

WINTER 2012-2013

Arkansas HIGHWAYS

A PUBLICATION OF THE ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT | MAGAZINE

R. Madison Murphy Reflects on Service

OUTGOING COMMISSION CHAIRMAN
SHARES HIS PARTING THOUGHTS

INSIDE

Voters Approve
ISSUE #1

CONSTRUCTION
CHALLENGE:
I-430/I-630
INTERCHANGE

A Trip Down
HWY. 165



DIRECTOR'S Message

It's hard to believe that this edition of the Arkansas Highways magazine is the winter issue. If you are like me, it makes you realize how quickly the year 2012 has gone by. The end of any year is a time of reflection and an opportunity to assess how the past twelve months have gone.

I'm proud to say that here at the Highway and Transportation Department we have had a good year, and as we come to the close of 2012, there is a sense of excitement. Two developments in particular serve as indicators that 2013 will be a big year.

First, Election Day in November saw the people of Arkansas put their stamp of approval on the temporary one-half cent sales tax issue. What that means for our Department is the beginning of a new four-lane highway construction and improvement program. The program will be designed to connect all parts of Arkansas with better roadways in order to provide safer and more efficient travel. The ripple effect of that new road construction is the fact that those new and improved roads will support economic development and make it more desirable for companies to locate, expand and do business in our great State. The building of those roads will itself support over 40,000 jobs. Here at our Department, I'm confident our entire staff will work hard to make the new program a success. The wheels have already begun turning as we get this program underway.

The second sign that a big year will unfold in 2013... at the same time the four-lane program is taking off, the new Interstate Rehabilitation Program is also getting underway. Contracts were awarded in November on the first three jobs. Those include improvements to Interstate 40 near Russellville, Interstate 540 in Van Buren and Fort Smith, and on Interstate 530 near Wrightsville. We will see many more projects get underway in 2013. In all, plans call for the rehabilitation of 455 miles of the State's Interstate highway system.

Articles on both of these programs and how they will unfold are included in this issue of Arkansas Highways. In addition, you will find an interesting interview with our outgoing Commission Chairman, Madison Murphy. I want to take this opportunity to thank Madison for his unstoppable energy and dedication to improving our highway system over the past ten years as a member of the Commission, and also for his leadership as Chairman these past two years.

And finally, in mentioning a few of the articles you will find in this magazine, let me say that in the year ahead you will find big changes coming not only to this magazine, but to the way we communicate with our employees through our print publications. We are going to see improvements that will allow us to better tell our story and provide insight into how the Department operates, focusing on the people that make it run from day to day.

The year 2012 may be coming to an end, but we close it out with an excitement that will surely carry over to 2013. I am confident that each of us will do our part from day to day to make the year ahead a big success.



Scott E. Bennett
Director of Highways and Transportation

FRONT COVER:
Interstate 30
Saline County

BACK COVER:
U.S. Highway 70
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ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION



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Chairman



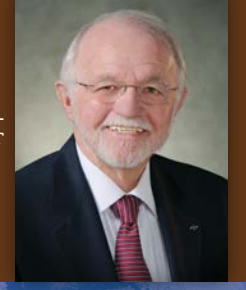
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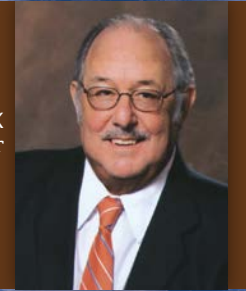
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Member



DICK TRAMMEL
Member



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Member



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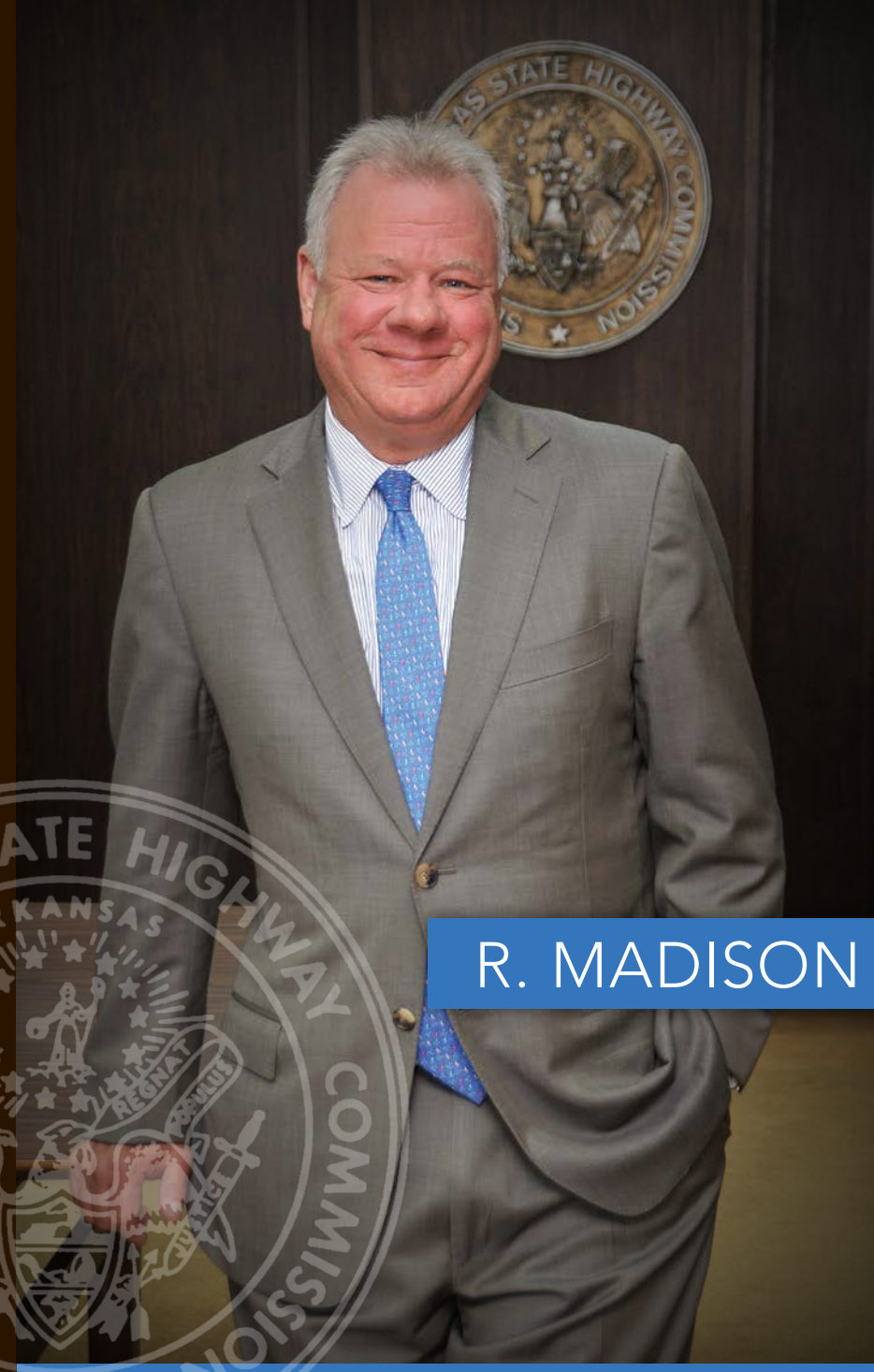
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R. MADISON MURPHY

COMMISSION CHAIRMAN SAYS FAREWELL TO AHTD

In January of 2013, Madison Murphy's ten-year term on the Arkansas State Highway Commission will come to a close. Murphy was appointed by Governor Mike Huckabee. He took the Oath of Office on January 14, 2003. A native and current resident of El Dorado, Murphy is a member of the board for Murphy Oil Corporation and serves as president of the Murphy Foundation. He sat down recently with Internal Communications Coordinator David Nilles to reflect on his term as Highway Commissioner and to discuss the future of Arkansas' highway system.

