16,400 highway miles and more than 7,000 bridges.

We have 10 Highway Districts that administer construction contracts and also maintain the system.

Our Central Offices that perform preconstruction and administrative work are located in Little Rock.

Recently we established a satellite design office in NWA – Bentonville. And earlier this year, the Arkansas Highway Commission gave us approval to establish a satellite design office in Jonesboro.

Opening these offices has enhanced our recruitment and retention of young professionals who will contribute to the success of our organization.

What's a SEAPUG?



Seapug is an opportunity. I'm very grateful that SEAPUG chose Little Rock this year because ARDOT is aggressively pursuing changes to the way we do business regarding asphalt and many of the ARDOT representatives that are here, are doing the work make changes, don't get the opportunity to attend out of state conferences. I have never attended a SEAPUG meeting, but I have had the opportunity to attend many conferences that put representatives from multiple states and industry in the same room for a couple of days. Here's one thing I've learned. People judge a conference "liked it-didn't like" by the presentations and we have some great presentations lined up, but the presentations are just the icing on the cake or for our friends from Mississippi, the gravy on the chicken fried steak. The real opportunity for the next three days is to build relationships with the people in front of and behind you.



And I hope you all have a wonderful conference. I hope you enjoy your time in Arkansas and I hope you leave with new friendships you can lean on the next time you take on a new task. Again, welcome