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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OTA Board selects new executive director

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Board unanimously selected Joe Echelle as the next OTA executive director at its monthly meeting Tuesday.

The appointment came after an executive session to discuss the resignation of OTA Executive Director Tim Gatz after an Attorney General's opinion last week about a state prohibition on dual office holding. Gatz briefly addressed the Board Tuesday to thank them for their support during his nearly eight-year tenure at OTA. He was reappointed last week by Gov. Kevin Stitt to the position of Oklahoma Department of Transportation executive director.

"The recent Attorney General opinions that were rendered were surprising to OTA but they weren't a shock to the transportation system. And the reason that they aren't a shock is that we have had and will continue to have great leadership from the OTA executive staff and continued diligent support from the Board," OTA Board Chairman John Jones said. "Tim Gatz was a wonderful and very successful leader of OTA throughout his tenure of approximately eight years. He and his team have successfully completed and accomplished many projects and made OTA better with each and every one. Without a doubt, he will be missed. But OTA has always been bigger than any one person. OTA is its executive staff, its various and meaningful departments and all of the dedicated employees that contribute to OTA's success along with its Board governance."

Echelle has served as OTA deputy director since 2021. He started at OTA in 2016 as the director of construction and was promoted in 2018 to assistant executive director.

"Thank you for putting a period at the end of a strange two weeks for me and our staff. ... Never did I think that this was going to happen like this. ... Thank you again for the opportunity and I will not let you down," Echelle told the Board.

Cashless conversion

In other action, the Board approved the final contract necessary for OTA to complete its cashless conversion for open road tolling in Oklahoma. The Board awarded a \$5.6 million contract to Robinson Construction LLC to convert the I-44/Will Rogers Turnpike to cashless tolling by late fall 2024. Cashless tolling means customers will pay tolls monthly at their convenience online either as a PIKEPASS customer or through OTA's PlatePay system. PIKEPASS account holders receive the lowest toll rate available.

Also, on schedule to convert to cashless tolling are the I-44/Turner Turnpike by summer 2024 and SH-375/Indian Nation Turnpike by the end of 2024. Construction projects to add the necessary tolling equipment for PlatePay are already underway on both turnpikes. Learn more or pay a PlatePay invoice at <https://www.platepay.com>.

Interstate designations

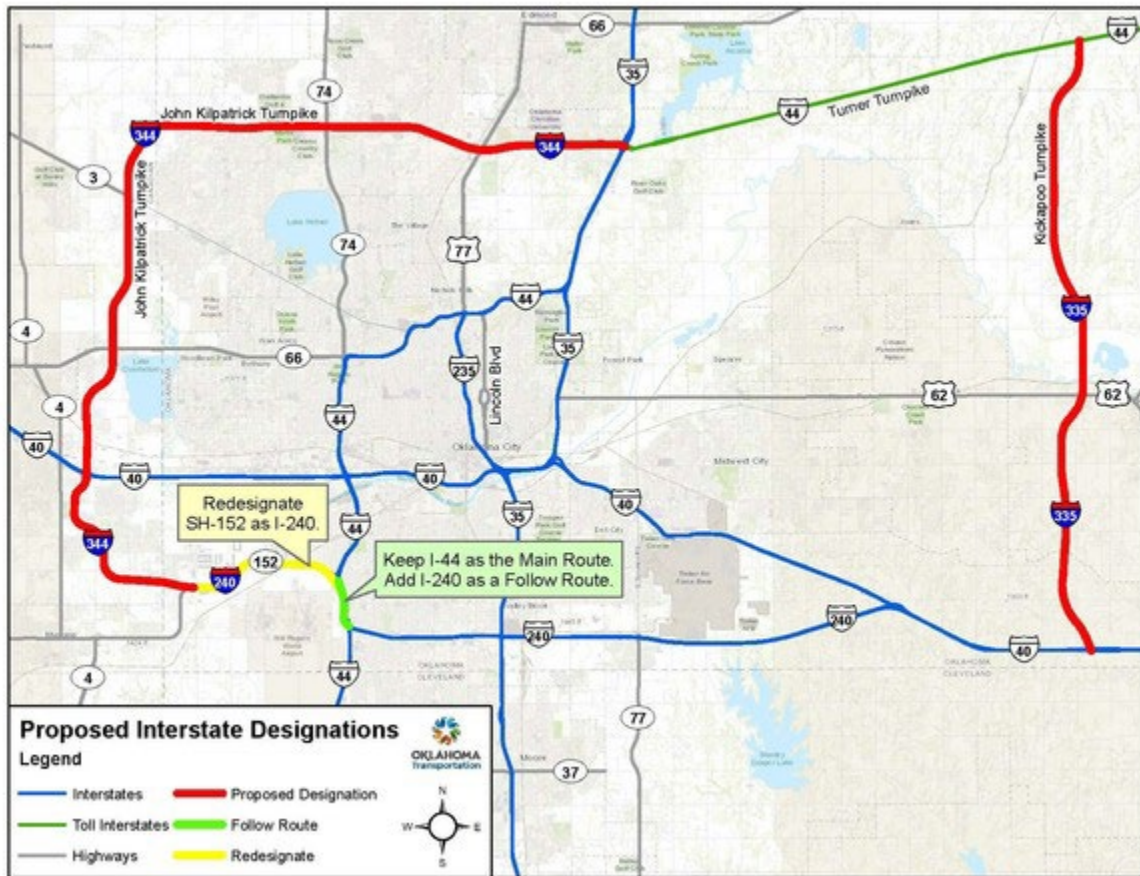
Additionally, the Board unanimously approved adding interstate designations to the John Kilpatrick Turnpike and the Kickapoo Turnpike. These were the only two turnpikes on the system without highway or interstate designations.

Crews will begin installing new signage designating the John Kilpatrick as I-344 and the Kickapoo as I-335 in about a month. The I-344/John Kilpatrick Turnpike designation will be for the entire nearly 31-mile length from SH-152 and continuing north and east to the I-35 and I-44/Turner Turnpike interchange. The I-335/Kickapoo Turnpike designation will be for the full nearly 19-mile length between I-44/Turner Turnpike and I-40.

Interstate designations help with navigation and are approved by the Oklahoma Transportation Commission in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration and American Association for State and Highway Transportation Officials. A roadway must meet certain standards to receive an interstate designation.



The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Board named Joe Echelle as the next executive director at its monthly meeting Tuesday. This appointment was effective immediately.



This map outlines the two new interstate designations of I-344/John Kilpatrick Turnpike and I-335/Kickapoo Turnpike. New signage will begin going up in about a month.

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Safe

Please click everyone's seat belt each and every time you drive.
 Check www.oktraffic.org for real-time traffic information
 OTA strongly discourages texting while driving.