

July Commission Wrap-Up:
Asphalt, federal funds discussed;
\$41 million in projects awarded
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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's July 14 meeting include discussions of federal transportation funding, a nationwide asphalt shortage and approval of an agreement for a study of pedestrian facilities for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In comments to the commission, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley said the agency's Eight-Year Construction Work Plan could be affected by a reduction in federal funding. He noted that without Congressional action, future federal funding could be reduced \$170 million from the \$500 million in transportation funding received annually by Oklahoma.

Ridley also said the nation is facing a shortage of liquid asphalt. As a result, the agency may focus more on projects that are less asphalt intensive, such as bridges.

He pointed out the Work Plan will also be affected by improved state funding from the Oklahoma Legislature. As a result of state funding increases, he said he expects all projects in the current Eight-Year Construction Work Plan to be completed.

Commissioners approved an interagency agreement with the University of Oklahoma for a study of pedestrian accessibility across the state. The federally funded study is a self assessment expected to take at least two years.

Commissioners approved a \$5.9 million contract to resurface a four-mile stretch of I-35 between I-40 and I-44 in Oklahoma City and a \$4.8 million project to resurface eight miles of I-244 through downtown Tulsa. In addition, they approved a \$1 million project to install cable barrier in Tulsa County on a 2 mile stretch of I-44 and a 3 mile stretch of I-244.

Also approved was a \$3.6 million contract to resurface 23 miles of highway in Beckham and Roger Mills counties. The project will include sections of SH-152 near the Texas state line and also east of Sayre.

Commissioners also approved a \$3 million project to rebuild a bridge in Hughes County on SH-48 over Wewoka Creek north of Holdenville and a \$3.6 million contract to rebuild a bridge in Cherokee County on SH-82 over Blackbird Creek about 10 miles northwest of Tahlequah.

In addition, they approved a \$1.2 million project to grade a section of US-54 near Hooker in Texas County in preparation for paving later. The project is part of a plan to widen US-54, which bisects the county en route from Texas to Kansas.

In all, commissioners awarded 38 contracts totaling \$41 million to improve highways, interstates and county roads in 27 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Adair, Beckham, Bryan, Caddo, Canadian, Carter, Cherokee, Cleveland, Comanche, Craig, Dewey, Grady, Harmon, Harper, Hughes, Johnston, LeFlore, Logan, Major, Okfuskee, Oklahoma, Payne, Pottawatomie, Rogers, Stephens, Texas and Tulsa counties.

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 11 a.m. Tuesday, August 12, 2008, 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 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 –

(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. For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Office at 405-521-6000.)



Gary Ridley, Oklahoma Department of Transportation director, explains feared reductions in federal funding could impact transportation construction across the nation, affecting state and local projects. Ridley's comments came following the monthly meeting of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission Monday, July 14.