(continued on page 6)

“**R**EFLECTING ON THE JOB, IT’S A TREMENDOUS PLACE TO HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AND I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN A PART OF IT OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS.”



NILLES: I’d like to begin our discussion with something that is timely and important for the Department. That’s the successful passing of the Half-Cent Sales Tax in November. You were very involved with that campaign. How important is it for Arkansas’ highway system that it was successfully passed?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: I think it was critical for the highway system that it passed. We have, in our state and in our country, a systemically flawed funding system called the “per gallon” motor fuel tax. This particular system of funding worked well in the 1950s and up through the 1980s. But today, our vehicles get better gas mileage, which is great. But as a result, what we have in our country and our state is a flat to declining source of revenue. Costs, on the other hand, are escalating dramatically. So our purchasing power for infrastructure has gotten seriously eroded.

As an example, the Department has data on what one hundred million dollars would do in four-lane widening. In 1970 or 1980, it would have widened 150 miles of roadway. Today, that number is about 13 miles of roadway.

The passage of Issue #1 really is a much needed capital infusion into the funding system. It gets projects of major regional significance done that we simply, as a state, wouldn’t have had the funding to get done otherwise. I think it’s critical that the voters of Arkansas understood the message, and on election day, it seemed to resonate with them.

This tax is temporary, and does not apply to groceries, medicine or motor fuel. Plus, it will end when the last bond is paid off in or around the tenth year. It goes to specific projects and creates 40,000 private sector jobs in the state. There is also city and county turn back money. It does not grow State government and people know exactly

where the money is going because all of the projects were identified early on. So there was literally something in it for everybody.

From a funding perspective, I liken it to a capital expenditure for major projects. But it does not help solve the systemic funding problem that the Department and the State have. It is a temporary, ten year major needed fix but it gives us ten years of breathing room to figure out how to better fund infrastructure in the state of Arkansas.

NILLES: What are some other developments that have occurred during your term that you consider major accomplishments?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: I think if you asked other people they would point to the passage of the GARVEE bonds for the Interstate Rehabilitation Program or perhaps the Half-Cent Sales Tax. Those are both significant, visible things.

But to me, one thing that was just as important was the Commission and Department’s adoption of the Arkansas Primary Highway Network. It allows us to determine where the scarce funding that we do have gets allocated.

The adoption of the Arkansas Primary Highway Network and the underlying four-lane grid system that is the backbone of that network, give the Department a long-range planning tool. We’ve heard people say we need to put the money where the cars are. The Primary Highway Network is approximately 8,000 miles so it is half of the State’s highway system and it carries 92% of the traffic in the state.

My hat is off to Buddy Benefield because we passed that when he was Chairman. We on the Commission worked closely to identify that system, spent time talking about it, came to an agreement and adopted it. The State can modify the network as traffic patterns change over time but the concept is sound. When you have this huge



R. Madison Murphy taking care of business as Commission Chairman in 2012.

shortfall coupled with many needs, you have to prioritize where to spend the money. The primary network has been the planning tool for eight years. I think that the professionals here at the Department would agree that it ranks right up there with some of the more public issues that we’ve all dealt with.

NILLES: Looking back, has your term on the Commission been close to what you expected it might be?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: To be honest, I wasn’t sure what to expect when I came onto the Commission. I didn’t have a real grasp of some issues that the Department has to deal with. The sheer complexity of how you deal with Federal highway rules and regulations, the categories of funding, and the constraints that the Department operates under all were learning experiences. So it hasn’t been what I expected because I didn’t know what to expect. Every time I walked through the front door it was a learning experience.

NILLES: In your years on the Commission, you’ve been involved in some programs that have had a great impact on our highway system... the first Interstate Rehabilitation Program, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, now the second Interstate Rehabilitation Program. Looking ahead, what is the long term answer to financing Arkansas’ highways in the future?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: One thing that happened while I was on the Commission was the formation of the Blue Ribbon Committee appointed to study highway finance. I served on that Committee. It came up with four principle recommendations.

One was re-establishing the GARVEE Bonds for the Interstate Rehabilitation Program, which we did. The voters of Arkansas passed that by an 80-percent plus margin.

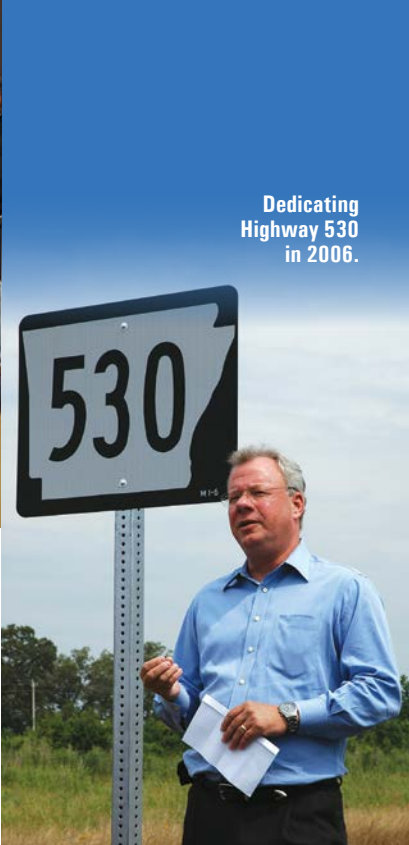
The second piece was the Half-Cent Temporary Sales Tax which became Issue #1. That passed by a 58 percent margin.

Coupled with that was the creation of the City Aid Program. The Department has carved out one penny of its existing motor fuel tax, which is about \$20 million a year, to fund a City Aid Program to mirror the County Aid Program that we already have.

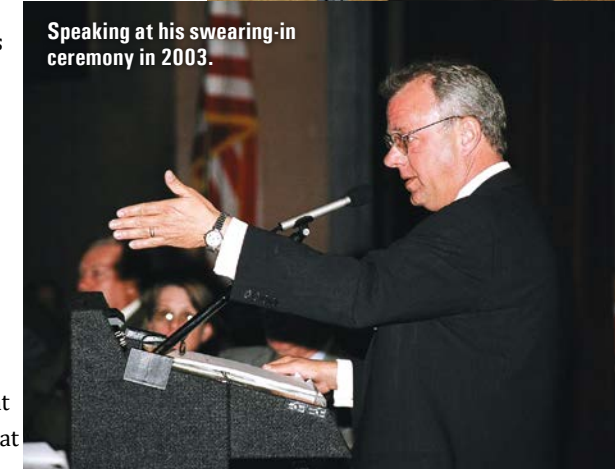
The fourth piece of that is the consideration of looking at the existing sales tax on road use items. That would include cars, trucks, batteries, accessories and repairs. It was one of the Blue Ribbon Committee’s recommendations to take that stream of revenue and begin to transfer that to highway funding over a ten year period. The ten year span was important because it really only takes growth money. Nobody would suffer a reduction in funding in other parts of State government.

Long term, I think you have to find multiple ways to fund highways. Ultimately, I think it is a vehicle-miles-traveled tax. That seems fair because the road users pay the tax. Soon the technology will evolve to implement that.

