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Stroud bridge over I-44/Turner Turnpike sustains severe damage from illegal over-height semi-truck; westbound motorists heading to Stroud must exit at Bristow

Oklahoma Turnpike Authority engineers said damage done by an illegal, over-height semi-tractor trailer to the Stroud bridge over the westbound I-44-Turner Turnpike lanes late Wednesday night is more severe than any of them have seen in their transportation careers.

As of early morning Thursday, all lanes of westbound I-44/Turner Turnpike were open and by mid-Thursday morning the westbound Turner Turnpike on-ramp was open to traffic. The westbound Turner Turnpike off-ramp to SH-99 in Stroud will remain closed until bridge repairs can be made. Westbound motorists who want to exit to Stroud are being detoured at the Bristow exit (mm 196) to SH-66 to Stroud. Portable message boards are in place on westbound Turner Turnpike directing Stroud traffic to Bristow.

The bridge has a more than 15-foot vertical clearance above the Turner Turnpike and serves as the westbound on- and off-ramp (mm 179) to SH-99 in Stroud. According to the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, the load carried by the semi-tractor-trailer was above 15-feet in height and struck the bridge with such force that it dislodged a bridge beam as well as caused damage to the bridge deck and parapet wall above. As the bridge beam fell to the ground, it impacted a second semi-truck following the first truck, causing severe damage to the vehicle.

"It's unbelievable that this crash did not result in a fatality or serious injuries," said OTA Deputy Director Joe Echelle. "We are so grateful that the driver of the second vehicle, who was at the wrong place at the wrong time, walked away from this incident. This bridge damage is severe and unlike any I've seen in my more than 20-year career in transportation."

OTA maintenance crews were called to the scene by OHP within minutes of the bridge hit and quickly closed I-44/Turner Turnpike lanes and the westbound I-44/Turner Turnpike on- and off-ramps while the bridge was assessed and crews and first responders cleared the scene.

Secretary of Transportation and OTA Executive Director Tim Gatz made an emergency declaration Thursday morning, which allows immediate repairs to restore the bridge's structural integrity, making it safe for the public traveling on and below the bridge. An emergency contract was issued to Built Right Construction. The contractor is working to quickly source a new bridge beam and repairs are expected to begin within the next few days. Once work begins, motorists can expect lane closures and ramp closures on westbound I-44/Turner Turnpike at Stroud for up to a week. Specific lane closure information will be provided as it becomes available.

"We are continuing to see damage to our state transportation infrastructure from illegal, over-height semi-trucks. This is a critical issue that we are calling on those in the trucking industry to address," Gatz said. "While both the OTA and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation are doing their part by reconstructing bridges to 17-foot vertical clearance as funds allow, it still remains law in Oklahoma that trucks should not be over 14-feet in height to safely navigate the state highway and turnpike system. We implore truck drivers to follow all Oklahoma laws and work with our Size and Weights permitting office to ensure that all travelers are safe on our roadways and that our infrastructure remains undamaged by these careless acts."

This bridge will be removed as part of a future ACCESS Oklahoma project in OTA's long-range infrastructure improvement plan. OTA will continue widening I-44/Turner Turnpike to six lanes between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Widening projects are anticipated to begin in 2024, however, the realignment and widening of the I-44/Turner Turnpike at

Stroud is expected to occur later in the 15-year long-range plan. Learn more about the long-range plan at www.accessoklahoma.com.



Shown is the area of the westbound I-44/Turner Turnpike bridge to Stroud where a bridge beam was dislodged by an illegal, over-height semi-truck late Wednesday night.



The damaged bridge beam lies on the shoulder of westbound I-44/Turner Turnpike at Stroud Thursday morning next to other debris from the bridge as well as large pipes knocked loose from the top of the illegal, over-height semi-tractor trailer load after it hit the bridge about 11 p.m. Wednesday.



Taken shortly after the crash Wednesday night on westbound I-44/Turner Turnpike at Stroud, this shows the second vehicle that was impacted by the falling bridge beam after an illegal, over-height semi-truck traveling just ahead of this vehicle hit the bridge, causing extensive damage.