



May Commission Wrap-Up:

Progress on bridges highlighted; nearly \$73 million in projects awarded

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's May 3 meeting include discussion of improvements to the state's bridge infrastructure, recognition of the retirement of a long-time transportation leader and approval of construction contracts totaling about \$73 million.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley told commissioners that in recent years the department has made progress in reducing the number of outdated and deficient bridges on the state's highway system. He cited the example of a structure recently removed to make way for a new bridge on SH-51 near Coweta. The original bridge was 60 years old, structurally deficient and functionally obsolete with outdated design standards.

"When this project is done, we will add the new structure to the growing list of bridges that this commission has, over the years, worked so diligently to replace," he told commissioners. "Governor Henry and the Legislature have provided Oklahoma transportation with more funds, and you have put those additional funds to work quickly."

He also predicted that at least another decade of sustained commitment by ODOT and the Legislature will be required to bring the state's bridge infrastructure up to standard.

Ridley said the agency is moving ahead on a series of highway resurfacing projects that was delayed pending the receipt of necessary federal funds to complete the bidding process.

Noting the bidding process was delayed by only 11 days, he said the projects scheduled this summer are necessary to maintain highways damaged by last winter's storms.

Ridley also recognized the retirement of John Kyle, who has served as executive director of the Oklahoma Railroad Association for 25 years. Ridley and other ODOT officials said Kyle's work has been instrumental in advancing both the rail industry and Oklahoma transportation as a whole.

Commissioners approved safety improvements, including guardrails in Beckham and Kiowa counties and across the Roosevelt Bridge in Bryan County, as well as contracts with engineering firms to perform underwater inspections of deep-water bridge substructures.

The commission awarded 76 contracts totaling nearly \$73 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 45 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Alfalfa, Atoka, Beckham, Blaine, Bryan, Carter, Cherokee, Comanche, Cotton, Craig, Creek, Custer, Ellis, Garvin, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Hughes, Jackson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, LeFlore, Lincoln, Logan, Major, Mayes, Murray, Muskogee, Noble, Oklahoma, Osage, Ottawa, Pawnee, Payne, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, Roger Mills, Seminole, Sequoyah, Stephens, Tulsa, Wagoner 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 meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m. Monday, June 7, 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. 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.

INFORMATION RELEASE

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Making way for safer highways: Workers had to act quickly to remove this bridge on SH-51 while minimizing disruption to shipping traffic on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigational System below. The 60-year-old bridge was structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. The new \$9 million bridge is expected to be completed in early 2011. At the May 3 Oklahoma Transportation Commission's meeting, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley said the new bridge will be part of a growing list of new bridges across the state.



Joe Kyle, right, director of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's Rail Programs Division, congratulates John Kyle (no relation), who is retiring after 25 years as executive director of the Oklahoma Railroad Association. The recognition came at the May 3 meeting of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission.