



## Current and former state leaders, time capsule, generational stories featured at Oklahoma transportation special observance

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 15, 2011

PR# 11-036

One hundred years to the date after the founding of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Gov. Mary Fallin and other state leaders commemorated the historic occasion and the impact transportation has had on Oklahoma's people and economy with a special tribute, a time capsule and press conference.

The event included the presentation of a plaque commemorating the department's creation and special recognition for families in which multiple generations have worked for ODOT. The event culminated with the sealing of a time capsule, donated by Pelco Products of Edmond, for future Oklahomans to open in 2061.

Items included in the time capsule are:

- List of current ODOT employees with signatures
- Copies of June 15 editions of both major state newspapers
- A June 15 postage stamp
- Cover sheets for significant projects in all areas of the state, including the I-40 Crosstown in Oklahoma City and the I-44 Riverside to Yale project in Tulsa
- A sample of paving materials currently in use
- Photographs from the 2002 reconstruction of the I-40 bridge at Webbers Falls after a tragedy in which the bridge was knocked down by an errant barge, killing 14 people
- Various informational items produced for the year-long centennial observance

During the press conference, Gov. Mary Fallin noted Oklahoma has a \$40 billion investment in its state-maintained transportation infrastructure, making it the largest, most valuable state asset.

"A safe and reliable transportation system is essential to the economic wellbeing of our state and is critical to attracting more jobs and investment to Oklahoma," Fallin said. "I am delighted to be a part of today's celebration and want to congratulate the Department of Transportation on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary."

Transportation Secretary Gary Ridley, who began his career as an ODOT equipment operator and now oversees several transportation-related agencies, praised the thousands of ODOT employees who have worked in various ways to manage and expand the state's transportation system.

"The employees who have worked for the agency have been part a team working to build and maintain an effective transportation system for Oklahoma – from the four employees who made up the State Highway Department when it was created in 1911 to the 2,400 employees who make up ODOT today," Ridley said.

Among those invited to help celebrate the monumental milestone were several former governors and as well as former secretaries of transportation and other officials.

Expected to attend along with Fallin are former Gov. George Nigh and all former transportation secretaries: Neal McCaleb, Delmas Ford, Herschal Crow and Phil Tomlinson.

Cattle trails and rivers were the closest thing early Oklahomans had to interstates. By statehood in 1907, trains were the most dependable form of transportation, but getting to a depot could be difficult. The situation began to change on June 15, 1911, when legislation took effect creating the State Highway Department.

INFORMATION RELEASE

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Today, ODOT is responsible for over 30,000 lane miles of highway - the equivalent of driving from Oklahoma City to Los Angeles and back 11 times – and also 6,800 bridges. The department also manages nearly 800 miles of freight rail along with the *Heartland Flyer's* daily passenger rail service.

“From those who built the first major highway in the United States – Route 66 – to the interstates we all travel today, all Oklahomans take great pride in improved transportation and the important role it has played in the development of the state,” Ridley said. “This celebration is about state achievement and the positive gains made possible by generations of hard-working Oklahomans.”

Sponsoring the observance throughout the year are: Platinum Engine level: Association of General Contractors and Oklahoma Employees Credit Union; Golden Steering level: American Concrete Pavement Association and Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma; and Silver Wheel level: Oklahoma Asphalt Pavement Association and EST Inc.

Celebrations begin at 9 a.m. June 15 and end at 9 p.m. June 15 with the documentary “ODOT 100: Celebrating 100 Years of Transportation in Oklahoma” on OETA. A coffee table book of transportation history, “ODOT100: Celebrating the First 100 Years of Transportation in Oklahoma” is available for purchase through ODOT, the Oklahoma History Center and the Oklahoma Heritage Association. For more information, call 405-521-2586.

For more information on ODOT’s history and centennial celebrations visit [www.okladot.state.ok.us](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us), click on the ODOT100 icon.

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



## Activities commemorating ODOT's year-long centennial observance

- ODOT100 centennial website
- "Oklahoma Driven: Cars, Collectors and the Birth of the Oklahoma Highway Commission" exhibit at the Oklahoma History Center
- "Oklahoma Moments" videos produced by ODOT and the Oklahoma History center, in partnership with *Distinctly Oklahoma* magazine
- 2011-2012 State map highlighting transportation trends since ODOT's founding
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Disadvantaged Business enterprise Business Development Conference featuring a centennial theme
- Brochure highlighting ODOT's centennial history
- Coffee table book recording ODOT history
- Commemorative calendar featuring ODOT historical events
- Educational programs for young students, including lesson plans for teachers and hands-on activities for pupils, developed by the Oklahoma Historical Society
- Employee fundraising cookbook featuring ODOT history
- Kiosk at Will Rogers World Airport showcasing ODOT history
- ODOT Day at Science Museum Oklahoma
- Open houses at division headquarters throughout the state
- Gubernatorial proclamation urging Oklahomans to celebrate ODOT's centennial
- Passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 9 commemorating ODOT's centennial
- Postcards noting Oklahoma transportation history
- Public service announcements
- Television documentary about ODOT history on OETA



**Current and former state leaders dedicate a time capsule on June 15, as part of the centennial celebrations by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. Standing by the capsule {from left to right} are Former Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Delmas Ford, Former Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Herschal Crow, Former Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Neal McCaleb, Governor Mary Fallin, Former Governor George Nigh, Former Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Phil Tomlinson and Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Gary Ridley. The time capsule contains dozens of items, including information on current projects, centennial memorabilia and photos, and will remain sealed until 2061.**