



December Commission Wrap-Up: Stimulus package discussed; \$51.8 million in projects awarded

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Dec. 8 meeting include discussion of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's preparation for a possible federal economic stimulus that could result in improvements to state bridges and highways; approval of a series of projects in the Safe Routes to School Program; honors for the *Heartland Flyer* coalition and for pavement improvements, and approval of \$51.8 million in bridge and highway construction projects.

Gary Ridley, director of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, said the agency's staff has identified \$850 million of already-scheduled transportation projects that need little preparation work before being ready for construction and could be expedited as part of a federal stimulus plan. Such a plan is expected early next year, and Ridley said the agency will be prepared. He said expediting projects will allow the agency to add projects to the Construction Work Plan. The agency currently has a \$12 billion backlog in highway construction projects.

Ridley also presented an award to the agency's Tulsa division for overall improvement in pavement smoothness. The award is given for progress in smoothness over a two year period.

Members of the *Heartland Flyer* coalition were congratulated for winning the "Champion of the Rails" award from Amtrak, at the President's Service and Safety Awards presentation held in Los Angeles recently. The award is given for enhancements to rail service.

"If you ever heard the story of the little train that could, that is the *Heartland Flyer*," said Joy Smith, Ft. Worth-based Amtrak Assistant Superintendent.

Commissioners approved grants to 18 communities in the Safe Routes to School Program. The communities requested funding for \$3 million in projects to encourage children to walk to school safely. Individual construction contracts will be approved at a later date.

In other actions, commissioners approved a reconstruction project on eastbound I-40 near Warner in Muskogee County, a widening project on US-54 through Hooker in Texas County and project improving the connection between US-81 and the Duncan Bypass in Stephens County.

In all, commissioners awarded 19 contracts totaling \$51.8 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 16 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beckham, Bryan, Carter, Comanche, Creek, Grady, Jackson, Kay, Mayes, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Osage, Stephens, Texas, Tulsa and Washita.

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. Monday, Jan. 5, 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 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. For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)

INFORMATION RELEASE

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION
200 N.E. 21st St. OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73105-3204 PHONE 405-521-6000



Randle White, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Division 8 Engineer, accepts the Director's Pavement Improvement Award for pavement progress in the Tulsa area. Also pictured are: Dan Overland, chairman of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission; Phil Tomlinson, Oklahoma Transportation Secretary; Ginger McGovern, Planning Division Engineer; Guy Berry, District 8 transportation commissioner and Gary Ridley, ODOT director.



Joy Smith, Amtrak Assistant Superintendent (third from right), congratulates the *Heartland Flyer* team for winning the “Champion of the Rails” award from Amtrak for enhancements to rail service. From left are: Dan Overland, chairman of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission; Judi Elmore, co-president of the *Heartland Flyer* coalition; Phil Tomlinson, Oklahoma Transportation Secretary; Joe Kyle, manager of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation’s Rail Division; John Dougherty, of ODOT’s Rail Division; Gary Ridley, ODOT director. Sharing in the honor but not pictured are: Karen Adams, co-president of the *Heartland Flyer* coalition; Lila Cooper, lead service attendant; Michael Doty, conductor; Carol A. Dougherty, lead service attendant; Robert Villarreal, conductor.



Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley (seated at center table) looks on after discussing a possible federal economic stimulus package and its affects on Oklahoma's transportation system as David Streb, ODOT's assistant director of pre-construction, presents contracts with nine consultants for stimulus plan preparation to members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission at its Monday, Dec. 8 meeting.