Some would suggest just raising the motor fuel tax. Fair enough... but to what level? To equate to the money raised in the Half-Cent Sales Tax you would have to raise motor fuel tax 12 to 15 cents a gallon and that impacts everybody in lots of ways. I would submit that it is significantly more regressive than the sales tax because the sales tax excludes groceries, medicine and motor fuel.



Dedicating Highway 530 in 2006.



Speaking at his swearing-in ceremony in 2003.



Serving on the Commission in 2010.

NILLES: Looking back over the past ten years, what specific road projects were you glad to see completed?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Well, I was glad to see every one of them completed! It's funny because people will ask me... when is that project going to be completed? I always reply that I start them, I don't complete them.

One of my top priorities was Highway 167. To try to have a four-lane, north-south connector between Interstate 20 in Louisiana and Interstates 30 and 40 in Arkansas.

Another one was Highway 65 from Lake Village to Interstate 530 in Pine Bluff. I am pleased to say that we've finally finished Highway 65 during my tenure. I'm extraordinarily pleased that Highway 167 is now completed in Louisiana to the Arkansas line and then on to El Dorado. We have in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program getting from El Dorado to Hampton. We have in the Half-Cent Sales Tax getting from Hampton to Fordyce. And we have from Fordyce to Interstate 530 either completed, currently under construction or in the current STIP. So Highway 167, with the passage of Issue #1, is assured to be completed. Those are two major four-lane corridors for the southern part of the state that will, in fact, be finished.

NILLES: What road projects do you feel need to become a reality over the next ten years?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: I wish that we had been able to get started on Highway 82 in a meaningful way. That will happen in the upcoming STIP and, in some measure, in Issue #1. It won't be completed, but I feel like the State and the Department and the Commission will be as obligated to finish that as we have felt about finishing Highway 65, Highway 167 and other projects.

I'd love to have seen significant progress made on Interstate 69. The same goes for Interstate 49 and Highway 412 across the top of the State. Highway 65 from Conway to Harrison comes to mind as does the Bella Vista Bypass. That bypass is now underway.

There are a number of projects I wish we had the funding to complete. We have to consider the fact that Arkansas has the 12th largest highway system in the United States, but we are 43rd in our ability to

“ WE HAVE TO CONSIDER THE FACT THAT ARKANSAS HAS THE 12TH LARGEST HIGHWAY SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT WE ARE 43RD IN OUR ABILITY TO FUND IT.”

fund it. We've all seen the needs studies. The funding gap has grown substantially in the ten years that I have been on the Commission. We now have a \$19 billion shortfall between our needs and the State's ability to fund them. A lot of the improvements we need are now in Issue #1 so the State will make huge progress in getting a lot of those projects done.

The four lane grid system needs to be built. That's a long term proposition. We are well on our way. If we stick to the Arkansas Primary Highway Network as funding priorities, it will happen. It will just take a while.

NILLES: In your ten years, you've had the opportunity to learn how things get accomplished at the AHTD. What has been your overall impression of the Department and its staff?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: The Department ranks second in the United States in terms of efficiency. If you look at administrative costs per mile, we're second best in the country. If you look at it in terms of administrative costs per expended dollar, we're fourth best in the country. This Department and staff are top docile performers in their profession. The best benchmark we have is the other 49 states and how they control their costs and get the taxpayers' dollars to road projects. Arkansas is either second or fourth best at it depending on how you look at it. I would say that's pretty good.

This is a world class group of people doing a world class job. They are highly professional, have great integrity and fulfill their mission extraordinarily well under difficult circumstances. People use

the highways on a daily basis and it's a commendation to the Department because they take a lot of that for granted.

I believe that the Department is as well managed as any in the country. It's the only State agency that I'm aware of that has fewer employees today than they did ten or twenty years ago. There are a number of things you can attribute that success to. The end product is a first class agency with a first class staff. I have enjoyed the association with the staff. I can honestly say that this place is well run by world class folks doing the right thing for the right reason with a lot of integrity. That has been the most rewarding part of these ten years.

NILLES: As you've learned, being on the Highway Commission can be very time consuming. How has serving on the Commission affected your personal life?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Well, the job can vary. Sometimes it is not that pressing, other times it takes what time it takes. You commit to do a job and you have to spend the time to get it done. I had not anticipated being involved in campaigns for the bond issue relative to GARVEE or to Issue #1. They were time consuming. I'm happy to say that the business community rallied around those issues and made it much easier to get done. It comes and goes on the time requirements but if you commit to do something you better be willing to spend the time to get it done. Then be happy when it's not overly consuming because we all have other day jobs, business endeavors and private endeavors.

NILLES: Ten years can be considered a long time to serve on a Commission. After serving a full term, does ten years seem about right?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: I've called it a ten-year sentence with no time off for good behavior. This is a complicated endeavor. This is a complicated endeavor. I was not a highway professional when I joined this Commission and I am not a highway professional today. I don't pretend to understand the complexities of Federal highway rules and regulations. It takes awhile to begin to understand how things work and how they should be managed.

“ THIS IS A WORLD CLASS GROUP OF PEOPLE DOING A WORLD CLASS JOB. THEY ARE HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL, HAVE GREAT INTEGRITY AND FULFILL THEIR MISSION EXTRAORDINARILY WELL UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. ”



Highway funding and construction are a rather slow process. It takes at least six years from the conception of an idea to letting the first contract. In a way, ten years is a very long time. But in long term highway planning, it's really not. I think it is probably an adequate period of time to get knowledgeable, do the job successfully and then exit feeling like you've had the opportunity to contribute.

NILLES: What advice would you have for the next Commissioner about to come on board?

COMMISSIONER MURPHY: I would advise them to spend enough time up front with staff to really understand the challenges. Learn how the Department is funded, how it ticks and understand the nuances and complexities of what the staff faces every day.

We, as Commissioners, are not at the Department every day. And it's really easy to have impressions or ideas that may or may not be based in the reality of what's going on. So, I would encourage a new Commissioner to get to know what's going on and spend time to learn it. You can't grasp it in a week or a month. Until a Commissioner sits down to work with four other Commissioners and staff to put together their first Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, I don't think they would really get it. That's when it hits home how the funding works. You learn the inadequacy of the funding at that time. You learn what a depressingly short amount of time it can take to apply all of your funding to projects and then realize you have a long list of projects still waiting for funding. My advice would be, if you commit to being a Highway

Commissioner, spend time to understand it before articulating a huge number of opinions about how this place operates, how it spends money, and how it exercises policy and strategy. There is a large learning curve, but in time a new Commissioner will come to understand how efficiently this agency is run. They will also learn to appreciate the highly professional staff and what a great job everyone is doing at this Department.

People have asked me if I enjoy being a Highway Commissioner. I don't really know how to answer that at times. I've found it rewarding in some senses and unbelievably frustrating in others. Reflecting on the job, it's a tremendous place to have had the opportunity to serve and I am grateful to have been a part of it over the past ten years. I believe the other four members of the Commission would say the same thing. ■

BOND SALE TO FUND INTERSTATE REHABILITATION

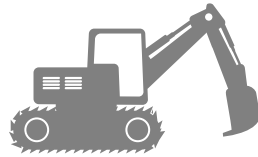
ON THE MAP

SPENDING TIME WITH AN ARKANSAS HIGHWAY MAP CAN BE INTERESTING. THE FOLLOWING IS THE NAME OF AN ACTUAL TOWN IN ARKANSAS! HAVE YOU EVER VISITED HERE?

