restoreTRUST.org

A PROGRESS REPORT ON OKLAHOMA TRANSPORTATION

SURFACE

FALL 2026

T.R.U.S.T
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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MAZZEI WINS GOVERNOR'S RACE,

HERN CAPTURES U.S. SENATE

A BUSY STATE AND FEDERAL 2026 ELECTION CYCLE CULMINATED WITH THE NOVEMBER 3 GENERAL ELECTION THAT SAW FORMER STATE SENATOR MIKE MAZZEI (R-TULSA) CAPTURE THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE BY DEFEATING OUTGOING DEMOCRAT STATE HOUSE MINORITY LEADER CYNDI MUNSON. Incumbent First District U.S. Rep. Kevin Hern (R-Tulsa) won the U.S. Senate seat vacated by former Senator Markwayne Mullin. Mullin was serving the final four years of the late former Senator Jim Inhofe's final term, before resigning earlier this year to accept President Donald Trump's appointment as Secretary of Homeland Security. Governor Kevin Stitt then appointed Alan Armstrong as the temporary senator until the general election determined the full-term senator. Armstrong, on acceptance of Stitt's appointment, was prohibited from seeking the office during the 2026 cycle. Attorney General Gentner Drummond issued an opinion in October stating that the winner of the general election (Hern) could be sworn in immediately upon election rather than waiting until the customary January inauguration. Hern will be sworn in November 30.

Oklahoma's five U.S. House seats were up for election with the GOP capturing each. Outgoing state Rep. Mark Tedford will succeed Hern as First District U.S. Representative. Incumbent Representatives Josh Brecheen (CD 2), Frank Lucas (CD 3) and Tom Cole (CD 4) enjoyed easy victories while the CD 5 race was narrowly won by incumbent U.S. Rep. Stephanie Bice.

The race for Attorney General went to outgoing GOP state Representative Jon Echols who defeated Democrat Nick Coffey, a former federal prosecutor. Oklahoma's new Republican Lt. Governor is former Speaker of the House T.W. Shannon who defeated Democrat Kelly Forbes. The race for Superintendent of Public Instruction saw Republican Robert



Governor-elect Mike Mazzei

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Franklin defeat Democrat Jennettie Marshall. Outgoing GOP State Auditor Cindy Byrd was elected State Treasurer while outgoing Republican state Rep. Brad Boles won the open Corporation Commission seat. The final three statewide winners are Republican Bob Sullivan (Insurance Commissioner), outgoing GOP state Rep. Kevin West (Labor Commissioner) and Republican Melissa Capps (State Auditor) who ran unopposed in the primary and general elections.

Oklahoma Legislature races resulted in Republicans maintaining supermajority status within both chambers. The Senate GOP majority remains at 40-8. New GOP senators winning previously held GOP seats in the general election are Justin Wood (SD 17), Tyler Herring (SD 18), Jon Painter (SD 24), Curtis Erwin (SD 32) and Aaron Forst (SD 34). New GOP senators winning previously held GOP open seats in the primary are Jessica Winegeart (SD 26) and Rick Vernon (SD 38). Senator Lonnie Paxton (SD 23) will serve a final two-year term as Senate President Pro Tempore.

Across the rotunda in the House of Representatives, the GOP majority is 75-26 after Democrats defeated five GOP incumbents and captured an open seat previously held by the GOP. They are Kathy Suttles (HD 64), Joe Watkins (HD 75), Dalton Gau (HD 83), Jeffrey Perez (HD 84), Tegan Malone (HD 95) and Chaunte Gilmore (HD 100).

New House Democrats winning open previously held Democrat seats in the general election are Chelsey Branham (HD 85) and Herschel Brown (HD 99). New House Democrats winning open previously held Democrat seats in the primary are Kristina Gabriel (HD 77) and Sam Grimaldo (HD 92).

New House Republicans winning open previously held GOP seats in the general election are Scotty Stokes (HD 9), David Nelson (HD 16), Leah Longest (HD 26), Madison Bolay (HD 38), Toby Thompson (HD 47), Heath Kufahl (HD 54), Troy Talley (HD 81) and Roberto Seda (HD 91).

New House Republicans winning open previously held GOP seats in the primary are Chris White (HD 1), Michael Brittingham (HD 19), Spencer Grace (HD 37), Kinsley Jordan (HD 40), Cole Stevens (HD 51) and Sam Mitchell (HD 65).

Rep. Kyle Hilbert (HD 29) will serve a final two-year term as Speaker of the House.



Senator-elect Kevin Hern

2027 OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE PREVIEW



Senate President Pro Tempore Lonnie Paxton



Speaker of the House Kyle Hilbert

AN UNUSUAL FY-27 BUDGET AGREEMENT SENT LAWMAKERS HOME TWO WEEKS EARLY DURING THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION EQUATING TO THE EARLIEST SINE DIE IN MANY YEARS. Session highlights included a teacher pay raise and important legislation to improve reading and literacy outcomes among public elementary school students. Most agencies received standstill budgets due to flat revenues. The first regular session of the 61st Oklahoma Legislature convenes February 1 with several new members and Governor-elect Mazzei delivering his first State of the State address before a joint session which is expected to outline his policy goals and views on the state budget. Initial FY-28 budget figures will be released in December by the Oklahoma State Equalization Board and the OSEB will meet again in February to certify final revenue available for appropriation during the fiscal year running July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028.

