



May Commission Wrap-Up

Commission reaches decision on Sooner Sub rail line; \$41 million in contracts awarded

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission’s Monday, May 5 meeting include a vote on the sale of the Sooner Subdivision rail line, an update on the Oklahoma Department of Transportation’s ongoing effort to repair the Purcell/Lexington Bridge, a report on transportation funding proposals before U.S. Congress and approval of contracts for major bridge work on US-60 near Ponca City and city street reconstruction in Elk City.

Secretary and Executive Director of Commerce Larry Parman, representing a Selection Committee of five cabinet secretaries, presented commissioners with a recommendation for sale of the state-owned Sooner Sub rail line that runs between Sapulpa and Midwest City. Over the last few months, the Selection Committee reviewed proposals from four companies as well as the option to keep the rail line under state ownership. After lengthy discussion, commissioners voted unanimously for the Selection Committee’s recommendation to sell the line to Stillwater Central Railroad, a subsidiary of WATCO, which has been leasing the line from ODOT since 1998. The \$75 million deal will close in July and includes financial commitments from Stillwater Central Railroad for enhanced rail access to energy infrastructure in Cushing, track improvements that will allow faster train speeds and development of a six-month trial run of passenger rail service within the next five years.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Executive Director Mike Patterson reported to commissioners on recently-announced additional repairs to the Purcell/Lexington bridge on US-77/SH-39. Cracks found on bridge beams in mid-April have added to the work that must be completed before the bridge can reopen. Despite the additional work, ODOT is still aiming for its goal to open the bridge to traffic by mid-June.

Patterson also highlighted a federal transportation funding proposal recently submitted to Congress by President Obama. The reauthorization measure would provide more than \$300 billion for surface transportation programs over a three-year period, including increased funding for highways and public transit. Without action by lawmakers in Washington, DC, the Highway Trust Fund is expected to become insolvent sometime this summer or fall, which would affect federal reimbursement on hundreds of highway projects in Oklahoma.

“While we don’t know if Congress will pass a reauthorization this year, I feel comfortable that the dialogue is at least taking place on how to solve the nation’s transportation issues,” Patterson said.

The commission awarded a contract with a base bid of \$10.5 million and the possibility of early completion incentives for bridge reconstruction and rehabilitation on US-60 over Bois D’Arc Creek and its overflow near Ponca City in Kay County. They also approved a nearly \$5 million contract to reconstruct and widen the intersection of Pioneer Rd. and 20th St. in Elk City with federal and city funds.

In all, commissioners awarded 23 contracts totaling nearly \$41 million to improve bridges, highways, interstates and roads in 18 counties.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Alfalfa, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Garvin, Grant, Jackson, Kay, McClain, McCurtain, Le Flore, Love, Pawnee, Pittsburg, Pottawatomie, Seminole, Sequoyah and Washita counties.

The 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 regular meeting is scheduled for **Monday, June 2 at 11 a.m.** in the R.A. Ward Transportation Building in Oklahoma City.

Before a project is awarded, ODOT researches, plans and designs the work to be done. Contracts are bid competitively, with the commission selecting the winning firm. Typically, work begins several weeks or months after contracts are awarded.

Contracts, bid information, the commission's monthly agenda and project details can be viewed at www.okladot.state.ok.us.

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At its Monday, May 5 meeting, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission voted to sell the state-owned Sooner Subdivision rail line between Sapulpa and Midwest City to Stillwater Central Railroad, a WATCO subsidiary, for \$75 million. WATCO Chief Executive Officer Rick Webb, pictured here speaking with reporters, thanked the commission for its trust in his company, which has been leasing the rail line from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation since 1998.



At its Monday, May 5 meeting, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission awarded a contract with a base bid of \$10.5 million for bridge reconstruction and rehabilitation on US-60 over the Bois D' Arc Creek and its overflow near Ponca City in Kay County. The contract includes financial incentives for early completion of the project.