



## **March Commission Wrap-Up: Stimulus plans updated; \$36.4 million in projects awarded**

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's March 2 meeting include an update on preparations for projects funded by the federal stimulus program, discussion of long-term federal funding issues, approval of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and the awarding of \$36.4 million in bridge and highway construction contracts.

Ridley told commissioners the agency is on track to ask them to award the first round of economic stimulus-related projects at a special meeting March 30. The meeting would usually be in early April but was moved in order to award stimulus projects more expeditiously.

Awarding projects in March will allow contractors to have two summer seasons for project construction, Ridley said. He noted summer months are best for highway construction.

He also updated commissioners on other federal issues noting that anticipated long-term funding for transportation projects has been affected by a reduction of vehicle miles traveled and a corresponding drop in expected fuel tax revenue.

Last fall, department officials scaled back planned spending in the agency's eight-year Construction Work Plan because of the expected reduction in federal revenue. Currently, legislation pending in Congress could reduce federally funded projects by \$172 million this year alone.

"I think we did the right thing last fall," he said. "The stimulus is certainly not a windfall. It really somewhat makes up for the funds we had reduced out of our eight-year plan."

Commissioners also approved the 2009-2012 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Written every three years, the document spans four-years and includes ODOT project plans, as well as those for state, local and tribal transportation including highways, rail and transit.

In action items, commissioners approved a \$2 million contract for resurfacing a portion of the Broken Arrow Expressway and contracts totaling \$1.6 million for right-of-way clearance along the I-44 Riverside to Yale project in Tulsa. Commissioners also approved a \$6.7 million contract for construction of a section of US-281 near Geary and a \$1.3 million contract for installation of cable barrier east of Elk City.

In all, commissioners awarded 27 contracts totaling \$36.4 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 19 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements.

Contracts were awarded for projects in Beaver, Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Choctaw, Cleveland, Ellis, Haskell, Hughes, Johnston, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Pottawatomie, Seminole, Sequoyah, Texas, Tulsa and Washita counties.

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, **March 30, 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](http://www.okladot.state.ok.us).

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

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

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**Crews continue to prepare for the widening of I-44 (pictured in the background) between Riverside and Yale in Tulsa. The Oklahoma Transportation Commission approved two contracts for right of way clearance at its meeting Monday, March 2. Under the two contracts, crews will clear 59 parcels of land. The improved highway is expected to be completed in late 2012.**