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## **Governor Fallin Unveils Plan to Revamp State Bridge System**

*“Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan” Would Virtually Eliminate Structurally Deficient Highway Bridges While Widening the Creek and Kilpatrick Turnpikes*

OKLAHOMA CITY – Governor Mary Fallin today announced a new initiative to target and fix all 706 of the Oklahoma state highway system’s currently identified structurally deficient bridges by 2019. Oklahoma has frequently and notoriously topped national “bad bridge” lists. Fallin’s new “Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan” would, upon completion, bring the number of currently known structurally deficient highway bridges to less than one percent and make Oklahoma a national leader in that area.

Her plan also calls for projects that would significantly reduce congestion on the Creek and Kilpatrick turnpikes. These improvements would be made without increasing taxes or tolls. Fallin said the historic number of upcoming infrastructure improvements will benefit safety, commerce and travel in Oklahoma for decades to come.

“Having a safe, reliable and modern transportation infrastructure is important for Oklahoma’s economy and important for the safety of our citizens,” Fallin said. “Our new ‘Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan’ will ensure that Oklahoma’s poor rankings on national transportation issues become a thing of the past. By the end of this decade, Oklahoma will be one of the top five states in the nation for well-maintained highway bridges.

“Our plan also delivers much-needed improvements to two of the state’s most widely traveled highways: the Creek and Kilpatrick turnpikes. I’m looking forward to working with both ODOT and the state legislature to fully implement this plan, improve our turnpikes and to finally deliver a safer, more modern bridge system to Oklahoma.”

Director Ridley said that Fallin’s plan would allow ODOT to clear its backlog and to make dramatic improvements to Oklahoma’s transportation infrastructure.

“Today’s announcement puts us on the fast track to finish the remaining critical backlog of on-system bridge improvements,” Oklahoma Transportation Secretary Gary Ridley said. “Our agency is committed to getting projects ready for construction and to make the improvements that Oklahoma citizens deserve.”

Three immediate actions called for by Gov. Fallin include:

- Directing the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to include 126 additional projects targeting structurally deficient bridges into its FFY 2012-2019 Construction Work Plan.

With 413 bridges already in the plan, this represents the largest number of highway bridges ever scheduled for work in the department's 8-Year Plan.

- Beams removed from the current I-40 Crosstown bridge replacement project in Oklahoma City will be offered for use in county bridge projects. Selected beams will be inspected for reuse, and could help reduce costs for around 300 county bridge projects statewide.
- The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority is directed to include projects in its Capital Plan to add capacity and for safety improvements on the Creek Turnpike in Tulsa and the Kilpatrick Turnpike in Oklahoma, at a cost of about \$150 million.

Shortly after, the expansions of the two turnpikes can begin in order to help meet current and future traffic demands. Additionally, Fallin will ask legislators to provide funding for the 167 structurally deficient bridges through the Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Driver Safety (ROADS) fund. An increase to help hundreds of county bridge projects through the County Improvement for Roads and Bridges (CIRB) fund will also be requested. The additions are generated by raising the annual ROADS fund increases to \$56.7 million from \$41.7 million, and raising the cap to \$550 million from \$435 million. Similarly, the counties would benefit from increases of about \$25 million a year to the CIRB program, phased in over a three year period.

Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma President Jerry Dean said he was particularly excited by Fallin's proposal to provide county assistance by reusing beams from the I-40 Crosstown Bridge as it is disassembled. Dean is the commissioner for Roger Mills County District 2.

"At the county level, many aging bridges remain in service far longer than they were designed for and are under increasing traffic volumes," said Dean. "The system was not built to carry the amounts of rural industry traffic of today. The beam recycling plan and increased funding proposal are truly a huge step forward for the counties, which have not had the funding to accommodate economic demands or address critical bridge needs."

The Governor's plan also requires system accountability by calling for annual reports on the plan's progress for all three areas.

In 2006, Oklahoma topped national lists for the number of deficient bridges. At that time, nearly 1,200 of ODOT's 6,800 bridges were considered structurally deficient. Since that time, ODOT has been able to repair or replace some of the worst bridges on its system and reduce that number to 706 thanks to increased state funding by the Legislature in recent years. Under Gov. Fallin's plan, ODOT expects to remove those remaining bridges off the list, and counties will be able to begin work on several hundred bridges.

Gov. Fallin asserts transportation is a key element in commerce and job creation, and expects these improvements to put Oklahoma on the map as a state known for good roads and bridges. She believes restoring the state's transportation assets creates a more competitive business environment and builds a transportation infrastructure of the future.

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