



April Commission Wrap-Up:

Safety issues highlighted; more than \$27 million in contracts approved

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2011

PR# 11-022

Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, April 4 meeting include recognition of workplace safety and driver safety in work zones as well as approval of contracts totaling more than \$27 million.

Transportation Secretary Gary Ridley noted Gov. Mary Fallin declared April 4 through April 8 to be "Work Zone Awareness Week" in Oklahoma. He said that in 2010, 18 people were killed and 748 injured in 1,406 collisions occurring in work zones – the most in nearly two decades.

This year's Work Zone Awareness Week is dedicated to the 54 Oklahoma Department of Transportation employees killed in the line of duty during its 100-year history.

"It takes your full attention to drive, but it's critical to avoid all distractions when you are driving in a work zone," Ridley said. "Work zones are dangerous not only for our workers because of the location but also hazardous and dangerous to the people who travel through those work zones – if they are not attentive."

Coincidentally, awards for workplace safety were presented at the meeting. Although the number of work zone collisions has increased, the number of work-related injuries suffered by ODOT employees has declined.

Mike Bracken, ODOT's safety manager, said the number of workplace injuries has dropped by two-thirds during the last two decades. He said that just in the last year, the number of days lost from work as a result of work place injuries declined by more than one third.

Among the awards given was the Governor's Safety Excellence Award for the ODOT division with the best safety program as measured by the number and severity of workplace accidents. The award was presented to the Clinton area division. In that 11-county region, days lost because of workplace accidents declined from 105 in 2009 to 1 in 2010.

Awards were also given to the safest crews in each of the agency's field divisions and central headquarters, taking into account safety meetings, housekeeping and maintenance equipment, along with having had no workplace accidents in the previous year. An award was also given to the field division with the most reduction in workplace accidents.

Also, Larry Reser, ODOT's chief of surveys, was recognized after he was given the Oklahoma Society of Land Surveyors top award, the David Page Distinguished Service Award.

Commissioners approved a project that will improve safety for drivers on SH-33 by replacing a seven-mile stretch of narrow roadway east of Coyle with a new highway that will have improved sight distance and shoulders. They also approved a project to realign SH-20 near 19th St. on the west side of Collinsville that will eliminate an "s-curve."

In all, commissioners awarded 25 contracts totaling more than \$27 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 20 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beckham, Canadian, Carter, Cleveland, Ellis, Grady, Jefferson, LeFlore, McCurtain, Murray, Muskogee, Nowata, Oklahoma, Osage, Ottawa, Pawnee, Payne, Stephens, Tulsa and Wagoner 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, May 2, 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.

—www.okladot.state.ok.us—

(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. For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)



INFORMATION RELEASE

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION
200 N.E. 21st St. OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73105-3204 PHONE 405-521-6000



Going for a test drive: Oklahoma Department of Transportation Clinton area Division Engineer Brent Almquist and ODOT's Director of Operations Casey Shell test a trailer designed to improve the safety of crews who set up work zones. The Clinton area was given the Governor's Safety Excellence Award at the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's April 4 meeting.



Close quarters: Oklahoma Department of Transportation workers repair a hole in a bridge on US-77 in the Arbuckle Mountains last June. April 4 through April 8 is Oklahoma Work Zone Awareness Week. The 54 employees who have died in the line of duty in the department's 100-year history – more than any other state agency – were remembered at the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's April 4 meeting.