

**ODOT delivers “progress report”  
on state’s bridges**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 31, 2008

PR# 08-043

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

## Information Release



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

On the eve of the first anniversary of the I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, Oklahoma Department of Transportation officials are pleased to provide a “progress report” to update Oklahoma citizens. Oklahoma has had a myriad of discouraging news regarding the state of its roads and bridges, but citizens and the legislature have worked hard to reverse this trend – well before the 2007 tragedy.

ODOT officials say efforts are paying off and the department is making progress on addressing needs statewide.

In the past year, hundreds of bridges have been repaired or replaced on Oklahoma’s highways. The number of structurally deficient bridges has been significantly reduced as has the number of load posted bridges. Hundreds more have been slated for major repairs or replacement. In all:

- The number of load-posted bridges in Oklahoma has been reduced almost 63 percent from 150 to 56, thanks primarily to a \$100 million, one-time appropriation by the Legislature and Governor.
- In the past 30 months, ODOT has repaired or replaced 242 bridges at a cost of \$682 million.
- Close to 500 on-system bridges are scheduled to be replaced in the 2007-2014 Construction Work Plan, which is more than triple the amount of bridges addressed in previous eight-year plans.
- The number of structurally deficient bridges has been reduced from 989 to 913, over the last year.
- Over the next decade, state funding for the agency is expected to increase by \$2.7 billion.

Additionally, the agency inspects many of its state highway bridges more frequently than federal requirements and has since beefed up its inspection regimen to include detailed inspections of fracture-critical bridges on county roads.

ODOT Director Gary Ridley said he expects continued improvements thanks to funding increases but noted because of the decades-old underfunding problem it could take up to 10 years before citizens begin to see significant effects of recent efforts.

“We are very optimistic we can now begin to address a backlog of projects that were left undone due to years of underfunding,” Gary Ridley, ODOT director said. “Improvements to Oklahoma’s bridges have been a direct result of efforts by the Legislature, the Governor who made transportation a priority and provided the necessary funding.”

In 2006, legislators approved a one-time appropriation of \$100 million that ODOT officials used to kick off a program to tackle load posted bridges, which have limited carrying capacity.

In 2006 and again in 2008, lawmakers implemented long-term funding increases for transportation projects throughout the state. Legislators also approved a \$300 million bond package aimed at keeping the agency’s current eight-year Construction Work Plan on track in addition to \$2.7 billion funding for other needed improvements. Lawmakers have allowed the department to focus these funds where they are needed most across the state.

Work on many of these bridges began after the Webbers Falls tragedy, but also includes projects such as the I-40 Crosstown in Oklahoma City, the planning of which started in 1993.

Infrastructure needs are not limited to bridges, and improvements include more lanes to address congestion along with safety improvements such as shoulders and cable barriers. Therefore, funds are spread out across the state based on many factors including traffic counts, conditions and several other factors.

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

**(Editors and News Directors: For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)**