



March Commission Wrap-Up

Changing of the guard; Final phase of I-244 bridge construction in Tulsa approved; \$100 million in contracts awarded

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, March 4 meeting include appointment of a new Oklahoma Department of Transportation director, recognition of ODOT field maintenance crews for their snow removal and rescue efforts during the recent major winter storm in northwestern Oklahoma and approval of a more than \$41 million contract to construct the new eastbound I-244 bridge over the Arkansas River in Tulsa.

After meeting in an executive session, commissioners voted unanimously to appoint Mike Patterson to succeed Gary Ridley as ODOT director. Commission Chairman Greg Love mentioned that it was a lengthy discussion and tough decision given the talented applicants for the position. Patterson, a 33-year employee of the agency and its current Deputy Director and Chief Financial Officer, will officially begin in his new capacity on April 1.

In his final report to the commission as director, Gary Ridley thanked commissioners for the opportunity to serve and wished Patterson well in his new role. Reflecting on his 44 years with the agency, Ridley praised the ODOT employees who often work behind the scenes to improve Oklahoma's transportation system.

"Nothing happens without everybody pulling the wagon in the same direction," Ridley said. "Mike understands that and all of the ODOT people across the state understand that."

Commissioners heard a report from Director of Operations Casey Shell on ODOT's response to the Feb. 25 winter storm that closed highways in several counties in northwestern Oklahoma. Though the storm was the 5th largest snowfall event in state history and produced near-blizzard conditions, he was proud to report that ODOT crews worked around the clock to completely clear and open all highways within 36 hours. Shell then recognized several maintenance workers from field divisions across the state that assisted with clearing snow and ice from highways and helped rescue 137 stranded motorists.

"All eight ODOT field divisions responded to this snowstorm in northwestern Oklahoma and our workers really went above and beyond to clear the highways and assist with rescuing stranded motorists," Shell said. "When the agency faces challenging conditions, it really brings out the best in our workers."

The end is in sight for interstate reconstruction in Tulsa, thanks to commission approval of a contract to construct the new eastbound I-244 bridge over the Arkansas River. The \$41 million contract, which includes construction costs and financial incentives for early competition, was awarded to Tulsa's Manhattan Road and Bridge Company. The new bridge is expected to open to traffic in about 18 months after construction begins. The project will replace a structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridge that was built in 1967.

Commissioners also approved a \$4.4 million contract to resurface 15 miles of US-270 in eastern Beaver County.

In all, commissioners awarded 37 contracts totaling more than \$100 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 32 counties.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Atoka, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Canadian, Carter, Cherokee, Cleveland, Comanche, Creek, Custer, Grant, Haskell, Hughes, Johnston, Kingfisher, Le Flore, Logan, McCurtain, Noble, Nowata, Oklahoma, Osage, Payne, Pittsburg, Pottawatomie, Pushmataha, Seminole, Texas, Tulsa, Woods and Woodward counties.

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INFORMATION RELEASE

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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 1 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.

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



An upcoming construction project will complete the reconstruction of a major interstate corridor in Tulsa and will replace an outdated bridge that was built in 1967. At its Monday meeting, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission awarded a \$41 million contract to replace the eastbound I-244 bridge (shown here) over the Arkansas River in downtown Tulsa.



Retiring Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley, right, congratulates Deputy Director/Chief Financial Officer Mike Patterson, who will step into the director's role beginning April 1. At their Monday, March 4 meeting, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission voted unanimously to appoint Patterson to the position. Ridley will remain on Gov. Mary Fallin's Cabinet as Transportation Secretary.



At the Monday, March 4 meeting of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission presented retiring Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley with a commemorative brick from historic Route 66 and thanked him for his 44 years of service. Pictured from left to right are District 1 Commissioner John Fidler, District 2 Commission David Burrage, District 3 Commissioner Dan Overland, Ridley, Commission Chairman Greg Love, District 5 Commissioner Todd Huckabay, District 6 Commissioner Bobby Alexander, District 7 Commissioner Brad Burgess and District 8 Commissioner Peter Regan.