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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release #008-23

I-44/Turner Turnpike bridge hits in Chandler highlight need for trucking to observe oversize load limits

Construction crews plan to finish repairs this week on a section of the I-44/Turner Turnpike in Chandler that sustained two bridge hits in two weeks. Truckers hauling non-permitted, illegal oversized loads underneath SH-18 caused the damage.

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority engineers report this bridge has been hit, in fact, eight times in the past five years by oversized loads. The two most recent bridge hits have cost more than \$230,000 to repair. Additionally, in November, an oversized load traveling on Route 66 under the I-44/Turner Turnpike, also struck and significantly damaged a turnpike bridge near Bristow.

The SH-18 bridge over the I-44/Turner Turnpike was hit Jan. 23 and caused damage to four beams that were repaired through a steel flame-straightening technique. The most recent oversized load struck the SH-18 bridge over the eastbound I-44/Turner Turnpike (mm 166) lanes Feb. 5, prompting OTA to close the westbound on-ramp from Chandler to Oklahoma City for safety. When that second hit occurred, contractors were on site repairing the initial bridge damage from two weeks earlier.

"We had an oversized vehicle come through within about 6 inches of our guys ... It was like a bomb went off when the truck hit (the bridge). It shook (workers) to their core," said James Barnard, the owner of LOGOS Construction Co., whose workers were on site to complete the bridge painting necessary from the previous repair.

The contractor began the prep work late last week to replace the damaged bridge beam from the most recent hit. While crews work, eastbound I-44/Turner between mm 165-167 at SH-18 in Chandler will be narrowed to one lane nightly as crews wrap up repairs. Lane closures will be from 7 p.m. Monday to 6 a.m. Tuesday and possibly 7 p.m. Wednesday to 6 a.m. Thursday. Motorists are advised to use caution during the remaining evening work times.

OTA engineer Ladan Nelson says bridge repairs like this one can cost as much as \$150,000 to \$200,000. Nelson says, "Back in the 1950s when the Turner was built, no one expected loads to be higher than 14 feet. Modern-day bridges are now over 18 feet. Truckers using Oklahoma highways need to plan their route and check in with ODOT's Size and Weight Permits to make sure their vehicle is appropriate for the bridge height." More information may be found on Size and Weights at <https://oklahoma.gov/odot/size-and-weight.html>

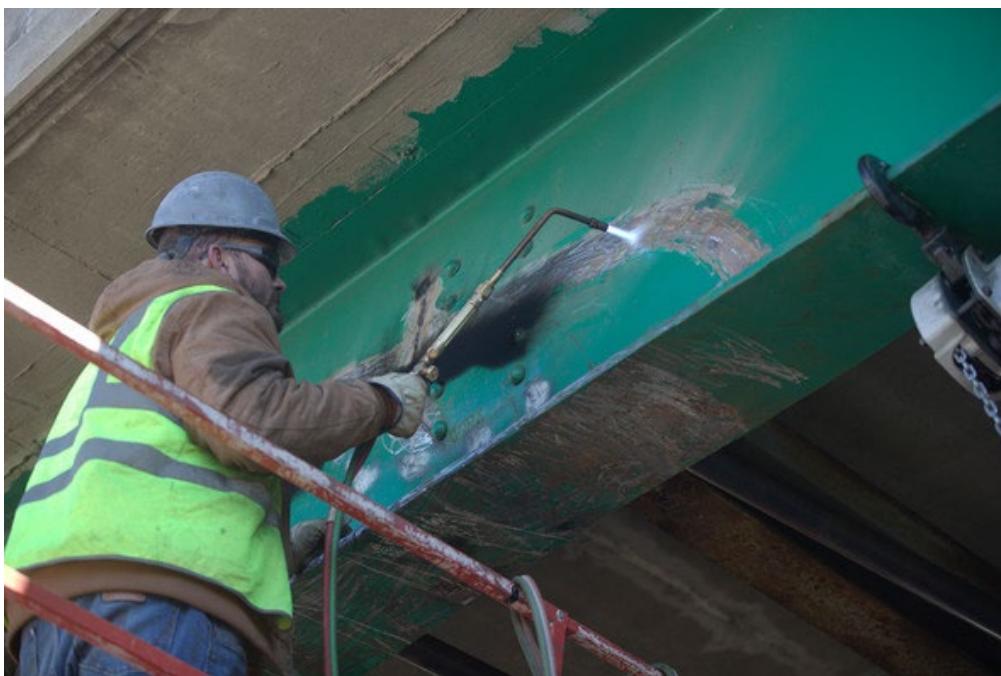
Of the nearly 300 bridges on Oklahoma turnpikes, only six are 15 feet or less. The vast majority of bridges provide more than 16 feet of clearance and all future bridge construction will be between 16-18 feet. Many of the lower-clearance bridges, including the SH-18 bridge above the I-44/Turner Turnpike, are scheduled for reconstruction in the ACCESS Oklahoma long-range plan. To learn more about the plan, go to www.AccessOklahoma.com.

ABOUT OKLAHOMA TURNPIKE AUTHORITY

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Board of Directors consists of the Governor (ex-officio) and six members serving without pay for eight-year terms from districts established in state statute. The members are appointed to represent geographical districts. OTA operates in compliance with trust agreements that define operating procedures.

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority uses cross-pledging, which was voted upon by Oklahoma citizens in 1954 and placed into Oklahoma statute the following year — Title 69-1705. Cross-pledging allows tolls from one turnpike to be used to build, expand or maintain other turnpikes as needed. Turnpikes are always built where an alternate, non-tolled road exists.

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A worker for LOGOS Construction Co. makes flame-straightening repairs to the SH-18 bridge over the I-44/Turner Turnpike in January after an oversize vehicle hit the structure, damaging four bridge beams. The bridge was hit a second time Feb. 5 and additional emergency repairs, including fully replacing a bridge beam, are expected to complete this week.