



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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ODOT Statement regarding stimulus meeting

Oklahoma is well positioned to move forward with federal stimulus funding as soon as Congress and the President approve legislation, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Director Gary Ridley said at a meeting in Washington D.C. Wednesday, Feb. 11, with U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and members of the Obama team.

Ridley said he was excited to report that most of the state's transportation improvement projects that would be funded with the stimulus package could be under construction within about 45 to 90 days of the president's signature. The director was among officials from all 50 states invited by the White House for an update on issues relating to transportation portions of the stimulus bill

In addition to impacting 16,000 Oklahoma jobs, the measure is expected to result in improvements to transportation infrastructure, including highways, bridges, transit and safety features.

"We talked about the importance of the transportation-related provisions of the stimulus package, and I assured Secretary LaHood that Oklahoma is in a position to move very quickly. In addition, we were assured that the Federal Highway Administration will work with states to expedite its processes while following necessary requirements."

All indications are the bill will be signed within the next week, allowing ODOT to finalize plans for bid lettings as quickly as possible. Officials have been looking at various scenarios, including amounts of money the state receives and requirements to put it to work within a very quick period of time.

Projects in the package were already included in ODOT's eight-year Construction Work Plan of critical improvements. ODOT officials have been preparing for the stimulus package since late October or early November and Oklahoma is ahead of most other states in preparations for the plan.

To be assigned stimulus funds, projects must be ready for construction quickly, which eliminates those that include purchase of right-of-way or relocation of utilities.

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"The mission of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation is to provide a safe, economical, and effective transportation network for the people, commerce and communities of Oklahoma."

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