



## Celebrating 100 years! ODOT centennial marked throughout Oklahoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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When Oklahoma's first highway commissioner proposed a series of routes throughout Oklahoma, the State Highway Department didn't have enough money to pay for blueprints or even office supplies, let alone build highways and bridges.

March 16, 1911, House Bill 318, which created the State Highway Department, was approved. The measure laid the groundwork for a network of highways few Oklahomans, at the time, could have imagined. Now, as the Oklahoma Department of Transportation celebrates its centennial, life without highways is nearly unimaginable.

State lawmakers are honored the agency's creation with a resolution approved exactly 100 years after HB 318 was approved. Senate Concurrent Resolution 9, by Sen. Mike Schulz, R-Altus, and Rep. Daniel Sullivan, R-Tulsa, highlights various transportation-related milestones and innovations made in Oklahoma during the last century.

A centennial celebration kicked off Wednesday with the unveiling of an exhibit at the Oklahoma History Center exploring the state's early road history that will remain on display through March 2012. The exhibit of vintage automobiles comes from the personal collections of members of the Sooner Regional Group of the Horseless Carriage Club of America. The unveiling reception is being sponsored by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Oklahoma.

When HB 318 took effect June 15, 1911, Gov. Lee Cruce appointed Ardmore newspaper publisher Sydney Suggs to be the state's first highway commissioner. Suggs traveled the state, often at his own expense, to survey existing road conditions and build public support for good roads.

"It's humbling to think the work of a few people who supported good roads impacts the lives of all Oklahomans each day," ODOT Director Gary Ridley said of the celebration. "The dedication of those people should inspire us today."

Dr. Bob L. Blackburn, executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, noted transportation has always played a role in the development of the state's economy.

"The creation of the Oklahoma Highway Department that occurred at the same time as the discovery of major oil fields in our state, has resulted in Oklahoma growing and prospering," Blackburn said. "These elements of transportation began with river boats, then railroads, followed by highways and the interstate highway system, and airlines crossing our state creating economic opportunity unlike that found in any other state."

ODOT also commissioned the Oklahoma History Center to develop educational trunks for elementary school teachers to use as an instructional tool that feature hands-on objects and activities representing road development and safety.

Other celebrations include a special "ODOT Day" planned at Science Museum Oklahoma Friday, May 13. The event will feature road-building equipment with crews on hand to answer questions. The event will also feature hands-on activities such as bridge building and using survey equipment and a liquid nitrogen experiment with road salt.

Additionally, commemorations are planned throughout the state. A series of open houses is planned at each of ODOT's eight division headquarters throughout the state.

A book documenting transportation history since statehood is being published through the Oklahoma Heritage Association and will be available for purchase this summer.

INFORMATION RELEASE

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION  
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The 2011 state map highlights transportation milestones in Oklahoma and is available to the public free of charge. Also, calendars highlighting significant transportation events will also be available through ODOT's central office headquarters at 405-522-8000.

Information including historical events, photos and archived maps are available on ODOT's website, [www.okladot.state.ok.us](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us); click on "Celebrating 100 Years."

"These commemorations are a reminder of the impact that good highways have on the lives of Oklahomans and the development of our economy," Ridley said. "They are also a reminder of the importance of the decisions we make today and how they will affect generations to come and how important it is to stay the course as we improve our highway system."

--[www.okladot.state.ok.us](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us)--

**Editors and News Directors:** The following link is to today's edition of Oklahoma Moments from *Distinctly Oklahoma Magazine* and the Oklahoma Historical Society. It commemorates 100 years of Oklahoma transportation milestone.

<http://www.okmoments.com/daily.php?j=1300248000&i=1300279300-1599>

**For more information on ODOT centennial activities, call the ODOT Media & Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000. For information about the Oklahoma History Center exhibit, call Oklahoma Historical Society Public Relations Division at 405-522-2492.**