In November of 2011, voters overwhelmingly approved the sale of up to \$575 million to fund the State's second Interstate Rehabilitation Program.

The Arkansas State Highway Commission opened bids on the initial sale of Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) Bonds on September 11th to fund construction projects for the upcoming Interstate Rehabilitation Program (IRP). The bond sale was held during the Commission's regularly-scheduled meeting which took place in Jonesboro.

The true interest cost on the \$225 million initial sale of bonds came in just above 1.62 percent in competitive bids submitted electronically.



JP Morgan Chase & Company submitted the lowest true interest cost that takes into account the average yield on the bonds, various maturity dates, and underwriting fees. Eight other firms submitted costs.

The true interest cost of the bonds is far lower than the average of 4.58 percent that was paid on the first series of bonds in the initial Interstate rehabilitation program that began in 1999. Much of the difference in cost is due to the bond market, which has seen bond yields fall over the ten years since the last highway bond issue.

Arkansas was one of the first states in the country to use the GARVEE bond funding mechanism in 1999, when proceeds from the sale of \$575 million in bonds helped pay for the State's first Interstate Rehabilitation Program. Nearly \$1 billion worth of improvements were made to approximately 375 miles of Interstate roadways under that program.

The new program will be similar to the rehabilitation program passed in 1999. This time around, plans call for the rehabilitation of 455 miles of the State's 656-mile Interstate highway system.

"The GARVEE Bond Program remains well-suited to help us rehabilitate our Interstate highways quickly," States AHTD Director Scott Bennett. "Our 1999 IRP was a tremendous success, and we have equally-ambitious plans

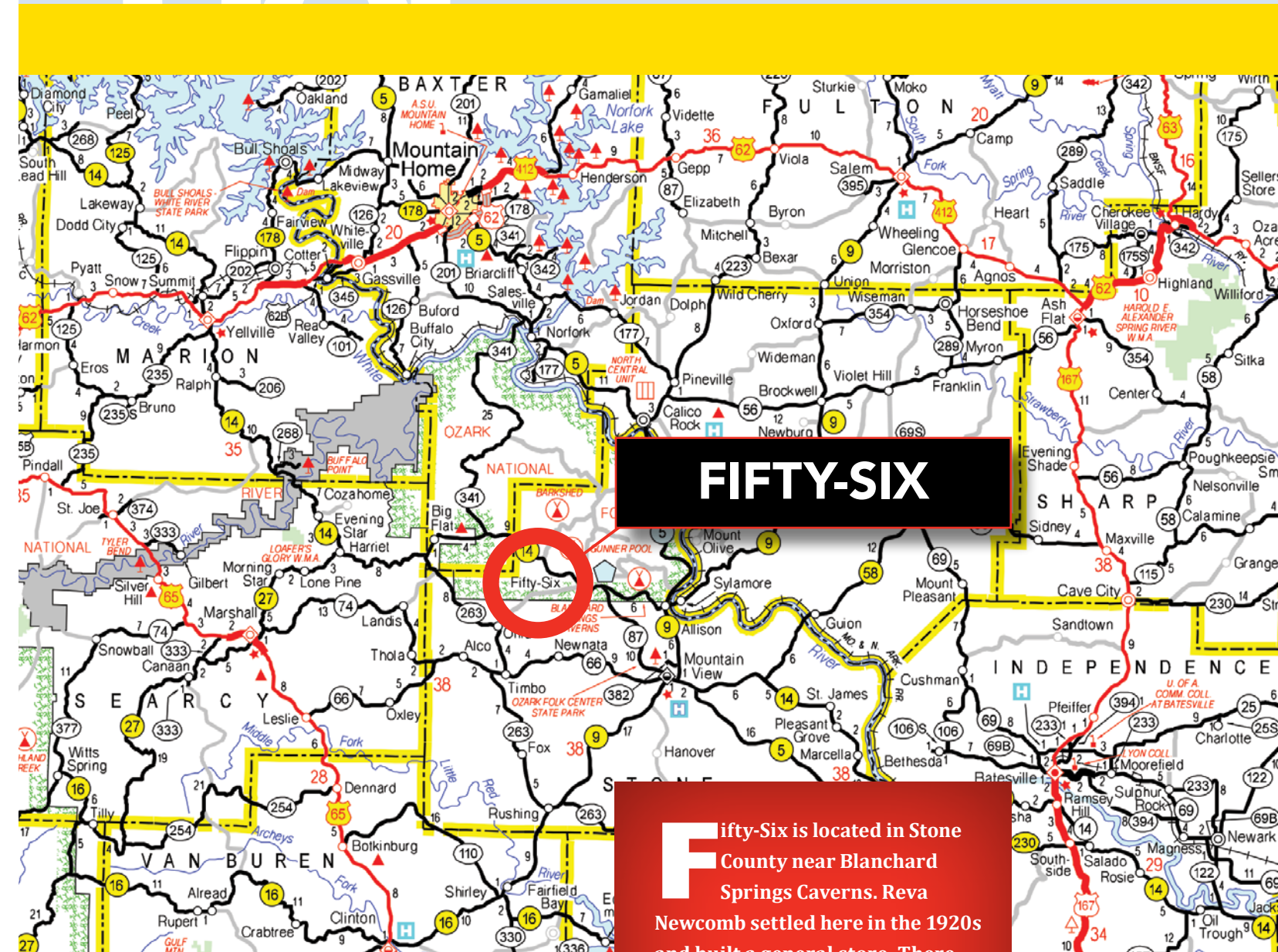
PLANS CALL FOR THE REHABILITATION OF 455 MILES OF THE STATE'S 656-MILE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM.

this time around. Motorists can expect to see work getting underway across the State beginning in early 2013."

Contracts for the first three IRP projects were awarded in November. That work includes improvements to sections of Interstate 40 near Russellville, Interstate 530 south of Little Rock and Interstate 540 in the Fort Smith/Van Buren area. By the end of 2013, an additional nine projects totaling an estimated \$170 million are expected to be awarded for additional work on Interstates 40, 55 and 540.

The key elements of the program will be to use GARVEE bonds supported by future federal funds and four cents of the existing diesel tax to create a more than \$1 billion construction program, without any new taxes or raising existing taxes.

Department officials expect the bonds to be paid off within 12 years. The September bond sale is the first of three that are planned. ■



Fifty-Six is located in Stone County near Blanchard Springs Caverns. Reva Newcomb settled here in the 1920s and built a general store. There was not a post office in the area, so he applied to the government for a new post office. His first choice for the name was Pleasant Hill. His second choice was the number of the local school district, 56. There was already a post office in Arkansas under the name Pleasant Hill, so the government chose Fifty-Six. The 2010 census lists the population as 173. ■



40 Steel Beams
to Hang
7 Traffic Shifts
20 Days to Do It...

ALL PART OF CONSTRUCTION AT THE BIG ROCK INTERCHANGE





The hanging of steel beams for the two flyover ramps at the I-430/I-630 interchange presented a challenge because of traffic moving through the construction area at a rate of 143,000 vehicles per day.

“This will be a challenging phase of work for the contractor and we really need the public’s help for 20 days.”

Those were the words of AHTD Director Scott Bennett addressing the media as construction crews made plans to hang 40 steel beams for flyover ramps at the construction site at the interchange of Interstates 430 & 630 in west Little Rock. Workers were preparing for a phase of construction that was to be completed in 20 days and would require seven shifts in traffic patterns through the heavily-traveled construction area.

