



October Commission Wrap-Up

Historic transportation commission meeting yields updates on major bridge projects; \$66 million in contracts awarded

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, Oct. 6 meeting include an update on the design of the Purcell/Lexington bridge, a review of an experimental bridge construction method used to replace a SH-51 bridge in Creek County, details on a \$4 million public transit grant recently awarded to the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and recognition of the 40th anniversary of the ODOT headquarters building. The commission approved major contracts for highway and bridge reconstruction on US-277 in Comanche County, cable barrier installation in on SH-152 (Airport Rd.) in Oklahoma City and highway reconstruction on US-64 in Alfalfa County.

Executive Director Mike Patterson told commissioners that engineering design work is currently underway on a new US-77/SH-39 bridge to replace the existing 76-year-old bridge between Purcell and Lexington that was closed for more than four months earlier this year. At a recent town hall meeting in Lexington, ODOT officials addressed local concerns about fully-loaded trucks crossing the bridge and the agency's expedited timeline for construction of its replacement.

"ODOT is designing the new bridge and doing the environmental review at the same time to move this along as quickly as possible," Patterson said. "Thanks to the commission, we now have the project scheduled to go to bid at least six years earlier, in Federal Fiscal Year 2018, and we will accelerate that timeframe if we can."

Commissioners also heard that, thanks to a new experimental bridge construction method, the SH-51 bridge over Cottonwood Creek near Mannford in Creek County was replaced with only a few days of inconvenience to drivers. The new method allowed a contractor for ODOT to build the new bridge alongside the existing bridge, and then slide it into place after the old bridge was removed. Rather than closing the bridge and detouring traffic for several months, this project only closed the bridge for 11 days, saving an estimated \$2 million in user costs that the lengthy detour would have cost drivers.

Thanks to a recently-announced \$4 million Ladders to Opportunity grant from the Federal Transit Administration, several Oklahoma transit providers will have the resources to purchase 37 new vehicles. Oklahoma was one of 19 states to receive a grant, which will help 10 transit operators statewide modernize their fleets.

Patterson announced the date of Monday's commission meeting was particularly historic, as it was the 40th anniversary of the dedication of ODOT's headquarters in Oklahoma City. Photos and original programs from the Oct. 6, 1974 dedication of what was then the Oklahoma Department of Highways office building were on display to commemorate the occasion.

Commissioners gave their approval to a \$15 million contract for highway and bridge reconstruction on more than four miles of US-277 north of Lawton and Fort Sill in Comanche County. They also awarded a nearly \$868,000 contract for installation of more than five miles of cable barrier on SH-152 (Airport Rd.) in Oklahoma City and a nearly \$9 million contract to reconstruct more than four miles of US-64 in Alfalfa County.

In all, commissioners awarded 24 contracts totaling more than \$66 million to improve bridges, highways, interstates and roads in 22 counties. Contracts were awarded for projects in Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Cherokee, Comanche, Cotton, Craig, Creek, Dewey, Grady, Harper, Hughes, Kingfisher, Lincoln, Muskogee, Noble, Oklahoma, Payne, Rogers, Stephens 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, Nov. 3 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, Oct. 6 meeting, members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission heard an update on the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's use of an innovative and experimental bridge construction method to replace the SH-51 bridge over Cottonwood Creek near Mannford in Creek County. The new bridge, pictured here, was built alongside the existing bridge, and then slid it into place after the old bridge was removed, resulting in a road closure of only 11 days versus the several months usually required.