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## **May OTA Board Meeting Wrap-Up**

### **Board approves contract for I-44 H.E. Bailey pavement rehabilitation; ratifies Declaration of Emergency following I-44/Turner Turnpike bridge hit**

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Board approved a more than \$10 million construction contract for 16 miles of pavement rehabilitation along I-44/H.E. Bailey Turnpike. The contract, awarded to Interstate Improvements, Inc., will rehabilitate I-44/H.E. Bailey in Comanche Co. between Lawton and Fletcher.

Secretary of Transportation and OTA Executive Director Tim Gatz briefed board members on continued efforts to convert I-44/H.E. Bailey to PlatePay. Last week, the H.E. Bailey mainline reopened to traffic along the Norman Spur. The mainline plaza lanes were closed in August 2022, so crews could remove old tolling equipment and install PlatePay tolling equipment.

"We are working to create free flowing traffic on our mainlines, and that is only possible through PlatePay and the investment we have made into that technology for the safety of those using the turnpike network," said Gatz.

PlatePay helps create a safer turnpike system by eliminating sudden speed changes needed to pay cash tolls. PlatePay cameras photograph a vehicle's license plate, enabling the Authority to mail an invoice to the vehicle's registered owner. The OTA plans to have all Oklahoma toll roads converted to PlatePay by the end of 2024.

Board members also approved the ratification of Declaration of Emergency for emergency repairs to a bridge along I-44/Turner Turnpike. The bridge near Chandler was hit by an over-height vehicle on April 14. Repairs will be made to the bridge to ensure the safety of the traveling public. This bridge has been hit three times in the last year.

During his director's report, Secretary Gatz provided the board with an update on the OTA's decision to suspend work on ACCESS Oklahoma. The OTA decided to suspend work on the \$5 billion, 15-year long-range ACCESS Oklahoma plan as it awaits validation on three proposed new turnpike routes from the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The Supreme Court's validation would allow the OTA to enter the bond market and begin work on the plan.

“Until we can access the bond markets and get the bond revenue we need to deliver this program, we have to call a pause,” said Gatz. “It’s important to remember, everything the turnpike authority does is in the interest of providing a better future for the state of Oklahoma and the state we serve by providing safe transportation opportunities. “

A new feature of the OTA monthly board meeting reports, include a more robust OTA operations and financials report. This report features the Authority’s budgets, debt services and toll revenue and highlights the OTA’s continuing efforts to display its financial condition in a more detailed manner. As part of the reports, it was announced the newest Oklahoma turnpike, the Gilcrease Expressway, has set a new single-day transaction record of more than 22,000 which was set in April.

The board, a six-member panel appointed by the governor to an eight-year term to oversee turnpike development, awards project contracts for road and bridge construction on a monthly basis.

The next Oklahoma Turnpike Authority board meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday, June 6, at the Oklahoma Department of Transportation Commission Room, 200 N.E. 21<sup>st</sup> St., Oklahoma City. The May meeting will feature the same format as the April meeting and will be available to view live online.