It’s all part of major improvements at the interchange. Crews are now in Phase III of construction at the location. At \$78,123,925, Phase III was awarded in November of 2010 and is the largest contract ever awarded for a state highway construction project in Arkansas. Additional work brought Phase III to over \$88 million. The contractors on this phase of the job are Manhattan Road and Bridge Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Weaver Bailey Contractors, Inc. of El Paso, Arkansas.

The phases of construction have included the, widening of a ramp connecting Interstate 630 and Interstate 430, installation of multiple traffic signals, replacement of four existing bridge structures, widening loop ramp connections, construction of a bridge over Shackleford Road and construction of two flyover ramps.

It is the hanging of steel beams for the two flyover ramps that this story is about. The task presented a challenge because of traffic moving through the construction area at a rate of 143,000 vehicles per day. There was also that 20-day time frame to get the work done.

“Because of the impact on traffic at peak travel periods, the ideal time to complete this work was before area schools opened for the new school year,” stated District Six Construction Engineer Mark Headley.



“Originally, this phase of construction was scheduled to be completed over a longer period of time, but ultimately it was determined that confining all of the lane shifts and lane closures into a shorter, limited time period would be safer and help decrease the overall impact on motorists.”

To get the work done in that time frame, workers were on-site around the clock, 24 hours-a-day. At any given time there were 25 to 30 workers on nine-hour shifts, with three shifts per day.

The scope of the work required the contractors to plan in advance for seven shifts of traffic on the Interstate 430 lanes over the 20-day period that the beams were being hung. An extensive public relations plan was put into place to warn motorists in the days leading up to the beginning of work that lane shifts would occur. News releases were sent out to the media resulting in television, newspaper and radio coverage. Message boards were put in place days in advance

to warn motorists of the upcoming lane shifts. Detour maps were drawn up and placed on the AHTD website to help motorists navigate the construction area.

“Motorists did a great job of listening to the warnings and adjusting to the changes in traffic patterns,” Bennett added. “We appreciate everyone’s cooperation.”

Another consideration to be handled before actual hanging of the beams was coordination of having the beams trucked to the construction site and having cranes ready to lift them into place when they arrived.

“The cranes are used daily in the Little Rock/Memphis market,” says Johnathon Mormon, District Six Assistant Resident Engineer.

“We had to get two large, 500-ton cranes plus four smaller cranes ready and into place before the beams got to the construction site.”

“Each crane required eight tractor trailer trucks to get them to the location. It took four to six hours to assemble each crane.”

To get an idea on the size of the cranes, the maximum boom length on the larger ones was 130 feet.

Once cranes were assembled and into place, it was important that the beams arrive shortly thereafter.

“We held multiple meetings with our superintendents and foreman regarding the scheduling and logistics of the plan,” says Mormon.

“All three crews were required to expedite the work at hand based on an hourly flow chart of activities. Project coordinators spent numerous hours, at times around the clock, monitoring shipments of girders, additional cranes, safety platforms, cross-braces, equipment and connection bolts. Crews were overlapped by one hour in order to update shifts to the current work status. Communication within and between crews was provided by twelve variable frequency radios maintained at the site in the manager/first aid trailer.”

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Once cranes were in place, it was time for the beams to arrive. All of the beams for the project were manufactured and shipped from AFCO Steel's facility in Van Buren, Arkansas. As for their arrival at the construction site, each beam required one truck to get to Little Rock. In other words, a total of 40 truck trips were utilized to get all the beams to their destination.

The beams are massive, up to 130 feet in length and nine feet tall. To give an idea of their size, the distance from the surface of Interstate 430 to the bottom of an installed beam ranges from 25 to 30 feet. Their weights vary with the largest ones coming in at 140,000 pounds.

And good weather is essential in lifting the beams into place.

"The beams cannot be swung into place if the wind is blowing over 15 miles-per-hour," said Headley. "The wind would cause too much movement from side to side."

The beams can't be placed if lightning is occurring in the area either. Wind and lightning caused only minor disruptions as the weather generally cooperated during the installation of the beams.

Crews proceeded to place 25 beams for the flyover ramp from Interstate 630 westbound to Interstate 430 southbound, and 15 beams for Interstate 430 southbound to Interstate 630 eastbound. The heaviest lift was

two pre-connected beams totaling 193 feet in length and weighing in at 146,000 pounds.

The entire operation was considered a success as installation went off without any major snags. Traffic went through the construction zone with little delay over the 20-day period.

With beams now in place, crews are working on retaining walls and anticipating the day the next big operation begins, that being the construction of a bridge over Shackleford Road.

With the success of the beam installation, the consensus is that work on the Big Rock Interchange is going well and as a result, is expected to be completed in late 2014. ■

BIG ROCK INTERCHANGE EXPECTED COMPLETION: LATE 2014





AHTD RECEIVES REGIONAL RECOGNITION FOR RAILROAD OVERPASS IN PRESCOTT



The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) has been awarded an “America’s Transportation Award” from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Now in its fifth year, the America’s Transportation Awards competition recognizes the very best of America’s transportation projects in three main categories: “Ahead of Schedule”, “Under Budget”, and “Best Use of Innovation”. The final regional winners were announced at the 2012 Southeastern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (SASHTO) annual meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, in August. The AHTD received a regional award in the “Under Budget” category for its Prescott Railroad Overpass Project.

For many years, the City of Prescott had sought a way to provide safe, uninterrupted access across the Union Pacific rail line. The line runs through the middle of town and

was creating a problem in emergency situations when law enforcement officers, paramedics and other first responders needed to get across town and were forced to wait on a train.

To remedy the situation, local officials sought help from State and Federal officials and were successful in securing dedicated funding from Congress. As a result, a plan was developed for a railroad overpass to move traffic up and over the tracks. The project was awarded to Earnest Investments, LLC, of Shreveport, Louisiana, in late 2008. Work began in 2009 and featured construction of a 340-foot bridge passing over the Union Pacific Railroad main line and Highway 67. It also utilizes a half mile of new alignment of Highway 371. The bridge structure was enhanced with an architectural finish and a texture-coated color scheme.

Two years after beginning, and \$6.2 million later, the project was completed \$229,287 under budget using two working days less than planned. The overpass links Highways 371 and

“

Working with local officials, we have eliminated a potentially dangerous traffic situation and improved traffic flow through downtown Prescott.

”



AASHTO President Kirk Steudle presents Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department Director Scott E. Bennett with an award for the Prescott Railroad Overpass.

67 together and motorists no longer have to wait for trains to pass to get to the other side of town.

“We’re excited for our Department staff and for the people of Prescott who worked on this project,” stated AHTD Director Scott Bennett. “Working with local officials, we have eliminated a potentially dangerous traffic situation and improved traffic flow through downtown Prescott.”

“We’re immensely proud of the quality projects entered into this year’s competition,”

our communities safe and contribute to our quality of life.”

The Southeast region was the final group of regional winners named in the competition. The 10 projects with the highest total judge votes nationally will compete for the Grand Prize and the People’s Choice Award.

The America’s Transportation Awards competition is sponsored by AASHTO, AAA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. ■

WEEKEND ROAD TRIP:



Pastoral scenes like this one abound along Highway 165 from North Little Rock to Dumas.



If a one-day journey sounds inviting one weekend soon, Highway 165 is a two-lane roadway that makes its way through southeast Arkansas and offers plenty to do. The roadway provides mile upon mile of fertile farmland and numerous towns with rich histories waiting to be experienced.

Traffic on Highway 165 is usually light allowing motorists to enjoy a slower pace with time enough to stop and experience what each town has to offer.