As TRUST celebrates its 20th year our mission to return all transportation-generated revenues to transportation-related programs has never been more important. TRUST will be present each day during the session advocating for continued investment in Oklahoma's bridge and highway infrastructure on both state and county levels. Oklahoma has made tremendous progress in modernizing and improving the safety of its surface transportation infrastructure and it has been a concerted effort among multiple entities, including past and current governors, the Legislature, ODOT, TRUST, counties and surface transportation advocates across the state. We must not rest on our laurels as there is so much more to accomplish. Educating new legislators on the importance of a first-class, modern surface transportation system is always important, and the statutory annual allocations provided to the ROADS and CIRB funds must be protected. The ODOT Eight-Year Construction Plan remains the central driving force for state highway and bridge improvements, however inflation has significantly reduced its impact resulting in removed and/or delayed projects. TRUST will also continue to support the continued advancement of OTA's Driving Forward plan.

As the new year draws near, please plan to attend and support our March 10 Transportation Day at the Capitol along with our Senate/House Transportation Committee Dinners. These events are vital to spreading the TRUST message which has helped TRUST establish itself as one of the premier coalitions at the state Capitol as we are respected by the executive branch and legislative members of both parties. It is imperative that our collective message continues.



A capacity crowd attended the October 14 TRUST Innovation Forum.

HONORING TIM GATZ, WELCOME T.J. DILL



Tim Gatz

Longtime ODOT professional Tim Gatz retired at the end of October after over 35 years with the agency. During his career Gatz served in multiple positions, including as ODOT Executive Director and as Governor Stitt's Cabinet Secretary of Transportation. Deliberate and laser focused, Gatz was the consummate state agency director whose knowledge base to all matters related to Oklahoma's transportation network was unmeasurable. He led with energy and absolute professionalism at every turn. The board of directors and members of TRUST are eternally grateful for everything Secretary Gatz did to support our organization, events and mission.

Succeeding Gatz as Interim ODOT Executive Director is longtime agency professional T.J. Dill who most recently served as ODOT Chief Engineer. Dill is well known and well respected which provides for a seamless transition; a trait ODOT has been known for over the years. Governor-elect Mazzei will determine the permanent executive director during the transition period. The board of directors and members of TRUST congratulate Director Dill on his appointment and are looking forward to collaborating with him to further improve Oklahoma's highway and bridge network.



T.J. Dill

TRANSPORTATION INNOVATION FORUM DRAWS CAPACITY CROWD



Guardian of Transportation recipients LaVern Phillips and Gene Love accept their awards from TRUST board members.

TRUST held its signature member event, the Transportation Innovation Forum October 14, before a capacity audience at the Oklahoma History Center. The gathering featured remarks from gubernatorial candidates Mike Mazzei and Cyndi Munson as well as presentation of the TRUST *Guardian of Transportation* award which saw two recipients for the first time. The recipients are former TRUST board member and longtime economic development and surface transportation improvement advocate LaVern Phillips of Woodward and former Oklahoma Turnpike Authority and Oklahoma Transportation Commission member Gene Love of Lawton. Thanks to all TRUST members and guests who attended and congratulations to our very special *Guardian of Transportation* honorees.

Why Join TRUST?

Be part of the voice for transportation advocacy that works with members of the Oklahoma Legislature to implement solutions. Without your membership, we risk losing the valuable momentum we have gained since 2006. 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 adequately funds and values 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 Oklahoma Legislature and Oklahoma Department of Transportation

TRUST ONLINE
restoreTRUST.org

OKLAHOMA TRANSPORTATION NEWS

Our online news page is updated with local and national legislative and transportation articles. To receive our weekly Oklahoma Transportation News email newsletter, please contact TRUST Membership Director Helra Han at helrahan@gmail.com.

EVENTS ONLINE

restoreTRUST.org allows members to register for 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 ONLINE

TRUST continually updates its mailing lists and contact database. If you wish to continue receiving our mailings, emails and newsletters, or wish to add additional contacts within your organization, please contact TRUST Membership Director Helra Han at helrahan@gmail.com.

TRUST STAFF

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Dues paid to TRUST, a project of Oklahomans for Safe Bridges and Roads, Inc., are not deductible as charitable contributions. However, 40% of dues paid may be claimed as business expense for federal income tax purposes for FY-2027. Any dues paid used for lobbying efforts are not tax deductible.

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Please Plan to Attend TRUST

- **Transportation Day at the Capitol – March 10, 2027**
- **Senate/House Transportation Committee Dinners – Spring 2027**

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING TRUST!