

# SURFACE

SPRING 2022

## TRUST

TRANSPORTATION REVENUES USED STRICTLY FOR TRANSPORTATION

*SURFACE* is a publication of TRUST dedicated to bringing news about the financing of Oklahoma's transportation infrastructure to community, business and policy leaders around the state. This biannual publication has a central focus of:

- Federal and state funding
- Regulatory news from state Capitol and Congress
- TRUST events and news
- Innovative topics on transportation funding

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## RECORD BUDGET DEFINES LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### BACKED BY A RECORD BUDGET SURPLUS, SENATE AND HOUSE MEMBERS WORKED THROUGH THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION

of the 58th Oklahoma Legislature with normalcy ahead of an election cycle that will result in several new members joining the body in 2023. The session convened February 7 and adjourned Sine Die May 27. The 148-member Legislature (one House seat vacant) was able to avoid cuts to state agencies while utilizing the surplus to provide taxpayers a rebate to assist with rising inflation, much-needed salary increases for state troopers and other targeted state employees plus further strengthening the Constitutional Reserve (Rainy Day) fund and other state savings accounts by millions of dollars, a top priority of Governor Kevin Stitt. The record \$9.7 billion FY23 budget runs July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023. The surplus was due to many factors including a robust state economy and continued monies received from the CARES Act. As for transportation priorities, the ROADS fund was fully funded at its annual cap of \$590 million while funding was returned to the County Improvements for Roads and Bridges (CIRB) fund to ultimately restore its annual cap to \$150 million.



House A&B Transportation Subcommittee Chair Nicole Miller speaks at TRUST Transportation Day

As for daily transportation progress, the ODOT eight-year highway and bridge construction plan continues to rebuild Oklahoma's surface transportation infrastructure in all 77 counties. It remains the single most influential policy and funding development for transportation in Oklahoma history. ODOT is knocking on the door of its goal to reduce the number of structurally-deficient bridges on the state highway system to less than 1%. In 2004, the state had 1,168 structurally-deficient bridges. Today, that number is less than 70. Major projects are underway all

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# TRANSPORTATION DAY, Committee Dinners Draw Enthusiastic Crowds



TRUST members and transportation advocates filled the new First Floor Multipurpose Room for TRUST Transportation Day

**FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2019, TRUST RETURNED TO A FULL SCHEDULE OF SPRING EVENTS THIS YEAR WITH** Transportation Day at the Capitol March 9, and the Senate and House Transportation Committee Dinners May 2 and May 11 respectively. TRUST members turned out strong for all three events as everyone was anxious to return to a normal routine following two years of COVID-related interruptions. The Transportation Day legislative luncheon and program were held for the first time in the new First Floor Capitol Multipurpose

Room while the Senate and House Committee Dinners were held at the headquarters of TRUST member, the Association of Oklahoma General Contractors. Featured Transportation Day speakers included Governor Stitt, Speaker of the House Charles McCall, Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz, Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Rob Standridge, Senate A&B Subcommittee Chairman John Haste, House Transportation Committee Chairman Avery Frix, House A&B Subcommittee Chairwoman Nicole Miller and Ottawa County Commissioner Russell Earls, president of the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma. TRUST Co-Chairman Kell Kelly served as emcee with TRUST board member Gary Ridley and TRUST President Neal McCaleb providing opening and closing remarks respectively.

Two months later, TRUST hosted members of the Senate and House Transportation Committees. Senate dinner guests included Standridge, Haste, Transportation Committee Vice-Chairman Micheal Bergstrom and Gatz among others. At the House dinner, newly named Transportation Committee Chairman Ronny Johns addressed guests as did Miller, former Committee Chairman Avery Frix, former A&B Subcommittee Chairman Todd Russ and Gatz.

The primary reason TRUST has been able to establish itself as the premier transportation funding advocacy organization in Oklahoma is because of our outstanding collection of members. Our members rose to the occasion again this spring by supporting these important legislative events. Thank you to all TRUST members who participated as it makes a genuine impact on our mission and on elected officials. ■



Governor Kevin Stitt made his third appearance at TRUST Transportation Day.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

across Oklahoma with one high profile project, the I-235/I-44 interchange in Oklahoma City, being completed earlier this year. Another sorely needed project, the I-44/75 interchange in Tulsa, is progressing rapidly and will be a game changer for that fast-growing corridor. In addition, Governor Stitt and Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz also unveiled the 15-year, \$5 billion ACCESS Oklahoma plan which will address Oklahoma's rapidly rising traffic growth by widening the Turner and Will Rogers Turnpikes along with additional enhancements throughout the OTA network. Proper funding, at both the state and federal levels, allows ODOT to complete projects more quickly, but to also focus additional monies on new statewide initiatives such as two-lane highway development, pavement and widening projects. Progress is also quite visible on the county highway system through the CIRB fund which provides millions of dollars for county priority bridge and highway projects.

In Washington, D.C. a new five-year federal funding bill has been approved by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden that includes transportation infrastructure appropriations for highways, bridges, rail, waterways and airports.