Leaving North Little Rock and heading southeast, the first town motorists come to is the small town of Scott.

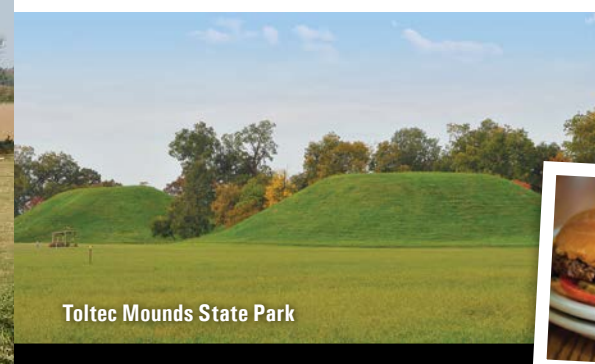
Fifty years ago, visitors to Scott and the surrounding area would have found cotton plantations of 1,000 to 7,000 acres. A visit to the **Plantation Agriculture Museum** offers visitors a

glimpse of that plantation life and cotton agriculture. Exhibits and programs interpret the period from Arkansas' admission to the Union in 1836, through World War II, when agricultural practices rapidly became mechanized. Visitors learn about cotton "from the field to the gin." Exhibitions cover what a cotton farmer would do in a year's time: plowing, planting, cultivating and picking. An exhibit on ginning explains how Eli Whitney's idea for a "cotton engine" became what we call a cotton gin today. Also on display is an early 1900s kitchen. Just outside the main building, a path leads past steam traction engines

and other large machinery en route to the restored gin and the seed warehouse.

The museum was originally constructed in 1912 as a general store. The smaller north wing, added in 1929, served as the Scott post office until the early 1960s. The museum is located at the intersection with Highway 161 and is open Tuesday through Sunday.

Across the highway, not far from the museum, is the **Scott Plantation Settlement**. Located in an area of Scott called Ashley's Bayou, the settlement sits on land that was once the Arthur Alexander plantation. Visitors will learn about plantation life in Scott. Buildings spanning the 1840s to the 1940s can be toured including the Scott train station, a plantation owner's home, a working blacksmith shop, a one-room school, a smokehouse and several tenant houses.



Toltec Mounds State Park



Marlsgate Plantation



There are numerous local restaurants to choose from as you travel Highway 165, giving you many delicious lunch opportunities.

The settlement is located at the corner of Alexander Road and Walkers Corner Road.

Not far from the Scott Plantation Settlement is **Marlsgate Plantation**, one of the most resplendent plantation homes built in the Arkansas Delta. This Greek revival style mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and includes 32 rooms. The home hosts group tours by appointment.

If it is lunchtime, drop in at the original Cotham's Mercantile and Restaurant for one of their famous Hubcap burgers.

Continuing east, just down the road from Scott a few miles, is **Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park**. The National Historic Landmark is located a quarter-mile down Highway 386. The park features Arkansas' tallest remaining prehistoric Native American mounds. The mounds and an earthen

embankment are the remains of a large ceremonial and governmental complex that was inhabited from A.D. 600 to 1050. The visitors center features exhibits, an audiovisual theater and an educational pavilion that overlooks the mounds. There is a self-guided, ¾-mile trail ready to be explored.

Just five miles farther down Highway 165 is the town of Keo, an antique collector's dream come true. Keo is home to numerous very nice antiques stores that draw visitors from miles around. It is easy to spend hours in town wandering through the stores in search of that perfect treasure.

Passing into Arkansas County, motorists arrive in Stuttgart, the "rice and duck capitol of the world." It is here that the World's Championship Duck Calling Contest is held in November along

with some of the best duck hunting to be found. The **Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie**, at the corner of Park Avenue and Fourth Street, depicts the history of agriculture and the pioneers who farmed the grand prairie of eastern Arkansas from the 1880s until 1921. Outbuildings include a newspaper shop, a firehouse, prairie school house, a church and a prairie house. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday. For art lovers, the **Arts Center of the Grand Prairie** offers visitors art exhibitions by local and regional artists, a dinner theater, concerts and workshops. The center is located at 108 W. 12th Street.

Continuing south in Arkansas County, at DeWitt, Highway 165 becomes part of the Great River Road, a national scenic byway. The River Road follows

(continued on page 22)

(continued from page 21)

the Mississippi River through five of the ten states that border the river. The byway highlights the natural beauty and cultural heritage along the route.

Six miles south of Gillett is **Arkansas Post**. In 1686, Henri de Tonti established a trading post here at the Quapaw Village of Osotouy. It was the first semi-permanent French settlement in the lower Mississippi River Valley. The post always served of strategic importance for the French, Spanish, American and Confederate military. Spanish soldiers and British partisans clashed here in the 1783 "Colbert Incident", the only Revolutionary War action in Arkansas. By 1819, the post was a thriving river port and the largest city in the region. It was selected as the first capital of the Arkansas Territory. In 1863, confederate and union troops clashed here to gain control of the Arkansas River. Today, a memorial and the Arkansas Post museum commemorate the history of the site. Visitors are welcome daily. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Twenty minutes down the road from Arkansas Post, Highway 165 brings motorists to the town of Dumas. To wrap up the day, visit the **Desha County Museum**. This attraction is one of the largest county museums in the state. Ten buildings recreate life in a typical south Arkansas farming community. The museum is located just inside the Dumas city limits on Highway 165.

At Dumas, Highway 165 meets Highway 65, a four-lane highway that makes for quick, easy travel back home after a full day discovering the best this southeast area of Arkansas has to offer. ■



Scott Plantation Settlement



Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie



Desha County Museum



Arkansas Post National Memorial



In Southeast Arkansas, cotton has been a cultivated crop since the 1820s and is still grown today. Travel Highway 165 in the fall and you are likely to see fields ready for harvest.





“
*This program
 does not rely on
 federal assistance
 — this is money
 GENERATED
 IN ARKANSAS,
 it STAYS IN
 ARKANSAS,
 and it IMPROVES
 ARKANSAS
 ROADS.*”



Election day on November 6th proved to be a successful one for the AHTD as Arkansas voters gave their stamp of approval to the temporary half-percent sales tax issue presented on the ballot.

Issue #1 on the ballot, a new Constitutional Amendment, will temporarily increase the state sales tax by one-half cent to finance a 10-year bond issue for four-lane highway construction and improvement designed to connect all parts of Arkansas.

The official results were 58% For and 42% Against the measure.

improves Arkansas roads.”

In addition to four-lane construction, the program will provide \$670 million to those Arkansas cities and counties for local projects. Those funds will be used by local communities for improvements to local road and street projects.

The AHTD will receive 70 percent of

ISSUE #1 APPROVED

Revenue from the temporary tax will finance up to a \$1.3 billion bond issue that will support a \$1.8 billion program for four-lane projects. When the bonds are paid off, the tax will be abolished by language in the state constitution.

“The positive vote on election day is evidence that Arkansans believe in the importance of good roads, and that they are willing to invest in themselves and the future of our State,” commented R. Madison Murphy, Chairman of the Arkansas State Highway Commission.

“The people of Arkansas were presented with an opportunity and they chose to pursue it,” Murphy added.

Murphy also commented on the uniqueness of the program to the state of Arkansas.

“This program does not rely on federal assistance — this is money generated in Arkansas, it stays in Arkansas, and it

the proceeds from the tax. Arkansas’ cities and counties will split the remaining 30 percent.

