



**OTA Communications and Marketing  
Thursday, June 6, 2024**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Press Release #010-24

**June OTA Board Meeting Wrap-Up**

**More ACCESS Oklahoma design work ready to launch**

More work will be re-engaged in the next three months for the ACCESS Oklahoma long-range plan, which includes projects to widen and improve the I-44/Turner Turnpike, the I-44/Will Rogers Turnpike, the John Kilpatrick Turnpike and further design work for the new alignment of the East-West Connector corridor in Oklahoma City.

ACCESS Oklahoma is the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority's 15-year long-range plan that includes new route alignments as well as several new interchanges. OTA sold the first \$500 million in bonds in late October 2023 to fund engineering design work and initial construction projects in the long-range plan. The program was validated for bond sales by the Oklahoma Supreme Court on Aug. 1, 2023.

Engineering design work restarted in February 2024 for 56 construction projects totaling \$156 million in authorized design contracts. OTA Deputy Director and Chief Engineer T.J. Dill updated the OTA Board this week that they will see more engineering design work contracts come before them for consideration starting in July. Dill anticipates the new design work contracts to add 57 more construction projects to the agency's workload.

"We are making great progress right now," Dill told the Board. "But for us to deliver this program in the timeframe we originally said, which is the 15-year time frame, we've got to get moving."

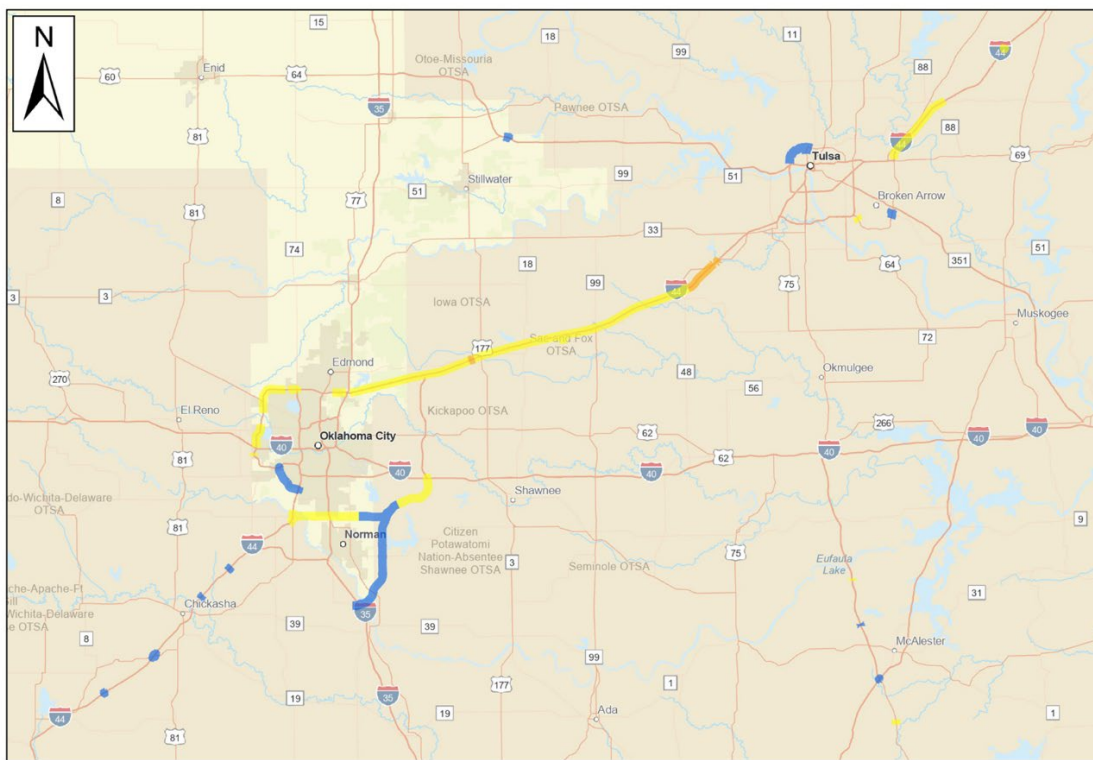
The East-West Connector is a 28-mile segment of the Oklahoma City Outer Loop that will connect the I-44/Tri-city area of Newcastle, Blanchard and Tuttle at SH-37/N.W. 32<sup>nd</sup> St. and cross the South Canadian River east to I-35 and continue east then northeast to ultimately connect with the Kickapoo Turnpike at I-40. This new alignment will expand the mobility of the south Oklahoma City metro population while also providing greater access to Moore and Norman.