As is the case each year, proper investment in Oklahoma's most valued physical commodity, our highway and bridge infrastructure, is vital. State and federal leaders must continue to hear from TRUST and other transportation funding advocates. With increased pressure on public dollars from thousands of special interest groups, TRUST has never been more important. TRUST will continue to foster an environment at the state Capitol and with our congressional delegation that lends itself to positive returns for Oklahoma's surface transportation infrastructure. Accomplishing our collective goals only happens with the continued support of TRUST members. Thank you for your loyal support! ■

# TRUST LEGISLATIVE AGENDA - 2022

“Our legislative agenda provides the bedrock for TRUST advocacy at the state Capitol, an agenda that is unilaterally focused for all transportation-generated revenues to be used strictly for transportation purposes”

*TRUST President Neal McCaleb*

- **Motor vehicle fees redirected to transportation.** A core TRUST principle is all transportation-derived revenues are used strictly for transportation. TRUST supports returning all motor fuel taxes and the remaining allocation of vehicle-related fees to transportation purposes, and encourages the appropriate allocation of motor vehicle fees to state highways, county roads and municipal streets taking into consideration previous vehicle-related fees and general fund allocations. TRUST will continue to support this concept as a matter of sound public policy.
- **Protect ODOT eight-year highway and bridge construction work plan.** TRUST’s top priority is ensuring funding remains at a level where no current projects are interrupted, no planned projects cut and no motor fuel taxes and vehicle-related transportation fees diverted from ODOT’s investment strategy which includes the Eight-Year Construction Work Plan, the Asset Preservation Plan and highway maintenance. TRUST opposes the diversion of funds from ODOT’s general budget and/or the eight-year plan to aid budget deficits.
- **Support the full statutory allocation to the ROADS fund.** In an effort to continue the replacement and rehabilitation of state highways and bridges, TRUST supports this statutory allocation as a core business function of the state.
- **Infrastructure bond financing.** During uncertain budget times TRUST supports infrastructure bond financing to maintain critical transportation funding and projects, and vehemently opposes the diversion of motor fuel taxes and vehicle-related transportation fees to non-transportation uses of state government.
- **Restore funding to County Improvements for Roads & Bridges (CIRB) five-year construction work plan.** To rehabilitate county bridges and highways, TRUST supports the CIRB program and its revolving fund to be used strictly for CIRB transportation projects with no interruption of current projects and no elimination of planned projects. Furthermore, TRUST supports full restoration of diverted funds from CIRB to the state budget over the past several years.
- **Protect transportation-dedicated revolving funds.** TRUST supports the protection of transportation dedicated revolving funds. The funds are intended to fund transportation infrastructure projects and should not be diverted for other governmental purposes.
- **Renovation of Ports of Entries - Weigh Stations.** TRUST supports methods to complete the construction of Oklahoma’s new ports of entries in order to protect highways and bridges from overweight freight. Doing so will result in additional revenues from fines and fees due to increased monitoring of overweight commercial traffic. TRUST also supports returning the one-cent transportation user fee from the Petroleum Storage Tank Indemnity Fund to



ACCO President and Ottawa County District 3 Commissioner Russell Earls provided a CIRB and county roads update at TRUST Transportation Day.

transportation needs to service the bond debt. This allows for no revenue impact or increased taxes while utilizing transportation fees to support transportation needs.

- **Innovative funding for transportation.** TRUST supports innovative and alternative transportation funding that is revenue equitable but not punitive, and for the intended purpose of establishing equitable mobility through a comprehensive approach to increase overall transportation funding. ■

## Why Join TRUST?

Be part of the voice for transportation advocacy that works with members of the state legislature to implement solutions. Without your membership to TRUST, we risk losing the valuable momentum we have gained over the past 16 years. At the state Capitol, we must have a constant and growing voice for transportation and urge you to join us in this vital cause.

## MISSION STATEMENT

TRUST, *Transportation Revenues Used Strictly for Transportation*, is an advocacy group dedicated to restoring Oklahoma's transportation infrastructure. We are committed to creating a culture within Oklahoma government that values and adequately funds transportation as a core priority.

## Principles of TRUST

- Use all state transportation-related taxes and fees strictly for transportation
- Protect and grow dedicated funds for Oklahoma's transportation system
- Educate policy makers and the public on the importance of investing in highways and bridges
- Support leaders who are committed to transportation as a core priority of state government
- Use high-quality, lasting materials in building and maintaining highways and bridges
- Advocate efficiency and accountability within the state legislature and Oklahoma Department of Transportation

## TRUST ONLINE restoreTRUST.org

### OKLAHOMA TRANSPORTATION NEWS



Our online news page is updated daily with local and national legislative and transportation articles. In addition, to receive our weekly Oklahoma Transportation News email newsletter, please contact TRUST membership director Helra Han at helrahan@gmail.com.

### EVENTS ONLINE

Our updated TRUST website - restoreTRUST.org - allows members to register for our annual events, and renew their membership with just a few clicks. Please take advantage of this convenient method to stay engaged with TRUST. For questions on events or membership, please contact TRUST membership director Helra Han at helrahan@gmail.com.

### UPDATE YOUR MEMBER PROFILE

In an ongoing effort to conserve operating funds, TRUST continually updates its mailing lists and contact database. If you wish to continue to receive TRUST mailings, emails and newsletters or wish to add additional contacts within your organization, please visit [www.restoreTRUST.org](http://www.restoreTRUST.org), click on the contribute page and select "update membership profile."

### TRUST STAFF

Jami Longacre - Executive Director

John Cox - Communications Director

Helra Han - Membership Director

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Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Rob Standridge was a featured speaker at the Senate Transportation Committee Dinner.



House Transportation Committee Chairman Ronny Johns speaks to attendees at the House Transportation Committee Dinner while TRUST Co-Chairman Kell Kelly observes.

**THANK YOU FOR BEING A TRUST MEMBER!**