Separately, the proposal also creates a permanent State Aid city street fund that will be similar to the Department’s existing State Aid county fund. It will be utilized for city street projects. One penny of the existing per-gallon motor fuels tax will go to that fund.

Director Scott Bennett was pleased with the election results and commented on what lies ahead for the Department.

“We appreciate the opportunity that we have been given. But with that opportunity comes responsibility, a responsibility that our Commission and AHTD staff do not take lightly. We have made commitments, both verbally and in writing, and it is now incumbent on us that we fulfill those commitments.”



BY ARKANSAS VOTERS

Chairman Murphy was quick to give thanks to those who worked so hard to see that the proposal was successful.

“I especially want to thank the Move Arkansas Forward Committee and the hundreds of volunteers who worked hard to get our message to the voters. I also want to recognize the work of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Highway Finance that met throughout 2009 and 2010 to develop options for improving roadways at all levels in Arkansas. What became Issue #1 was proposed by the Blue Ribbon Committee, adopted and referred by the Legislature and ultimately approved by the people.”

Director Bennett also commented on what the next step is for the AHTD.

“The Highway Commission and Department must now implement and complete this highway construction program. The new revenue stream will begin in July of 2013, and we will be

working diligently throughout the coming months to prepare for beginning of construction shortly thereafter.”

All together, there are 16 four-lane projects scheduled to be funded, each with regional significance.

In Central Arkansas, among the projects are the widening of Highway 70 to four lanes between Interstate 30 and Hot Springs, completion of the widening of Interstate 40 to six lanes between Little Rock and Conway, completion of widening Highway 64 to four lanes between Conway and Beebe, and widening of Interstate 30 from Sevier Street to Highway 70.

Motorists in northwest Arkansas will see the widening of Interstate 540 to six lanes between Fayetteville and Bentonville, completion of the initial two lanes of the ultimate four lanes of the Bella Vista Bypass and the beginning of four-lane construction of the Highway 412 Springdale Bypass from Interstate 540 to

the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA) connector.

Scheduled in northeast Arkansas are the widening of Highway 412 to four lanes between Paragould and Walnut Ridge, and additional widening on Highway 64 between Marion and Wynne.

In south Arkansas, Highway 425 will be widened to four lanes from Hamburg to the Louisiana state line, the widening of Highway 167 to four lanes between Interstate 530 and El Dorado will be completed and widening of Highway 82 to four lanes from El Dorado to Magnolia to Texarkana will begin.

“We look forward to fulfilling the public’s trust by successfully completing this program within the coming ten years,” Bennett added.

In addition to better roadways, the amendment has a ripple effect that benefits the state in terms of employment numbers. Construction and maintenance work on state highways, county roads and city streets associated with the program is expected to support over 40,000 jobs. ■



HIGHWAY HISTORIAN



1956



2012

THE HIGHWAY 270B RAILROAD OVERPASS IN MALVERN, ARKANSAS, WAS ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED AS A TWO LANE BRIDGE IN 1955. IT WAS RECONSTRUCTED/ WIDENED IN 1979.



(LEFT, L. to R.) Carlisle Mayor Ray Glover, Donny Graves of Graves & Associates, Inc., AHTD Director Scott Bennett, and honoree former Senator Bobby Glover. (BELOW) Carlisle area residents gather for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.



BOBBY GLOVER HIGHWAY DEDICATED



AHTD Director Scott Bennett joined a crowd of Carlisle area residents on August 13th to dedicate a section of Highway 13 as the Bobby Glover Highway. The former State Senator, and Carlisle resident, was instrumental in getting that section of Highway 13 widened to a three-lane direct connection from Interstate 40 to Highway 70. Two contracts totaling \$5.2 million were involved. Mayor Ray Glover was also on hand for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. ■



CONSTRUCTION PLANS AROUND THE STATE

Throughout the year, public meetings are held around the State in communities where roadwork is being planned. These meetings are an opportunity for citizens to hear about and respond to future highway construction happening in their area.

NEW CONNECTOR – *Searcy*

A Location Public Hearing was held in Searcy on June 28th to discuss alternatives for a two-lane highway on new location between Highway 36 on the west side of Searcy and Highway 67 on the north side of Searcy. Approximately 150 attended the meeting which was held at the Downtown Church of Christ. Participants viewed drawings of the project location and asked questions of the AHTD staff. Written comments on the project location were collected.

HIGHWAY 63 – *Mammoth Spring*

A proposed plan to widen 2.5 miles of Highway 63 to five lanes in the area of Mammoth Spring was shared at a Public Involvement Meeting held on July 12th. A total of 86 people were in attendance at Mammoth Spring High School to learn details of the plan that will begin at Highway 9 in Mammoth Spring and continue southward to the vicinity of Highway 342. In addition to the widening, improvements will include three new bridges.

EASTERN NORTH/SOUTH CORRIDOR – *Rogers*

A total of 182 people were in attendance at The Annex Professional Development Center in Rogers on July 17th to learn more about a proposed new highway extended north and south between Fayetteville and Rogers. The section of the new project discussed at the meeting begins at Highway 264 in Springdale and extends northward to Highway 94 in Rogers. Several corridor alternatives were on display. AHTD staff was on hand to answer questions and assist participants with questions about the displays of the project area.

HIGHWAYS 124 AND 326 – *Russellville*

A Design Public Hearing was held on August 2nd in Russellville to share plans for improvements to Highways 124 and 326. Approximately 90 people were in attendance at Calvary Temple Assembly of God Church to view displays, ask questions of the AHTD staff and offer comments. Plans call for widening Highways 124 and 326 (Weir Road) in Russellville, extending from Crow Mountain Road southward to Hob Nob Road.

HIGHWAY 25 – *Conway*

The Conway Parks and Recreation Don Owens Sports Center was the scene for a Location Public Hearing regarding the relocation of a section of Highway 25. The meeting was held on August 9th and was attended by approximately 85 people. Several new location alternatives for relocating Highway 25 in the area north of Interstate 40 in Conway were shown at the meeting. Participants viewed displays and provided comments to the AHTD staff on hand.

BROADWAY BRIDGE – *Little Rock/North Little Rock*

August 23rd was the date for a Location Public Hearing regarding alternatives for improvements to the Broadway Bridge (Highway 70) over the Arkansas River between Little Rock and North Little Rock. A total of 141 people were in attendance at the Arkansas Transit Association Building in North Little Rock. At the meeting, participants saw plans for four construction alternatives. Displays of all alternatives were on view and AHTD staff was on hand to answer questions from the public. The project is proposed due to deterioration of the existing structure, increasing maintenance costs and the bridge's functional obsolescence.

HIGHWAY 67 – *Jacksonville/Cabot*

Public Information meetings in Jacksonville and Cabot were conducted on September 11th and September 12th respectively as part of a study to identify improvements to address congestion issues on Highway 67 in the area. A total of 184 people attended the meetings which were held at the Jacksonville Community Center and at Cabot High School. AHTD staff was on hand to gather information from participants and to answer questions about the study area. The study area extends from the south side of Jacksonville to Cabot.

HIGHWAY 67 – *Pocahontas/Corning*

A planning study on Highway 67 was the focus of a Public Information Meeting held in Pocahontas at Black River Technical College on September 26th and one in Corning at the M.B. Ainley Community Center on September 27th. A total of 412 people attended the meetings to learn more about plans for the Highway 67 corridor from Walnut Ridge to the Missouri state line. The Department is conducting the study to re-evaluate the long term improvement needs for this section of Highway 67.





