



## November Commission Wrap-Up:

### ODOT wins Amtrak's highest award; more than \$100 million in contracts approved

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Nov. 8 meeting include presentation of a national award for work with the *Heartland Flyer*; a discussion of recent grants for studies relating to rail and the feasibility of high-speed passenger rail and rural transit improvements; and approval of contracts totaling more than \$100 million.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley was presented the Amtrak President's Service and Safety Award for the *Heartland Flyer* by Joy Smith, Chicago-based Central Division superintendent, Passenger Services.

ODOT and the Texas Department of Transportation received the award for their partnership in operating Amtrak's *Heartland Flyer*, which runs from Oklahoma City to Fort Worth, Texas. Smith said that of all Amtrak's state partners, Texas and Oklahoma are the only two that work together to support a single train.

The President's Award is the highest honor given by Amtrak. In the 31 years since the program began, this is the fifth time that a state department of transportation has been recognized. Nominees undergo a six-month review and must meet strict criteria.

"The *Heartland Flyer* has been a tremendous success story," Smith said. "This year the *Heartland Flyer* had its highest ridership in 11 years – over 81,000 passengers. Its customer service rating was the best of all of our trains, including our high-speed train in New York City, called the Acela."

Ridley announced ODOT has received a federal grant for track improvements on the *Heartland Flyer* in Oklahoma City. ODOT also received grants to improve rural transit, to study the feasibility of operating a high-speed passenger rail system between Oklahoma City and Tulsa and to update the state's rail transportation plan.

Commissioners approved a series of 17 engineering contracts for planning and design work on 57 bridges throughout the state.

They also awarded contracts for two projects on I-44. One contract was for widening a section near 41st Street in Tulsa, and the second was for resurfacing and installation of median cable barriers in Lawton. They also approved contracts for reconstruction of I-35 near Marietta and I-40 east of Checotah.

Also approved was a contract for construction of a Port of Entry station on I-40 near Texas. The facility is the second of nine planned for key locations along Oklahoma's state lines designed for enforcement of truck safety and weight regulations.

In all, commissioners awarded 35 contracts totaling just under than \$103 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 25 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beckham, Comanche, Craig, Garfield, Garvin, Greer, Haskell, Kay, Kingfisher, Latimer, Logan, Love, Major, McClain, McIntosh, Muskogee, Okfuskee, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Osage, Pontotoc, Sequoyah, Texas, Tillman and Tulsa 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, Dec. 6, 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](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us).

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(Editors and News Directors: For details about projects in your area and to view accompanying pictures, please visit the website [www.okladot.state.ok.us](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us). For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)

INFORMATION RELEASE

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Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley shows his appreciation to Amtrak's Joy Smith after she presented ODOT a prestigious, national award at the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, Nov. 8 meeting. Based in Chicago, Smith is Amtrak's Central Division superintendent, Passenger Services. The award recognized the work ODOT and the Texas Department of Transportation that makes possible the *Heartland Flyer* passenger train from Oklahoma City to Fort Worth, Texas, and points between.





The Oklahoma and Texas Departments of Transportation recently won a prestigious national award for their unique partnership making the *Heartland Flyer* possible. The award was announced at the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, Nov. 8 meeting. In the most recent fiscal year, the *Heartland Flyer* had the best customer service record of all Amtrak trains and posted its highest annual ridership with 81,000 passengers. The train travels daily between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, Texas, with stops in Norman, Purcell, Pauls Valley, Ardmore and Gainesville, Texas. To reserve a seat on board, call 1-800-USA-RAIL.