



Special May Commission Wrap-Up:

Upcoming highway construction discussed; \$100 million in projects awarded

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Highlights of the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's May 19 meeting include approval of the fiscal year 2010 budget, discussing upcoming construction related to the economic stimulus plan, recognition of a retiring community leader as well as recognition of student accomplishments through the Oklahoma Byways program and awarding \$100 million in construction contracts.

Commissioners approved a \$1.7 billion budget for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation in the fiscal year beginning July 1. The program includes state and federal revenue projections as well as spending for construction, land purchases and maintenance.

In discussions on the federal economic stimulus plan, ODOT Director Gary Ridley noted that many of the projects have been focused on major thoroughfares in the state's most critical, high traffic areas, including several locations on I-35 and I-40; US-69 in the southeastern part of the state; and US-412 in the Panhandle.

"The work that everyone is doing certainly will cause a lot of inconvenience," Director Ridley said. "When we're done with these projects, we will have a much better system that will be long lasting."

He noted that nearly 80 percent of the transportation portion of stimulus funding has been committed to bridge and highway projects statewide. So far, the commission has approved spending \$353 million of the \$465 million in stimulus funding allotted to ODOT.

Ridley also honored Dean Schirf who is retiring from the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce after more than 30 years of service. During his tenure, Schirf worked on transportation, environmental and economic development issues and served as a member of the *Heartland Flyer* coalition. He also served on ODOT's mitigation committees dealing with three major projects in Oklahoma City.

Also during the meeting award-winning students from the University of Oklahoma Division of Landscape Architecture were honored for their work for the Oklahoma Byways Program, a collaborative project of ODOT, University of Oklahoma Outreach and local communities. The program is an effort to encourage historic perseveration of culturally significant highways while promoting tourism and economic development.

In action items, commissioners approved projects including the first section of the US-70 bypass southwest of Durant, as well as improvements to US-70 near Ardmore and Hugo. They also approved reconstruction of a part of I-40 in Seminole county, resurfacing US-64 in Cimarron and Pawnee counties, and construction of a new US-81 bridge over the Canadian River near Minco.

In all, commissioners awarded 36 contracts totaling \$100 million to improve highways, interstates and roads in 22 counties. Projects include bridge and highway construction and reconstruction, resurfacing and safety improvements. Contracts were awarded for projects in Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Bryan, Canadian, Carter, Cherokee, Choctaw, Cimarron, Custer, Garfield, Grady, Johnston, Latimer, Okfuskee, Oklahoma, Osage, Pawnee, Seminole, Sequoyah, Tulsa and Washington 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, June 22**, 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 the Web site www.okladot.state.ok.us. For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)

INFORMATION RELEASE

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At the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's May 19 meeting, commissioners approved an emergency \$800,000 contract for a temporary structure to replace this bridge on SH-8 near Aline in Alfalfa County. The original concrete box structure, built in 1951, was heavily damaged by intense rains on April 27. It carried about 900 vehicles daily.



Dean Schirf, center, who is retiring as the Corporate Secretary and Vice President of Government Relations for the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, was presented a flag honoring more than 30 years of service during the Oklahoma Transportation Commission's May 19 meeting. Schirf has influenced transportation issues statewide through work relating to surface transportation, environmental issues and economic development programs. Pictured with Schirf is Oklahoma Department of Transportation senior staff. From left: Gary Ridley, director and Secretary of Transportation; Tim Gatz, director of Capital Programs; Mike Patterson, director of Finance and Administration; Schirf; David Streb, director of Engineering; John Fuller, Deputy Director; and Gary Evans, director of Operations. Not pictured is Norman Hill, General Counsel.