Dill said initial design work on the East-West Connector segment between Newcastle to east of I-35 is nearing 60 percent plan completion and this segment remains the priority among the new alignments to construct first. Property owners in this area can expect to hear from OTA about parcels needed for the corridor by fall 2024. A contract for design work on the segment between Bethel Rd. and I-40 is expected to go before the Board for its consideration for approval later this summer.

Dill told the Board that no design work has started yet on the East-West Connector interchange between Lake Stanley Draper and Lake Thunderbird nor has design work started on the South Extension alignment, which is scheduled for later in the long-range plan.

“We know we have to do some sort of realignment in that area, but we’re working to get the rest of the program off the ground first,” Dill said.

Oklahomans will see the new areas to be engaged for design shown in yellow on the long-range plan map at [www.accessoklahom.com](http://www.accessoklahom.com).



**ACCESS Program Status - June 2024**  
**All Segments**



The [www.accessoklahoma.com](http://www.accessoklahoma.com) project map was updated this week to reflect more project areas moving to the engineering design phase this summer. Additional engineering contracts are expected to go before OTA’s Board starting in July.

## **New Board officers elected for 2024-2025**

In other business, the Board unanimously approved its slate of officers, who will serve from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Those positions include John D. Jones as chairman, Will Berry as vice chairman, Todd Cone as secretary/treasurer and OTA Chief Financial Officer Julie Porter as assistant secretary/treasurer.

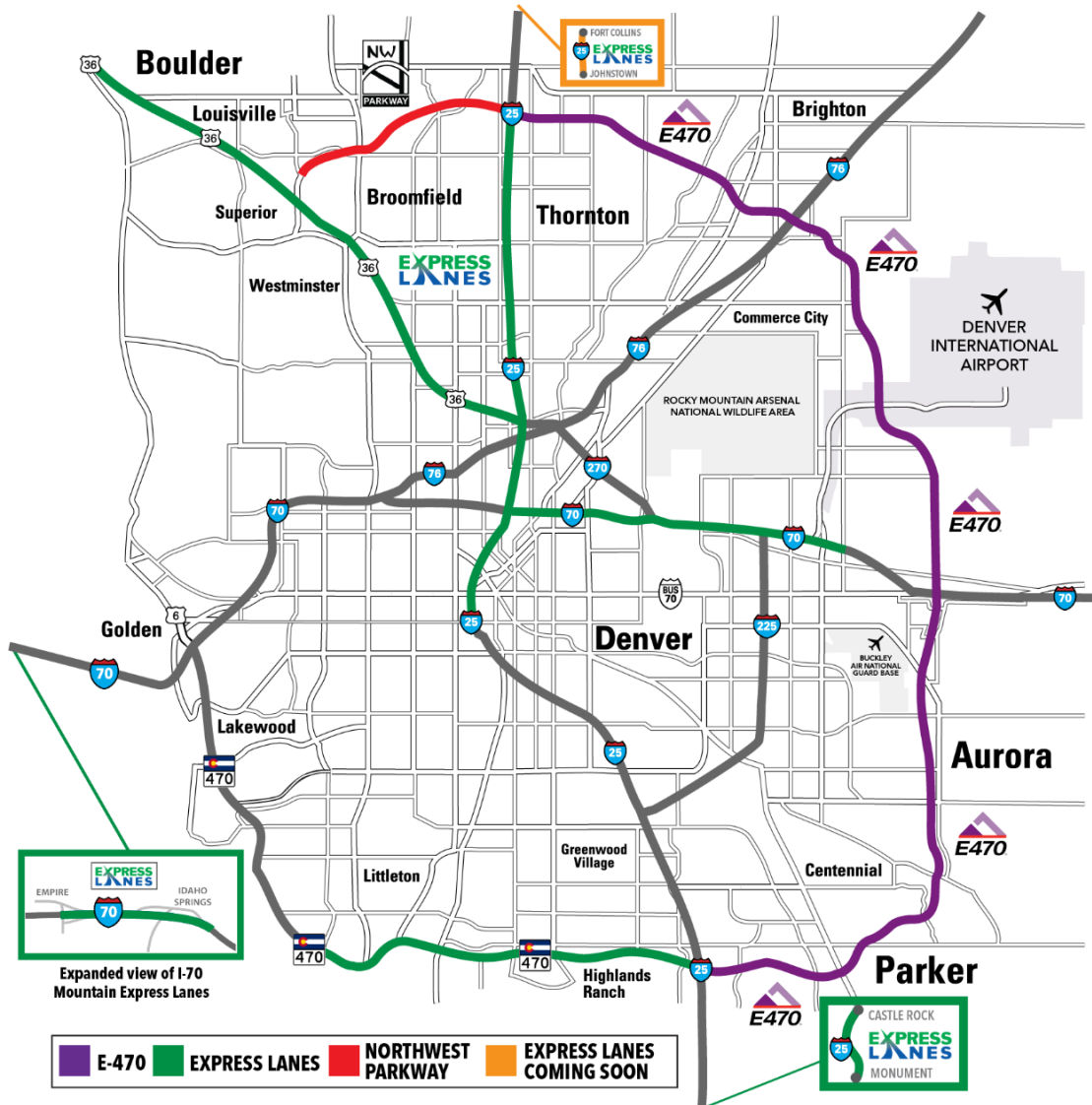
## **OTA adds PIKEPASS interoperability on E-470 in Colorado**

