

Centennial Express Launches

Historic Ride to Guthrie

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 15, 2007

PR# 07-063

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Information Release



Public Affairs Division, 200 N. E. 21st Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105 (405) 521-2554

With the whistle blowing and the engine chugging, the Centennial Express train took more than 400 lawmakers and state officials to Guthrie the morning of November 15, to launch a historic day in the former Oklahoma Capitol. As set by Senate Joint Resolution 48, the Oklahoma Legislature had a Ceremonial Session in Guthrie, marking 100 years since the first State Legislative Convention. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company teamed up to provide a unique traveling experience for this special trip.

"I can't think of a better way to get to Guthrie for the Centennial Legislative session than by train," Gov. Brad Henry said. "The railroads crisscrossing Oklahoma were vital to the economic growth of our state, and the Centennial Train ride is a great opportunity to explore this part of Oklahoma's past."

Guests getting on board included Governor Henry, members of the Centennial Commission, state legislators, along with ODOT, BNSF and Amtrak Heartland Flyer representatives. After leaving the Santa Fe Depot in Oklahoma City that morning, guests enjoyed the ride in the 10 vintage railcars provided by BNSF for the 45-minute trip.

"The BNSF Centennial Express pays tribute to Oklahoma's rich history and the role the railroad played in developing the state," Andrew Johnsen, BNSF Assistant Vice President for State Government Affairs, said. "This train trip is our way of saying thank you to the state, its leaders and the people who make Oklahoma special."

Events in Guthrie included a legislative luncheon, the Ceremonial Legislative Session at the Scottish Rite Temple, and a Native American Sunset Ceremony in the Temple Oval. The Centennial Express departed from Guthrie at 6:30 p.m., and was followed by a reception for legislators upon arriving at the Oklahoma City Santa Fe Depot at 7:30 p.m.

"We are proud to play such a vital role in this historic event for Oklahoma," Phil Tomlinson, Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation, said. "The trip aboard the Centennial Express train kicked off an amazing series of ceremonial events in our state. It certainly gave everyone a glimpse into the mode of transportation used during our very first statehood events, and also a new appreciation for how important the railway system is to Oklahoma."

The day's events were in coordination with the Guthrie Centennial Committee, City of Guthrie, Oklahoma Centennial Commission, ODOT, BNSF Railway Co., the Oklahoma Railroad Association, Amtrak Heartland Flyer Coalition and the Oklahoma Legislature. The Guthrie Lions Club served as "Official Hosts" for state legislators and dignitaries.

---www.okladot.state.ok.us---

(Editors and News Directors: For questions regarding the *Centennial Express*, please call the ODOT Public Affairs Office at 405-521-6000.)