Dear AHTD,

I don't suppose you get a whole lot of positive feedback, but I'd like to change that for a minute or two.

I have traveled almost 7,000 miles on interstate highways this summer in the US. I have seen a few construction spots during that drive. I just want to say that the warning messages, merge zone set ups and maintenance of reasonable speed limits that you have on the major construction zone near Brinkley on I-40 was the best set up I have seen in my travels this summer. It certainly reduced the stress of travel. Thank you very much for investing the time and effort to ensure a safe, stress free drive through Arkansas.

Yours,
Jon Bennett

NOTE: Jon Bennett is of no relation to Scott E. Bennett, Director of Arkansas Highways and Transportation.

DRIVER SAFETY TRAINING

The week of October 15 thru October 20, Lehigh Hanson held our annual Safety Week. On Thursday, October 18 our topic was Safe Highway Driving. I contacted AHP Sergeant Doug Jones and invited him to come and speak on the subject. Sergeant Jones did an exceptional job, and everyone enjoyed him.

We appreciate everything that the Arkansas Highway Police does in this area, and would like to thank you for allowing your employees to take part in events of this kind.

Thank you again,
Kay Howard
Hanson Aggregates – Eagle Mills Plant

SPOTLESS REST AREA

There is a rest area just South of McGehee at the junction of Highway 65 and 165. We live in Tumbling Shoals, Arkansas and our daughter lives in New Orleans so we make the trip past there several times a year. We always pack a lunch and stop there to eat on the way. There is a gentleman who is the caretaker for the rest area who should be commended for the excellent job he does. The area is always spotless. We have seen him on several occasions when we stop there and he always greets us in a friendly manner and wishes us a pleasant journey.

Sarah Carter
NOTE: The employee referenced in the above letter is James Ball, Rest Area Attendant.

BEAUTIFUL IMPROVEMENT

I'm sure you get all sorts of negative feedback when a project is under construction, but doubtfully get many thank-you's when you finish one.

This is a big thank-you from someone who drives on Harkrider in Conway every day. It is a beautiful, wide road with nice curbs and sidewalks in the heart of a growing city. Our Interstate upgrades are also a necessary and appreciated addition to Central Arkansas.

God bless you for blessing our city.

Dr. Mark Dance
Pastor, Second Baptist Church
Conway, Arkansas

CABLE BARRIER THANK-YOU

My husband and I drive to Little Rock from Arkadelphia everyday to work and I want to say how appreciative I am to the state for placing the wire barriers in the median of I-30 from Benton to around the 111 exit. I know the concrete barriers and the wire barriers have helped to tremendously eliminate fatal accidents on I-30. If you take a moment to look at the fatal accident reports on the Arkansas State Police website, it is very noticeable the decline in fatal accidents on I-30 since the wire barriers have been erected. It is horrible to see accidents everyday and the safety component you all have added to the interstate is very much appreciated. Thank you for making an investment in saving the lives of Arkansas residents and our visitors as they pass through our state.

Carmen Irby

DRUG USE PREVENTION

A few weeks ago I requested a drug awareness presentation for BSA Venture Crew 1108 and BSA Scout Troop 108 for Red Ribbon Week. What I got far exceeded my expectations.

As Advisor for the Venture Crew, it was brought to my attention that we could earn a patch from the DEA by fulfilling three requirements. It seemed like a great idea as well as giving the kids a needed lesson on drug avoidance, and why to say "No!"

Officer John Clark kept in touch with me to see what he could do to help prepare materials I would need. He called Washington D.C. and obtained one of the patches we wanted to earn and the kids were thrilled to see the final product. He contacted the Grant County Youth Board to inquire about other Red Ribbon Week activities as we would need more than the presentation to earn the patch.

In essence, Officer Clark went above and beyond what I asked to make our event a success. He put together an excellent presentation, was engaging and interesting to the kids and the adults in attendance, had time for our questions, and was professional throughout the evening.

Thank you for choosing such an outstanding person to help us in our endeavor. I know, when this time rolls around next year, who to ask for to make Red Ribbon week a success.

Angela Undiener
Advisor, Venture Crew 1108
East End, Arkansas

SAFER HIGHWAY

Just a note to let you know how pleased I am with the resurfacing of HWY 79 between Stuttgart and Ulm. It is now so much nicer and more safe to drive this stretch of highway. It really was dangerous in heavy rain as the big trucks had made deep trenches. I am very pleased and hope everyone else who travels the roadways in Arkansas appreciate the Arkansas Highway Department as much as I do.

Sincerely,
Judy Harrison
A Concerned Citizen

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

I just wanted to let you know that every single AHTD employee that is painting bridges, clearing outlets and sealing bridge joints has been very understanding and cooperative with IHC. Everyone seems to be going that extra mile in coordinating and working with IHC so we can both accomplish our scheduled goals. Every single AHTD person has been very polite, friendly and understanding. I would also like to mention that again ALL of your inspection team on the project have been very professional and helpful in seeing a common goal of a good quality job be built with pride and commitment to quality and safety. Thank you and all your district team. We at IHC really appreciate it.

Sincerely,
Michael W. Howell
Project Superintendent
Interstate Highway Construction, Inc.

COURTEOUS EMPLOYEES

I want to call to your attention the courteous acts of three of your employees on Tuesday, July 24.

My wife and I were on our way home in Bella Vista when we had a flat tire just east of DeValls Bluff on Highway 70. When your employees observed me pulling off to the side of the road, they quickly came to my aid and changed the tire. When I asked if I could pay them for their service, they quickly declined.

Tuesday was a very hot day and I was several hundred yards down the road from where these three gentlemen when I pulled over. They could have easily stayed where they were working and left the tire problem to me. It is a credit to them, and all public employees, that they chose to help.

I don't know the names of these three gentlemen, but I'm sure that you will be able to determine who they are. Please thank them again for my wife and me.

Sincerely,
Robert Svehla

NOTE: The employees referenced in the above letter are Billy Waggle, Phillip Powell and James Inman.

GREYHOUND BUS ASSISTANCE

On July 20, 2012, I, David R Holmes, a Memphis Greyhound Lines bus driver, was en route to Memphis, Tennessee from Little Rock, Arkansas on schedule #1500. Approximately 11:00 p.m., I encountered major electrical problems that caused the bus to cease running on a rainy night. It took Greyhound approximately 1 to 2 hours to get an operational bus to me to transfer the passengers. In the meantime, I called Greyhound's Maintenance Response Department (MRD) to advise them of the problem and requested assistance. Then I contacted Operation Supervisory Communication (OSC) to get assistance for the passengers.

Arkansas Highway Police Sgt. Stan Griffin stopped to see what the problem was and then offered assistance to me until Greyhound provided me with an operational bus. I asked Sgt. Griffin to talk to a passenger that was becoming irate and causing disturbance to the other passengers. He explained to the passenger that the driver had no control of the bus issues but was taking procedural measures to resolve the problem. After the bus arrived, Sgt. Griffin assured ongoing traffic did not hinder the passengers transitioning to the replacement bus. Once all passengers were safe and ready to continue to Memphis with a relief driver, he remained with me until a wrecker arrived to tow the broke down bus to the Memphis bus terminal.

Sgt. Griffin's patience, empathy, loyalty and concern for the passengers and me was greatly appreciated. Sincere THANKS for his professionalism in helping me in a stressful situation.

Respectfully,
David R. Holmes
Greyhound Bus Driver
Memphis, Tennessee



Arkansas State Highway and
Transportation Department
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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

