

**Commission approves major
work in special bridge program**

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Information Release



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Members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission hailed the second major phase of the state's load-posted bridge program, approving engineering contracts on structures in 14 counties across the state at their meeting Monday, March 5.

Commissioners agreed to spend \$4.4 million in federal funding for contracts with 10 firms to design 24 bridges. The move means that significant progress has been made on each of the 137 load-posted bridges in the program.

Load-posted bridges are deemed structurally deficient and obsolete, and it is illegal for many vehicles to use them. For example, fully loaded tractor trailers cannot cross a load-posted bridge and, in many cases, even loaded school buses cannot cross them. Many vehicles have been forced to use detours that often take them far off their original routes, adversely affecting commerce throughout the state.

Last year, the Oklahoma Legislature approved \$100 million in a one-time state appropriation for bridges, which has been used to start a program to repair or replace all 137 load-posted bridges throughout the state.

By July 2006, the commission approved the first phase of engineering contracts as part of the program with projects on 52 bridges in 30 counties. Currently, 39 load-posted bridges across the state have been repaired, replaced or are under construction.

Following the commission's action Monday, the engineering firms will conduct location analysis, surveys, hydraulic studies and prepare final construction plans for the bridges and adjoining highways. Construction is expected to start on each bridge sometime over the next four years, and final completion of the 137-bridge project is expected within six years.

Commissioners approved design work on bridges in Bryan, Carter, Cherokee, Coal, Grant, Johnston, Kay, Latimer, Logan, Okfuskee, Pontotoc, Pushmataha, Seminole and Sequoyah counties. Engineers estimate construction costs for the 24 bridges will total nearly \$56 million.

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