



## April Commission Wrap-Up

### **Work zone safety is top priority at ODOT; \$40 million in contracts awarded**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Even on April Fool's Day, work zone safety was no laughing matter to the Oklahoma Department of Transportation workers who risk their lives every day in work zones just a few feet from moving traffic. Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, April 1 meeting include presentation of a proclamation declaring "Work Zone Awareness Week" in Oklahoma, recognition of ODOT work crews with the best safety records, acknowledgement of a local reporter and columnist who received a national award for reporting on safety issues and an update on recently-signed federal funding legislation.

In preparation for a nationwide campaign to promote work zone safety, Secretary of Transportation Gary Ridley, representing Gov. Mary Fallin, read a proclamation from the governor declaring the week of April 15-19 "Work Zone Awareness Week" in Oklahoma. During this week, Oklahoma will join the Federal Highway Administration and other states in a national effort to focus on driver and worker safety in highway work zones.

"It's always disheartening when we read the accident statistics and look at the memorial with the names of the 57 ODOT employees who have died in the line of duty," Director Mike Patterson said. "We must constantly be aware of the safety of the workers on the highways, not only ODOT employees, but those of our construction, engineering and consultant partners who are out doing their jobs."

Several ODOT field crews were recognized for their safety efforts in the past year, as Patterson and Safety Branch Manager Mike Bracken presented the agency's annual Safety Awards. The Governor's Safety Excellence Award was presented to Division Five, headquartered in Clinton, which had the lowest overall accident rating last year. The Progressive Excellence Award for the most improved safety record was given to Division Eight, headquartered Tulsa. Ten crews from across the state earned the Director's Safety Award for being accident-free in 2012 and excelling in safety training and equipment maintenance.

Commissioners also congratulated *The Oklahoman* reporter and columnist Bryan Painter, who was honored with the first-ever National Media Award from the American Traffic Safety Services Association in February for his coverage of work zone safety and other transportation safety issues often overlooked. Painter has written numerous pieces on traffic signs, highway markings, work zones and severe weather driving, including a recent story about the ODOT Central Sign Shop that helped educate drivers about the design and placement of signs on highways and in work zones. For his work to raise public awareness about transportation issues, the 20-year veteran reporter was presented with a commemorative brick from historic Route 66.

On his first official day as director, Patterson was pleased to announce that federal legislation signed into law last week will ensure full transportation funding for the next six months. After years of short-term funding extensions, the latest measure will keep federal transportation funding at levels established by last year's Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Commissioners approved a \$13.6 million contract to perform more than five miles of asphalt resurfacing on I-40 near Sayre in Beckham County. The SH-3W bridge over the Canadian River south of Asher at the border of Pottawatomie and Pontotoc counties will be replaced thanks to commission approval of a more than \$12 million contract that includes financial incentives for early completion.

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In all, commissioners awarded 19 contracts totaling more than \$40 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 16 counties.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beckham, Blaine, Bryan, Carter, Choctaw, Cleveland, Haskell, Jefferson, Johnston, Kay, Kiowa, Le Flore, Noble, Pottawatomie, Oklahoma and Tulsa 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, May 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 more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)**





The Oklahoma Department of Transportation's Division Five, headquartered in Clinton, was the winner of the Governor's Safety Excellence Award for the best overall safety rating in 2012 and was given a traffic cone trailer to help set up and take down work zones safely and efficiently. Division Five encompasses 11 counties in western and southwestern Oklahoma. Pictured from the left are Division Five Risk Manager Tim Tutten, Roger Mills County Maintenance Superintendent Steve Mendez, Division Engineer Brent Almquist, ODOT Director Mike Patterson, Director of Operations Casey Shell and Safety Branch Manager Mike Bracken.



At the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, April 1 meeting, commissioners and Oklahoma Department of Transportation staff acknowledged *The Oklahoman* reporter and columnist Bryan Painter for his work to inform the public about transportation issues and work zone safety with a commemorative brick from the original Route 66. In February, Painter was honored with the first-ever National Media Award from the American Traffic Safety Services Association for his coverage on important transportation safety issues. Pictured from the left are Secretary of Transportation Gary Ridley, ODOT Chief of Media and Public Relations Terri Angier, Transportation Commission Chairman Greg Love, Painter, Central Sign Shop Manager Marco White and Director Mike Patterson.





Drivers crossing the border between Pottawatomie and Pontotoc counties will have a smoother ride in the near future. Replacement of the SH-3W bridge over the Canadian River near Asher (pictured above) was approved by the Oklahoma Transportation Commission at its monthly meeting on Monday, April 1.