



## **November Commission Wrap-Up**

### **ODOT hopeful for federal transportation funding solution; \$57 million in contracts awarded**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2013

PR# 13-046

Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Monday, Nov. 4 meeting include an update on federal transportation funding, recognition of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's award-winning video of a bridge demolition, designation of 10 memorial highways and bridges and approval of a more than \$13 million contract to replace the SH-18 bridge over the Arkansas River near Ralston as well as contracts for major highway projects in Adair and Cotton counties.

Executive Director Mike Patterson reported on the continuing resolution approved by Congress and the president in late October that ended the partial federal government shutdown and will fund federal operations and authorizations through Jan. 15. While the short-term extension will fund ODOT's bid lettings for February and at least part of March, a solution for the federal government's Highway Trust Fund is still needed to ensure ODOT's 2014-2021 Eight-year Construction Work Plan stays on schedule. Patterson explained that the trust fund is currently at a record low level and faces insolvency unless federal lawmakers act soon. Created in 1956, the Highway Trust Fund provides funding to states for highway and bridge projects from revenue collected from the federal fuel tax and motor vehicle excise taxes. Unfortunately, declining revenues in recent years have created a \$9 billion shortfall and uncertainty for transportation programs nationwide. About 50 percent of ODOT's Eight-year Construction Work Plan is funded with federal money.

"We're closely monitoring the situation with the Highway Trust Fund and preparing to delay putting new projects out for bid if necessary," Patterson said. "We're certainly hopeful that lawmakers in Washington, D.C. will act in the near future on a solution for the trust fund's cash balance before that happens."

Patterson also recognized the ODOT Video Production Branch for its award-winning video of the demolition of the old SH-28 bridge over Big Cabin Creek in Mayes County, which recently earned an Upper Case award from the Oklahoma City Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America for the best video produced for an external audience. The video was featured on several construction and demolition websites and has been viewed more than 41,000 times on YouTube.

Several memorial highway and bridge designations honoring soldiers, law enforcement officers and famous Oklahomans were approved by the commission. These included the Petty Officer Tony Randolph Memorial Highway in Okmulgee County, the Specialist Howard Lee Jones Memorial Bridge in Coal County, the OHP Captain Pete Norwood Memorial Highway in Caddo County and the Wayman Tisdale Memorial Highway in Tulsa County.

Commissioners voted to award a more than \$13 million contract to replace the SH-18 bridge near Ralston in Osage and Pawnee counties. The truss bridge over the Arkansas River was built in 1935. They also approved a \$9.5 million contract to reconstruct nearly five miles of I-44 near the Oklahoma/Texas state line in Cotton County and a more than \$8 million contract for the first of three phases of a project to widen US-59 from north of Westville to the Illinois River in Adair County.

In all, commissioners awarded 27 contracts totaling more than \$57 million to improve bridges, highways, interstates and roads in 21 counties.

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**INFORMATION RELEASE**

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Contracts were awarded for projects in Adair, Atoka, Bryan, Cleveland, Comanche, Cotton, Dewey, Garvin, Jackson, Johnston, McClain, McCurtain, Okmulgee, Osage, Ottawa, Pawnee, Pushmataha, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, Tulsa and Washington 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 regular meeting is scheduled for **Monday, Dec. 9 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 commission 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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A highway truss bridge over the Arkansas River that was built in 1935 is slated for replacement next year. At their Monday, Nov. 4 meeting, members of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission voted to award a more than \$13 million contract to build a new SH-18 bridge near Ralston in Osage and Pawnee counties.



At the Monday, Nov. 4 meeting of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Executive Director Mike Patterson told commissioners that the recent federal funding resolution approved by Congress and the president will fund ODOT's bid lettings for February and at least part of March, but a fix to the federal government's Highway Trust Fund is still needed to ensure ODOT's 2014-2021 Eight-year Construction Work Plan stays on schedule.