



July Commission Wrap-Up:

Budget concerns, county projects highlighted; \$46 million in contracts approved

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, July 11, meeting include discussion of the possible impact of federal budget issues on transportation planning, approval of a list of county projects to be funded during the next five years and approval of contracts totaling more than \$46 million.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley told commissioners the debate over federal transportation funding has made future funding uncertain, noting that as much as a 34 percent reduction in funds is included in one proposal. However, both the House and Senate are discussing ideas to reduce burdensome regulations on federally funded construction projects.

"Hopefully, we will have some relief on the strings that are attached to the money we receive and will have more flexibility in conducting our business and we can accelerate project delivery," Ridley said.

The commission approved a five-year \$705 million plan to replace 414 county bridges and 686 miles of county roads under the County Improvement for Roads and Bridges program. The program, created in 2006, is funded using a portion of the state's Motor Vehicle Tax.

Gayle Ward, executive director of the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma, said the program has allowed counties to tackle projects that previously would have been impossible. She said the construction projects likely will result in economic development, because many businesses rely on county roads – such as firms and individuals in the agriculture, petroleum and wind energy sectors.

"Counties have been very pleased to partner with ODOT on this program," Ward said. "I can't tell you how much effort has been put into working with the counties and ODOT to craft this five-year program. It is financially prudent, it is safety conscious and it is focused on bridge deficiencies."

Commissioners awarded contracts to install cable barrier along I-35 at two locations near Ardmore in Carter County and along I-40 between the Calumet and Geary exits in Western Canadian County.

They also approved a project to construct new portions of US-75 in Wetumka and extending north in Hughes County. In addition, two projects on SH-3 received commission approval, one in Woodward County and another in McCurtain County. The McCurtain County project will rebuild a six-mile stretch of the highway with modern safety standards. The Woodward County project is a two-mile stretch that is part of a long-term corridor widening program.

In all, commissioners awarded 29 contracts totaling more than \$46 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 Atoka, Beckham, Caddo, Canadian, Carter, Choctaw, Cleveland, Comanche, Custer, Garfield, Harper, Hughes, Kingfisher, Latimer, Love, McCurtain, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Ottawa, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, Seminole, Stephens, Tulsa 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. Monday, Aug. 1, 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



Attendees of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, July 11, meeting study maps of county bridge and road projects being funded over the next five years with revenue through the County Improvements for Roads and Bridges program. The program is financed through the state's Motor Vehicle Tax. Of 471 planned projects, 414 are for bridge replacements.