



## OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

200 N. E. 21st Street

Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3204

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### Facts regarding the cause of cracks on the Purcell/Lexington Bridge

February 28, 2014

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation has put together bullet points and a timeline to clarify facts about the bridge closure and when they were made public.

#### The facts are:

- ODOT regrets and said so as early as January 31 that repairs made during an ongoing project, which included welding, appear to have caused cracks in areas of the bridge containing a manganese alloy. The bridge was closed on Friday, January 31 and at least one news report on that day has the department making that admission.
- When the bridge was under construction in 1938, the contractor had the option to build a portion of the bridge with manganese steel. When national bridge inspections began in 1950s, the inspector left no indication that the steel differed from other portions of the bridge.
- Numerous inspections were performed on the bridge in the last year within three categories: the federally required national bridge inspection, fracture critical inspection and construction inspection. It was during the construction inspection toward the end of the project when areas were being tightened that the cracks were formed. These cracks weren't found in earlier inspections because they were only caused by the recent repair project.
- The chords and channels along the bottom of the truss structure sitting directly atop the piers are the only parts of the bridge made of manganese alloy. The rest of the bridge is made of high carbon steel and the welding didn't cause problems in those areas.
- The exact number of cracks is difficult to pin down because they are very small and require a certain test to make sure they are actually cracks in the steel and not just in the paint. That's why the contract for repairs includes fixes to all 264 areas of the bridge that were welded, not just where cracks formed.
- The cost of the repairs is coming from ODOT's contingency fund. The department is not seeking additional funds from the state legislature or federal government.
- Governor Fallin is holding ODOT accountable for repairs to the bridge and the department fully accepts this responsibility. The Governor visited the area and held a press conference February 7 after declaring an emergency.
- ODOT released many pieces of information at the monthly public Transportation Commission meeting on February 3, and then on its website February 6, including transit schedules, bullet points about the bridge and detour routes.

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### **Timeline of events and ODOT's public comments about the cause of cracks on the Purcell/Lexington Bridge**

February 28, 2014

**January 20** – Inspection discovers cracks.

**January 21** – Bridge load posted at 5 tons, later revised to 16 tons that same day.

**January 31** – Bridge closed. Chief Engineer Casey Shell reveals to Channel 5 and 9 that welding in the ongoing repair project caused cracks. On the 6 p.m. broadcast, channel 5 mentioned cracks developed near welds.

**February 3** – Commission meeting – Casey Shell discussed the bridge at length as well as the cause of cracks due to welds during an ongoing project (audio available). Tulsa World and the Oklahoman were present. Later that day, ODOT attended a meeting in Purcell to discuss the bridge and the cause of the cracks due to welds during an ongoing project. Channel 4 was present at Purcell meeting.

**February 4** – ODOT attended city hall meeting in Lexington to discuss the bridge and the cause of the cracks due to welds during an ongoing project.

**February 6** – Released information about the cause of the cracks on ODOT website. Purcell Register ran story about cause of cracks.

**February 7** – Press conference with Governor. Again, cracks and the welding that caused them were discussed at length (video available). Channel 5, Channel 9, Channel 4, NewsOK.com and Channel 25 all present, including Purcell Register, Oklahoman and the Norman Transcript. Fox ran story on 9 p.m. news about the cause of cracks. Channel 9 ran story at 4 p.m. about the cause of cracks.

**February 8** – Channel 9 ran story at 6 a.m. talking about what caused the cracks. Norman Transcript and Enid News Eagle ran story about cause of cracks.

**February 9** – The Express Star out of Chickasha ran a story saying the cause of the cracks was due to welding during an ongoing project.

**February 13** – Pre-Bid meeting for contractors.

**February 14** – Bid letting and Emergency commission meeting (same day). A \$10.6 million contract was awarded to Manhattan Road & Bridge of Sapulpa.

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