



July Commission Wrap-Up:

Bridge repair, design modifications discussed; \$60 million in projects awarded

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's July 6 meeting include discussions of an emergency bridge repair and bridge design modifications and approval of construction contracts totaling about \$60 million.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley told commissioners emergency repairs of a bridge on I-35 south of Guthrie were completed several weeks ahead of schedule. The structure was damaged in flooding on June 14, and commissioners held an emergency meeting to award a \$715,000 contract for its repair. Wittwer Construction Co. Inc. of Stillwater, was one of four firms, all based in Oklahoma, to bid on the project.

Although it was expected to take 60 days to complete the repairs, they were made in less than two weeks – in time for the high-traffic Fourth of July holiday.

He also advised commissioners about emergency modifications made to several bridges in Oklahoma following a federal study that indicated connector plates, called gussets, played a role in the 2007 Minnesota bridge collapse. ODOT ordered a design review of all 95 Oklahoma bridges with gusset plates, resulting in emergency modifications to many.

"We've inspected these bridges, at arm's length inspection with engineers and technicians that are well trained, and are seeing no problems that should alarm us," Ridley said. "This was a design review of these gusset plates."

Commissioners approved a project to widen from three lanes to four a three-mile stretch of US-270 near Woodward. In addition, they approved a project to build a new bridge on US-270 between Wilburton and Panola.

They also approved Oklahoma's final roadway projects to be funded through the federal stimulus program. The projects, seven in all, are in Midwest City, Owasso and Tulsa. The state received nearly \$465 million for roadway projects as part of the stimulus.

Throughout the course of the stimulus program, commissioners approved a variety of projects ranging from sidewalks in rural areas to reconstruction of the I-244 Inner Dispersal Loop in downtown Tulsa. Projects are spread throughout the state with construction continuing through the first of next year.

In all, commissioners awarded 47 contracts totaling \$60 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 34 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Atoka, Beaver, Caddo, Canadian, Cleveland, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Garfield, Garvin, Grady, Greer, Jefferson, Kay, Kiowa, Latimer, LeFlore, Love, Major, McIntosh, Murray, Muskogee, Noble, Nowata, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Payne, Pittsburg, Pottawatomie, Sequoyah, Stephens, Tulsa, Woods and Woodward 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. **Tuesday, Aug. 10**, 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.

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(Editors and News Director's: Next month's meeting is on the second Tuesday instead of the usual first Monday.)

INFORMATION RELEASE

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An ODOT engineer inspects a series of gusset plates, or connectors, on the US-77 bridge between Lexington and Purcell. Although truss bridges in Oklahoma have been inspected three times since the Minnesota bridge collapse, ODOT officials ordered a review of gusset plate design after a federal study indicated the connectors played a role in the tragedy. Gusset plates were used in construction of truss bridges, which were built on state highways until the mid-1960s. About 95 such bridges remain.



Crews rebuild an I-35 bridge damaged by flash floods in mid-June. Although engineers estimated construction would take about two months, the contractor, Stillwater-based Wittwer Construction Co. Inc., finished the job in less than two weeks, working around the clock. The early finish meant all lanes of the busy highway were opened during the Fourth of July weekend.