

**Byways grants approved,
Oklahoma receives highest**

amount in region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2007

PR# 08-001

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Information Release



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On the heels of celebrating our state's Centennial, Oklahoma continues to showcase our unique attributes with the help of the Federal Highway Administration's grants to the Oklahoma Byways Program. The grants will assist communities with project development and enhancement of areas along their routes.

The FHWA recently announced approval of fiscal year 2007 Byways grants, with Oklahoma receiving more than \$985,000 for 11 projects along state byways. This amount is more than double the state's 2001 grant of \$450,000. Oklahoma's allocation is more than any other state in the region and ranks Oklahoma as 10th highest nationally in amount received. Grants were approved for 276 projects in 41 states as authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU) federal bill.

The Oklahoma Byways Program is a grassroots collaborative effort, with local communities working with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and partner, University of Oklahoma Outreach, to establish, recognize and preserve selected roads based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities. Designation promotes community sustainability, fosters efforts to preserve the unique history of the byway and encourages travelers to experience our state's diversity.

"The Oklahoma Byways Program is very excited about the recent award of Byways grants to Oklahoma. The large number of grant awards, as well as the award amount, is a testament to the efforts of the Byways Communities that submitted the grant applications and to the quality of Byways in Oklahoma," Richard Andrews, Oklahoma Byways Program Coordinator and ODOT Project Management Division Assistant Manager, said.

The Byways Program is a cooperative effort between ODOT and the University of Oklahoma Outreach. The state Secretary of Transportation approves all state byway designations. Once approved as a state byway, communities collaborate with the Oklahoma Byways Program to bring their goals to fruition in an effort to enhance economic development and community sustainability throughout the state. Byway project proposals are submitted to the FHWA where grants are considered and approved.

"Our communities have accomplished the difficult balance between progressing forward while maintaining a full appreciation of our past. The awards reflect some of the most innovative proposals throughout the United States and align with the statewide goals of Byways Program in Oklahoma. Together, the Oklahoma Byways Program and the award recipients will collaborate to interpret the unique history of our treasured roads while continuing to develop long term economic prosperity," Pam Lewis, Oklahoma Byways Program Director, University of Oklahoma Outreach, said.

Project costs, descriptions and details can be viewed at <http://www.okladot.state.ok.us/public-info/press/>. For more details and information on the Byways Program, visit www.okscenicbyways.org.

Projects include:

Route 66: Spans nearly 400 miles with endpoints in Quapaw and Texola

The projects approved for Route 66 were submitted by the communities of Miami, Bristow, El Reno and Tulsa. These awards include:

- Directional signs and markers to historic sites, Miami
- Route 66 banners welcoming byway travelers; Preservation and Enhancements plan; Completion of Youngheim Centennial Plaza, El Reno
- Marketing materials, Bristow
- Cultural Crossroads Interpretive Intersection, Tulsa, 11th St. (Route 66) and Yale Ave.

Talimena Scenic Drive: A 54-mile route between Mena, Ark. and Talihina, Okla.

Regional projects approved along the Talimena Scenic Drive were submitted by the Talimena Drive Association, City of Poteau, and Talihina Chamber of Commerce and include:

- Rehabilitation for Interpretive and Visitor Center, Talihina
- Phase 2 Corridor Management Plan to ensure long-term sustainability of the byway
- Brochure and Web site for Talimena Scenic Drive, **Mountain Pass** and **Mountain Gateway Scenic Byway**

Wichita Mountains Scenic Byway: SH-115 and SH-49 near Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

- The Wichita Mountains Scenic Byway will be enhanced by a project award to the City of Mountain View to create a Geological Plaza & Visitor Center.

Cimarron Heritage Trail Byway: US-64 and SH-325 in the Panhandle west to New Mexico

- The Cimarron Heritage Trail Byway will benefit from funding for a Corridor Management Plan for development and enhancements submitted by the City of Boise City.

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(Editors and News Directors: For more information call the ODOT Public and Media Relations Division at 405-521-6000. To download graphics, project costs, descriptions and details visit www.okladot.state.ok.us/public-info/press/)