

March Commission Wrap-Up

Inhofe speaks on transportation funding, \$55.7 million in contracts approved

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, March 5 meeting include an update from U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe on federal transportation funding legislation, the hiring of a new division engineer and a report on inspection stations, also called ports of entry.

In an earlier gathering, U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe made a few comments on transportation and infrastructure funding legislation currently before the U.S. Senate. Inhofe was formerly the chairman and is currently the ranking member of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Public Works. Inhofe explained that, if enacted, Senate Bill 1813 "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" would provide two years of federal transportation funding. Transportation programs have been funded with a series of short-term extensions since 2009.

"When you do extensions, you don't get any reforms; you don't get any planning in advance," Inhofe said. "If you have a six-month or even a one-year extension, it's not enough for adequate planning." He also thanked committee Chairman Barbara Boxer for working with him to pass the bill out of committee with bipartisan support.

In his director's report to the commission, Transportation Secretary Gary Ridley echoed Sen. Inhofe's comments on the importance of transportation funding in Oklahoma, and applauded the senator's ability to build consensus among Republican and Democratic members in order to pass the transportation bill out of committee unanimously.

Anthony Echelle was announced as the new Division Two Engineer. He will oversee maintenance and construction activities in nine counties in southeastern Oklahoma. Echelle previously served as the Division Four Construction Engineer.

Secretary Ridley updated the commission on several inspection station projects across the state. Projects on I-35 in Kay County and I-40 in Beckham County are currently under construction and expected to open in May. He noted these projects are undertaken jointly by ODOT, Oklahoma Corporation Commission and Oklahoma Highway Patrol. The inspection station on I-44 in Ottawa County is being funded and built entirely by the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

In all, commissioners awarded 37 contracts totaling more than \$55.7 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 26 counties, however a majority of this month's awards were asphalt resurfacing projects to take advantage of upcoming summer construction months.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Bryan, Carter, Cleveland, Coal, Craig, Creek, Custer, Garfield, Grant, Harmon Hughes, Johnston, Leflore, Lincoln, McClain, Mayes, Muskogee, Okmulgee, Pittsburg, Tillman, Wagoner, 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 **Monday, April 2 at 11 a.m.** in the R.A. Ward Transportation Building in Oklahoma City.

Before a project is awarded, ODOT researches, plans and designs the 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.)



U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe updated members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission on federal transportation funding legislation currently before the U.S. Senate. Inhofe is currently the ranking member and former chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Public Works. Seated on the left is District 3 Commission Member Dan Overland; Inhofe, middle; Commission Chairman Greg Love, right.