

Results of bridge funding

Out strip expectations;

Much work remains

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One-time funding appropriated by the state Legislature in 2006 for bridges has been used to repair or build 68 structures throughout the state, but dozens more remain on a list of the state's worst, ODOT Director Gary Ridley reported to members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission at its meeting Monday, Dec. 3.

In 2006, the state Legislature made a special appropriation to fund \$100 million in bridge repair and replacements. At the time, ODOT officials said they believed the money would fund replacements for 35 to 40 of the bridges. Monday, Ridley told commissioners that repair or replacement of 45 bridges has been funded with the one-time funds, and that another 23 others were partially funded with the appropriation.

With passage of Senate Bill 1288, ODOT officials drew up preliminary designs for about 135 bridges and focused on those that were the worst and those that could be quickly readied for construction.

"With this funding, we have improved the state highway system by focusing on one of our most critical needs," ODOT Director Gary Ridley said. "We set an ambitious goal and our designers and staff have exceeded our own expectations."

The final amount of money from SB 1288 was committed by the Transportation Commission at its November meeting – 18 months from the time lawmakers made the appropriation. Normally, the process of replacing a bridge takes three to four years of preparation, including environmental clearance, surveys, design, right of way acquisition and relocation of utilities, but ODOT used an expedited schedule to build the bridges as quickly as possible.

Of the 68 bridges targeted with the one-time funding, 49 were load posted – some of the worst structures in the state. Load posted bridges have limited carrying capacity, meaning they are structurally unable to safely carry a legally loaded truck – and in some cases, not even a school bus. At the time the special appropriation was made, Oklahoma had 137 load posted bridges on its highway system.

"Our job was to stretch this money as far as we could," ODOT bridge engineer Greg Allen, who oversees the \$100 million plan, said. "It is rewarding to see this \$100 million go as far as it did. We have a way to go in eliminating all critical bridges on the state highway system, but this funding helped substantially."

Oklahoma currently has about 1,600 bridges on its highway system that are ranked as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Currently, the state has 71 load posted bridges; 13 of which have been added since passage of the SB 1288.

In addition to the one-time funding in SB 1288, the state Legislature increased ODOT's annual budget in House Bill 1176 with annual funding increases contingent on increases in state revenue. If HB 1176 is fully funded, state officials will be able to replace 480 bridges – about triple what was previously planned.

However, the agency has no funding available for another 626 narrow or low sufficiency rated bridges in need of critical repair or replacement. Although one-time appropriations allow ODOT to target special projects, ultimately consistent funding increases such as HB 1176 most benefit Oklahoma's highway system.

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Funding for Oklahoma bridges

Structurally deficient bridges, when left open to traffic, typically requires significant maintenance and repair to remain in service and eventual rehabilitation or replacement to address deficiencies.

Functionally obsolete bridges are those that do not have adequate lane widths, shoulder widths, or vertical clearances to serve current traffic demand, or those that may be occasionally flooded.

Load posted bridges have limited carrying capacity, meaning they are structurally unable to safely carry a legally loaded truck (usually 45 tons).

- Amount of one-time funding in SB 1288 (2006): \$100 million
- Annual funding increase in funding under HB 1176 (2006) if state's 3 percent increased revenue target is met: \$50 million
- Annual funding increase in funding under HB 1176 (2006) if state's 3 percent increased revenue target is not met: \$17.5 million.
- Was first year of full funding under HB 1176 met? No – ODOT received \$17.5 million, rather than the targeted \$50 million
- Bridges in Oklahoma: 6,700
- Oklahoma highway bridges ranked structurally deficient or functionally obsolete: 1,600
- Highway bridges that currently load posted: 71
- Number of highway bridges 75 years old or more: 803 (Built prior to election of FDR.)
- Number of highway bridges at least 80 years old: 173 (The Ford Model-T was still in production)
- Number of highway bridges that will be 75 or more in 2014: 1,583
- Number of bridges scheduled for replacement or major rehabilitation by 2014: 480
- Funding backlog *for bridges only*: \$2.6 billion
- Number of bridges that have been load posted since SB 1288 passed: 13
- Number of load posted bridges that can't carry a loaded school bus: 35

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(Editors and News Directors: For more information, call the ODOT Public Affairs Office at 405-521-6000.)