



January Commission Wrap-Up:

Honors presented; contract awarded for I-35 project in Norman

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's Jan. 5 meeting include an update of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's preparation for a possible federal economic stimulus that could result in improvements to state bridges and highways; presentation of several awards and approval of a widening project on I-35 in Norman.

In his report to the commission, ODOT Director Gary Ridley said about 350 members of the agency's staff are working to ensure the agency can quickly put funding to use if a federal stimulus plan is approved. He said the amount of funding Oklahoma highways would receive under the package is unknown, but expects ODOT to have about \$800 million in projects ready for construction if the plan is passed.

Ridley and transportation commissioners were presented three prestigious awards for road and highway construction throughout the state.

Natalie Shirley, secretary of Commerce and Tourism, presented the commission with the Commerce Department's 2008 Ally of the Year for ODOT's role in the state's economic development.

Shirley said that without infrastructure investments by ODOT, it is doubtful that Google, Gatorade or AERT, a composite wood manufacturer, would have announced plans to locate in Oklahoma.

Two awards were also presented to the agency by the American Concrete Pavement Association for two projects on I-35 that finished in 2008. ODOT received a Gold Medal for Overlay for a \$19 million project to reconstruct the SH-51 interchange near Stillwater and a Silver Medal for Rural Divided Highways for a \$20 million, five-mile long project near Ardmore. Sharing in the honors with ODOT were Duit Construction Co. of Edmond, and Koss Construction of Topeka, Kan., respectively.

The City of Seminole and TTK Construction Co. of Edmond also received an award for improvements to Good Hope Road.

In other actions, commissioners approved an approximately \$40 million contract to widen I-35 between Indian Hills Road and Main Street in Norman. As well as adding a lane in each direction, the project will include lighting and improved median barriers.

The highway carries about 75,000 vehicles daily but was designed for between 25,000 and 30,000. Ridley noted it is the busiest four-lane highway in Oklahoma.

The commission – an 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 11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 2, 2009, in the R.A. Ward Transportation Building in Oklahoma City.

Before a project is awarded, ODOT researches, plans and designs work to be done. Contracts are bid competitively, with the OTC selecting the winning firm. Contractors have a grace period to begin work, typically several weeks or months after a contract is awarded. Weather or other factors can delay a project.

Contracts, bid information, the commission's monthly agenda and project details can be accessed at www.okladot.state.ok.us.

– www.okladot.state.ok.us –

(Editors and News Directors: For details about projects in your area and to download accompanying pictures, please visit www.okladot.state.ok.us and click News & Media. For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)

INFORMATION RELEASE

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION
200 N.E. 21ST ST. OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73105-3204 PHONE 405-521-6000



Monday, Jan. 5, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission approved a contract to widen and add safety features to I-35 in Norman. About 75,000 vehicles use this stretch of interstate, although designed to carry 25,000 to 30,000 vehicles.



Natalie Shirley, secretary of Commerce and Tourism (center right), presents the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's 2008 Ally of the Year Award in recognition of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's roll in infrastructure development. Shirley said infrastructure is critical to attracting new employers to Oklahoma. Pictured from left to right are: James Dunegan, vice chair of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission; Phil Tomlinson, Secretary of Transportation, Shirley and Gary Ridley, ODOT director.



Shawn O'Leary, Norman Public Works director (at podium) addresses the Oklahoma Transportation Commission before the board approved a contract to widen a 4.6 mile stretch of I-35 in Norman. Also speaking to the commission on the project were (seated at table from left to right): Rep. Wallace Collins, D-Norman; Sen. John Sparks, D-Norman; Rep. Bill Nations, D-Norman; Rep. Scott Martin, R-Norman and Rep. Guy Liebmann, R-Oklahoma City.