



## Strategic Communications Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Oklahoma Supreme Court rules for full validation of new turnpike routes

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority appreciates the Oklahoma Supreme Court's decision affirming OTA's statutory authority to build new turnpike alignments proposed in the ACCESS Oklahoma \$5 billion, 15-year long-range plan. This plan is designed to Advance and Connect Communities and Economies Safely Statewide.

First announced as a long-range plan in December 2021, ACCESS Oklahoma includes construction projects across the turnpike network, such as widening the I-44/Turner, I-44/Will Rogers, and John Kilpatrick turnpikes as well as adding and enhancing nearly two dozen access points along existing turnpikes. The program also includes rehabilitating numerous bridges, finishing the loop around Tulsa's northwest side and building reliever routes in the Oklahoma City metro, completing the Outer Loop.

Today's ruling is the 14<sup>th</sup> time the OTA has received bond validation from the Supreme Court for new turnpike routes since 1950.

"This bond validation creates certainty for OTA, its bondholders and citizens who now know without doubt that these final three legs of the Oklahoma City Outer Loop meet the legislative intent to provide reliever routes through the metro area and fight increasing traffic congestion," said Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz. "This allows one of the most ambitious state transportation plans in Oklahoma history to move forward. It will increase safety and travel reliability, provide new connections to communities and improve traffic flow by integrating with the state highway system."

Today's ruling allows the OTA to confidently return to the Council of Bond Oversight to reapply for approval to issue up to \$500 million in bonds and to begin the process of selling bonds to fund planning and construction of three proposed turnpike alignments in the Oklahoma City metro area and to improve existing toll roads. It's worth noting, turnpike revenue bonds are payable solely from the tolls and other OTA revenues and do not constitute indebtedness of the state.

In the coming weeks, OTA engineers and consultants will resume their diligent work on the ACCESS Oklahoma plan, including working with our federal, state and local partners, to develop the best solutions for the three newly validated routes as well as the entire ACCESS program.

The OTA is committed to paying close attention to Oklahoma's increasing traffic congestion, as well as to any adverse effects on people, property and the environment.

For more information and project updates, visit the [ACCESS Oklahoma website](#) or call the ACCESS Oklahoma hotline at 1-844-562-2237.

**For background:**

The need for reliever routes into the southern Oklahoma City metro area is undeniable. In 2019, law enforcement officials responded to an average of five traffic-related crashes every day on I-35 between I-40 and Purcell. Transportation officials predict that in just seven years, motorists driving during peak travel times will experience a significant surge in stop-and-go conditions, causing a shockwave in traffic delays. It's worth noting, the five collisions daily do not include unreported incidents when drivers simply exchange insurance information.



Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz speaks with media Tuesday afternoon about the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling today for bond validation for the ACCESS Oklahoma long-range plan.

(Editors and News Directors: For questions, please call the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority's Strategic Communications office at 405-425-2849.)

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