



PRESS RELEASE

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November Board Meeting Wrap-Up

OTA Board recognizes Gene Love's 14 years of service

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Board recognized former Board member Gene Love's 14 years of service to Oklahoma's transportation industry and the state at its monthly meeting Nov. 4.

Love served a vital role on the Board since 2011, while contributing to many significant projects and programs during his tenure, including a \$150 million 2011 Construction Program, developed to widen bridges and roadways for 7.5 miles of the I-344/John Kilpatrick Turnpike and 7 miles of the SH-364/Creek Turnpike; the \$1.19 billion 2015 Driving Forward Program, which was developed to address the critical need to reconstruct, expand, and enhance the surface transportation system in Oklahoma; as well as the \$8.2 billion ACCESS Oklahoma long-range plan.

"I'll be forever indebted to you, Gene, for everything that you have shown me and taught me about this business. You've been a great role model," said OTA Board Chairman John Jones.

As chairman of the Board's Engineering and Construction Committee for nine years, Love's committee oversaw \$100 million to \$120 million annually of Capital projects in the Authority's five-year Capital Program. During this time, the Board oversaw an upgrade to the historic Vinita Service Plaza "Glass House" in 2014, which was renamed the Will Rogers Archway. As part of that committee, Love championed a comprehensive cable barrier installation program designed to make toll roads safer for the driving public.

While presenting Love with a commemorative brick from the original Route 66, ODOT Executive Director Tim Gatz said, “Gene epitomizes civil service and concern for the wellbeing of everyone around him.”

“It was not an easy decision to resign because I’ve enjoyed my time here on the Turnpike Authority Board,” Love said.

OTA thanked Love for his servant leadership and the work he has done to champion safety in Oklahoma’s transportation industry.

David Madigan joins OTA Board

David Madigan was appointed to OTA’s Board on Oct. 23 by Oklahoma Senate President Pro-Tempore Lonnie Paxton. A resident of Lawton, Oklahoma, Madigan will represent District 5 and serve a six-year term ending on July 1, 2031.

As president and CEO of Arvest Bank, Madigan brings more than three decades of banking experience and deep community roots in southwest Oklahoma.

Addressing his appointment to the Board, Madigan said, “I look forward to working with this Authority, as well as the staff. I’ve got big shoes to fill from my friend Colonel Love and his service to this organization. I’ll do my best to live up to his standard.”



The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Board, standing in the background, honored retired Board member Gene Love Nov. 4 for his dedicated service to OTA and the state. Front row, from left are Oklahoma Department of Transportation Executive Director Tim Gatz, Gene Love, and OTA Executive Director Joe Echelle.

OTA Board accepts 2026 budget

The OTA Board voted unanimously to accept the 2026 operating and maintenance budget in the amount of \$165.1 million and a capital budget of \$165 million, presented by OTA's Director of Finance Wendy Smith. The Board also voted unanimously to accept the 2026 annual budget for the SH-344/Gilcrease Turnpike in the amount of \$1.4 million.

Smith also reported on toll revenues for September 2025 on the Oklahoma turnpike system, which were \$40.3 million — 23.7 percent higher compared to September 2024. Total transactions grew by 2.5 percent compared to last year, with truck traffic continuing to remain strong during that same period. Year-to-date toll revenues continue to outpace budgeted projections by 8.3 percent, Smith said.

OTA moves forward on East-West Connector, seeks resident input, approves possible condemnation cases

An estimated \$140 million project for the East-West Connector Turnpike River Bridge crossing over the Canadian River is scheduled to for bid letting in November and will be considered for possible award in December. This will be one of the first East-West Connector turnpike projects to reach the construction phase and will connect Newcastle with Moore and Norman. What will ultimately become the longest bridge in the state will reduce travel distance to 12 miles and improve travel time reliability between I-44 and I-35. A unique aspect to this bridge construction is that it will be built entirely outside of the river's high-water mark meaning OTA will not impact the river or its banks during construction. Watch a short concept video of what the new bridge will look like at <https://youtu.be/30ad8UVDnXY>

OTA is seeking public comment from residents in McClain County and those who regularly drive I-44 between S.W. 149th St. and N.E. 24th St. regarding the future East-West Connector interchange at I-44/SH-37. Comments may be submitted virtually through Dec. 3 by visiting accessoklahoma.com. On the project website landing page, the public will see information about the future traffic movements and proposed interchange design to connect the new East-West Connector Turnpike to I-44/SH-37. This project includes new bridges, ramps, a diverging diamond interchange and new frontage roads.

The OTA Board adopted a Resolution of Necessity for the possible condemnation of nine properties along the East-West Connector, I-44/Turner and I-44/Will Rogers turnpikes. Todd Gore, OTA director of Right-of-Way and Utilities, noted that in six of the nine cases, condemnation proceedings are necessary to resolve title issues meaning the courts must determine the legal owner of the properties. The other three properties were recommended for possible condemnation proceedings due to financial differences.

OTA continues to negotiate with landowners even once condemnation proceedings begin in the courts. A resolution of necessity gives the Board's approval to move forward with condemnation on a property only if necessary. To date, OTA has not filed any condemnation cases for the ACCESS Oklahoma program but has approved two resolutions of necessity to allow for filings if negotiated settlements are not able to be reached.

ACCESS Oklahoma Program Manager Ladan Nelson reported that program-wide more than 45 properties have been acquired through negotiated settlements as part of the ACCESS Oklahoma projects. This includes properties on the Will Rogers, East-West Connector and SH-375/Indian Nation turnpikes.

Board awards new ACCESS Oklahoma construction project

A \$3.1 million bridge widening project on the I-44/Turner Turnpike at County Rd. NS 3310 near Wellston in Lincoln County was awarded to Sherwood Construction. The existing bridge will be widened in preparation for the future widening of the Turner Turnpike to six lanes. This project will include the construction of new sections of the bridge on the north and south sides of the existing structure. The project will have minimal impacts on traffic, but the speed limit will be lowered through the work zone and motorists can expect slightly narrowed lanes. Work is scheduled to begin spring 2026, with an expected completion date of late 2026/early 2027.

Winter weather safety reminders, announcement of new activity kit

OTA is preparing well in advance of winter weather entering the state and encourages motorists to do the same. OTA has materials, equipment and crews ready to serve Oklahomans in the event of inclement weather. This includes 100 trucks with plows - 17 of which are tow plows - 65,000 tons of salt/sand stored across the turnpike network, 85,000 gallons of magnesium-chloride, and 38 crews with 148 equipment operators trained and ready to tackle winter weather.

Drivers can prepare for winter weather alongside OTA by considering these reminders:

- Posted speed limits are for when road conditions are optimal. When roadways become slick, motorists are encouraged to drive appropriately for the road conditions.
- While pre-treating helps mitigate icy road conditions initially, it does not eliminate roadway issues entirely. OTA encourages motorists to slow down and stay vigilant when driving during inclement weather.
- Motorists should use caution around snowplows. Drivers can see snowplow cameras and road conditions at okroads.org or in the Drive Oklahoma mobile app.

Additionally, OTA is pleased to offer motorists a winter weather activity kit for children to help pass the time on longer trips during the holidays. The kits include a winter-themed coloring sheet, word search and crossword puzzle, as well as stickers.

The kits are available for free in PIKEPASS store locations, and the activity sheets will be downloadable from [Road Ready](#) on www.pikepass.com.

TO WATCH the November OTA Board meeting, find the full video online at [OTA Board Meeting Nov. 4, 2025](#)