



## **July Commission Wrap-Up**

### **Lankford praises federal transportation reforms; \$75 million in contracts approved**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, July 2 meeting include a report from U.S. Rep. James Lankford on the federal highway funding bill recently passed by Congress and approval of the final phase of the I-44 expansion project in Tulsa.

Transportation Secretary/ODOT Director Gary Ridley welcomed Lankford, R-OKC, who sits on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and was a House conferee involved in negotiation of House Resolution 4348, which was approved by Congress on Friday, June 29. Lankford was very pleased that the surface transportation bill passed with strong bipartisan support and contained no earmarks. He explained that H.R. 4348 provides two years of transportation funding and contains key reforms that will give states more control over how funds are spent. The final version of the bill included a reform requested by Lankford that gives states more flexibility in how they categorize and use transportation enhancement funds.

Lankford said that Congress also worked to streamline the permitting process and lift restrictions on environmental review for projects with no significant impact to the environment, allowing construction to begin much quicker.

"There were no real deadlines and we wanted to get hard deadlines in place," Lankford said. "This takes us from a seven-year period that was typical for major projects to a maximum length of four years."

The congressman explained that a major negotiation point was his call to move more authority from the federal government to state transportation agencies.

"People in many other states don't trust their department of transportation like we trust ours, so they want to keep control in Washington, D.C." Lankford said. "My statement over and over was, 'Don't punish us in Oklahoma because you don't have a DOT like we have. You go get one like we have.'"

Commissioners approved a \$50 million bid, which includes financial incentives for early completion, for construction of new interstate lanes and a new Lewis Ave. bridge at I-44 in Tulsa. Work on this final phase of the I-44 expansion project is expected to start in the fall and be open to traffic by late 2013. Commissioners also approved ten engineering contracts, including one for preparation of construction plans for replacement of the SH-99/US-377 bridge over Lake Texoma in Marshall County, which is the largest structurally deficient bridge in the state.

In all, commissioners awarded 27 contracts totaling \$75 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 24 counties.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beckham, Blaine, Carter, Cimarron, Cleveland, Delaware, Garvin, Grady, Jackson, Kay, Latimer, Lincoln, Mayes, Okfuskee, Osage, Ottawa, Payne, Pittsburg, Pushmataha, Stephens, Texas, Tulsa, Washita and Woods 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, August 6 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](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.)



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U.S. Rep. James Lankford explained the funding provisions and reforms included in the recently approved transportation bill to Oklahoma Transportation Commission members, including Commission Chairman Greg Love (right). Lankford was a key negotiator in the conference committee process and was pleased that House Resolution 4348 contains two years of funding and no earmarks, as well as key reforms that give states more flexibility in how they use transportation funds.



The Oklahoma Transportation Commission recently approved a contract with an engineering firm to prepare construction plans for replacement of the SH-99/US-377 bridge near Willis, just south of Madill in Marshall County. The bridge spans Lake Texoma and is the largest structurally deficient bridge in the state.