New this month for PIKEPASS toll tag customers is the ability to travel on the E-470 toll road in Colorado with the convenience of using a single transponder. E-470 joined the Central U.S. Interoperability Hub on June 2, which includes Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas.

This means that 2.1 million transponders in Colorado can now seamlessly travel Oklahoma's toll roads. The first night of transactions saw 286 E-470 tags using Oklahoma turnpikes, meaning OTA will not need to send separate PlatePay invoices to those customers as they will be handled through the Central U.S. Interoperability Hub.

“With Oklahoma being in the middle of the United States, we see a lot of transponders from other states,” said OTA Executive Director Joe Echelle. Oklahoma is a national leader in increasing interoperability agreements to the benefit of PIKEPASS users.

E-470 provides a direct connection to Denver International Airport. Interoperability is not available yet on Colorado's Northwest Parkway, but that is expected to come online later.



This map graphic shows the E-470 toll road in purple. This Colorado turnpike is now interoperable with Oklahoma’s PIKEPASS toll tag.

### OTA receives national beautification award, honors Trooper of the Month

Keep Oklahoma Beautiful Executive Director Evelyn Schaefer presented to the Board and OTA staff the Keep America Beautiful Partnership Award. This award recognizes the partnership between the OTA and Keep Oklahoma Beautiful for the annual Great American Cleanup. In 2024, all 77 counties participated for the fourth consecutive year and 13,000 volunteers picked up 2.3 million pounds of trash across the state with nearly 5,000 acres of land cleared, she said.

“On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff thank you for your commitment to litter education, beautification and environmental sustainability and for helping us keep Oklahoma beautiful,” Schaefer said.

Additionally, Oklahoma Highway Patrol Maj. Garrett Vowell recognized Trooper Eric Geib with the OTA Trooper of the Month Award for his recent arrest of a homicide and burglary suspect who was traveling on the Cherokee Turnpike in Eastern Oklahoma. On March 23, Trooper Geib pulled over a vehicle for speeding at more than 70 mph in a 55 mph work zone. During the traffic stop, the trooper noticed multiple weapons on the floorboards and other items that did not appear to belong to the driver, who also had no driver’s license. Upon further investigation in cooperation with the Okfuskee County Sheriff’s Office, a gunshot victim was found at the home of the vehicle’s registered owner.

Geib arrested the suspect and secured evidence.

“Geib did an outstanding job recognizing the inconsistencies in the suspect’s story, identified an unreported crime that had just occurred and took steps to ensure a complete investigation,” Vowell said. “He was able to have a violent criminal in custody before the crime was ever even reported. Trooper Geib is recognized for going above and beyond on the traffic stop and recognized for a job well done.”

Watch the full meeting video on OTA’s YouTube channel at [OTA June 4, 2024 Board Meeting \(youtube.com\)](#). The next OTA Board meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. July 9 at the R.A. Ward Transportation Building, 200 N.E. 21<sup>st</sup> St., Oklahoma City.



**Keep Oklahoma Beautiful Executive Director Evelyn Schaefer, front row center, presented the Keep America Beautiful Partnership Award to the OTA Board on Tuesday. Pictured, back row from left, are OTA Board members Dana Weber, Chairman John Jones, Gene Love and John Titsworth. Front row, from left, are OTA Deputy Director T.J. Dill, OTA Executive Director Joe Echelle, Schaefer, OTA Construction Engineer Ladan Nelson and OTA Right-of-Way and Construction Rhonda Powell.**





**OTA recognized OHP Trooper Eric Geib, front row center, with the OTA Trooper of the Month award for his role in apprehending a homicide suspect on the Cherokee Turnpike in March 2023. He is joined in the photo by, back row from left OTA Board members Dana Weber, Chairman John Jones, Gene Love and John Titsworth. Front row, from left, are OTA Deputy Director T.J. Dill, OTA Executive Director Joe Echelle, Geib, OHP Maj. Garrett Vowell and OTA Director of Maintenance Jeremy Smith.**

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**OKLAHOMA**  
**Safe**

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Check [www.oktraffic.org](http://www.oktraffic.org) for real-time traffic information  
OTA strongly discourages texting while driving.

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