

**April Commission Wrap-Up:**  
**Funding needs, safety issues discussed;**  
**\$49.2 million in projects awarded**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 9, 2008  
PR# 08-027

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

## Information Release



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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's March 5 meeting include a discussion of funding issues, a visit by Lt. Gov. Jari Askins to present safety awards, approval of 11 rail safety projects across the state, the awarding of projects on US-59 in Cherokee County, I-44 in Comanche County and I-40 in Pottawatomie County.

Commissioners held their first press conference in memory to explain the effects of a drop in revenue that could result if a trigger is not removed from the funding mechanism for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. Current state law specifies that ODOT will receive an increased amount of funding each year. However, in years when state revenue growth is estimated at less than 3 percent, the amount is reduced by more than 50 percent.

They explained that the loss of current funding to its budget could be devastating and that without guarantees of the additional funding, \$127 million of already scheduled projects will have to be eliminated from the agency's eight-year Construction Work Plan. Commissioners pointed out cuts in infrastructure funding could hurt the state's economic development efforts.

Askins was on hand to present 11 awards for employee safety, one for each of the agency's nine divisions, an overall award and another for the division showing the most improvement over the last year. She noted that over the last five years, the agency has saved nearly \$2.7 in workers compensation premium costs through work-related accident reduction.

Commissioners approved 11 rail safety crossing projects, which will include a flashing light signal with a gate arm, designed to reduce the number of vehicle collisions with trains. The safety projects will be built in Garfield, Hughes, Mayes, Murray, Okmulgee, Ottawa, Pawnee and Wagoner counties.

Commissioners awarded a \$7.7 million contract to build a three-mile stretch of US-59 over Wild Horse Mountain south of Sallisaw. Previously, part of the mountain was removed in preparation for realignment of the highway.

They also awarded a \$4.8 million contract to build new, wider bridges on I-44 over Medicine Bluff Creek. The bridges being replaced were built in the late 1950s, are functionally obsolete and have become a maintenance concern.

Also approved was a contract for approximately \$4.5 million for lighting, striping and other safety improvements on I-40 between Kickapoo Ave. (SH-3E) and Harrison Ave. (SH-18) in Shawnee.

In all, commissioners awarded 24 contracts totaling \$49.2 million to improve highways, interstates and county roads in 20 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beaver, Beckham, Caddo, Cherokee, Choctaw, Comanche, Custer, Ellis, Grady, Hughes, Kiowa, Lincoln, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Pottawatomie, Rogers, Sequoyah, Tulsa, Wagoner and Woodward.

The commission - an eight-member panel appointed by the governor to oversee the state's transportation development - awards project contracts for road and bridge construction every month. The panel's next meeting is Monday, May 5, 2008, at 11 a.m. in the R.A. Ward Transportation Building in Oklahoma City.

Before a project is awarded, ODOT researches, plans and designs work to be done. Contracts are bid competitively, with the OTC selecting the winning firm. Contractors have a grace period to begin work, typically several weeks or months after a contract is awarded. Weather or other factors also can delay a project.

Contracts, bid information, the commission's monthly agenda and project details can be accessed at <http://www.okladot.state.ok.us>.

– [www.okladot.state.ok.us](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us) –

**(Editors and News Directors: For details about projects in your area and to download accompanying pictures, please visit the Web site [www.okladot.state.ok.us/public-info](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us/public-info). For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Office at 405-521-6000.)**



**Celebrating safety: Oklahoma Department of Transportation engineers and superintendents mark the agency's annual Safety Awards. Over the last five years, the agency has saved \$2.7 million in workers' compensation costs by reducing employee accidents. Pictured are: John Green of the Division Four Division Wide Bridge Crew; Jerry Harwell, of the Duncan Residency; Steve Myatt, Harper County maintenance superintendent; Jeanette Allen, Division Five superintendent; Randle White, Division Eight engineer; Jeff Perry, superintendent of the Cherokee county maintenance crew; Jerry Eldridge, Madill resident engineer; Lt. Gov. Jari Askins; David Smith, Division Two engineer; Paul Rachel, Division Three engineer; John Fuller, ODOT Chief Engineer; Red Raley, of the Purcell Residency; Nick Guerriero, of the Central Sign Shop; and Mike Bracken, of the agency's Safety Branch.**



**Lt. Gov. Jari Askins presents Dan Overland, chairman of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission, a proclamation declaring April 7-11 to be Work Zone Awareness Week. In 2006, 17 people were killed in Oklahoma work zones. In addition, 515 people were injured in 1,122 collisions.**