

Stimulus road projects win praise for Oklahoma Capitol: 87.6 percent of funding has been assigned for construction

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Oklahoma is one of a handful of states successfully using its federal stimulus dollars for road projects, according to a report presented to members of the Transportation Commission on Tuesday.

Through the end of August, 87.6 percent of the \$465 million the state received for road projects is linked to a project that has been approved by the Federal Highway Administration and is ready for bidding, said Gary Evans, director of operations for the state Transportation Department.

About 25 percent — or \$115.8 million — has been paid out to contractors working on projects on Oklahoma roads, Evans said. So far, eight projects, totaling \$14.3 million, have been completed.

Road projects being funded by federal stimulus dollars are expected to be completed over the next 12 months.

The chairman of the U.S. House committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., recently sent a letter to state officials commending them for their efforts to put federal stimulus dollars to work.

Oberstar said Oklahoma has the third-best record among all states and the District of Columbia.

Extra stimulus funds are also helping the state get to projects included in its eight-year long-term plan. Commissioners on Tuesday approved a new \$4 billion plan that includes projects in 2010 through 2017.

"It is the most comprehensive plan the agency has ever had," said Gary Ridley, director of the state Transportation Department.

The plan includes more than 563 bridge replacements or major repairs.

"We are working our way out of the bridge problem," Ridley said. "This will put us in a very manageable position. Four or five years ago we were in a very unmanageable position."

The eight-year plan also includes 446 miles of shoulder improvements and repairs on two-lane roads, \$1.9 billion for improvements to high-volume highways and the construction of 62 miles of cable and concrete barriers.

Read more: <http://newsok.com/stimulus-road-projects-win-praise-for-oklahoma/article/3399372#ixzz0RjxAa3PC>