



August Commission Wrap-Up

Short-term federal funding extension will keep state transportation projects moving forward; \$68 million in contracts awarded

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2014

PR# 14-032

Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, August 4 meeting include an update on the process of finalizing the sale of the Sooner Sub rail line, news on recent action by Congress to address federal transportation funding, a report on the successful emergency repairs to US-271 near Clayton and approval of contracts for bridge rehabilitation on SH-266 and SH-167 in Rogers County, bridge reconstruction and resurfacing on SH-33 in Payne County and improvements to SH-11 in Grant County.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Executive Director Mike Patterson briefed commissioners on the details of the sale of the Sooner Sub rail line, which was finalized following the commission meeting. In May, the commission approved the sale of the rail line that runs between Sapulpa and Midwest City to Stillwater Central Railroad a WATCO Company, for \$75 million. Proceeds from the sale will go to an ODOT fund designated for improvements to state-owed rail line, including safety upgrades at rail crossings.

Patterson also gave an update on legislation recently passed by Congress to maintain the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund, ensuring continued federal funding for hundreds of ongoing and planned transportation projects in Oklahoma. Commissioners heard that the \$10.8 billion measure will extend funding through May 2015, but that a permanent solution is needed to provide the certainty required for long-term transportation planning.

"This measure helps solve two short-term issues by allowing ODOT to move forward with new highway and bridge projects as scheduled and ensuring timely payments can be made to construction contractors for ongoing work," Patterson said.

Additionally, Patterson shared with commissioners that the Chickasaw Nation has offered to partner with ODOT to take another look at issues expressed by the public about a future bridge project near Tishomingo in Johnston County that is scheduled in Federal Fiscal Year 2018. Through this partnership, ODOT is evaluating possibly replacing the structurally deficient SH-99/US-377 bridge over the Washita River with a new bridge built on an offset alignment. This partnership would look at solutions to allow the existing bridge to remain open to traffic without a detour during construction.

An emergency project to reopen a damaged section of highway in Pushmataha County was successfully completed in about half the estimated time, commissioners learned. In June, ODOT closed US-271 near Clayton after degraded soil under the highway caused a slide. Because of the 70 mile highway detour for drivers, ODOT expedited the bidding procedure and commissioners awarded an emergency contract with strong financial incentives for early completion. The contractor originally bid 40 days to reopen the highway to one lane, but worked around the clock to cut that time by more than half, reopening both lanes in 18 days. Video footage of the repairs can be seen online at www.Youtube.com/OklaDOT.

The commission awarded a contract with a base bid of nearly \$5.5 million to rehabilitate bridges on SH-266 in Verdigris and SH-167 in Catoosa in Rogers County and a contract with a more than \$4 million base bid for bridge reconstruction and pavement resurfacing on SH-33 near Perkins in Payne County. Both contracts include financial incentives for early completion. Commissioners also approved a nearly \$10 million contract for bridge reconstruction, pavement resurfacing and shoulder improvement on SH-11 near Medford in Grant County.

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In all, commissioners awarded 26 contracts totaling more than \$68 million to improve bridges, highways, interstates and roads in 24 counties. Contracts were awarded for projects in Atoka, Blaine, Carter, Cherokee, Cleveland, Cotton, Garfield, Garvin, Grady, Grant, Johnston, Kay, Le Flore, McCurtain, Major, Mayes, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Ottawa, Payne, Pottawatomie, Pushmataha, Rogers and Sequoyah 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, September 8 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 their Monday, August 4 meeting, members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission heard that legislation recently passed by Congress will provide short-term solvency to the Highway Trust Fund through May 2015. This will allow the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to continue with ongoing and planned projects as scheduled, including nearly \$5 million bridge rehabilitation project on the heavily-traveled I-44 Belle Isle bridge in Oklahoma City, pictured here, set to go out for bid later in August.



Oklahoma Department of Transportation Resident Engineer David Huddleston monitors excavation work during a July emergency repair project on US-271 near Clayton in Pushmataha County, pictured here. At their Monday, August 4 meeting, members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission heard that ODOT's construction contractor worked around the clock to reopen the highway in only 18 days.