



SURFACE

SPRING 2024

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



CONTENTS

- 02** Spring TRUST Events
- 03** TRUST Legislative Agenda 2024
- 04** Why Join TRUST?
- 05** Thank you SURFACE sponsors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Frank Keating, Co-Chairman
- Kell Kelly, Co-Chairman
- Neal McCaleb, President
- Terri Angier
- David Burrage
- Jim Duit
- Tom Kirby
- LaVern Phillips
- Jim Rodriguez
- Mike Webb
- Ken Wert

PUBLIC BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE 59TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE CONVENED FEBRUARY 5 AND ADJOURNED SINE DIE MAY 30, ONE DAY PRIOR TO ITS MANDATORY ADJOURNMENT.

It was a session filled with public FY-25 budget transparency and intense discussion over tax cuts, immigration reform and several other issues related to the day-to-day lives of over four million Oklahomans. The Legislature also found itself in a concurrent special session, called by Governor Kevin Stitt for the purpose of reducing the state income tax, that began several days before the beginning of the regular session. As was the case last year, lawmakers had over \$13 billion to appropriate for FY-25 that begins July 1 and ends June 30, 2026. The majority of state agencies were funded with standstill budgets in order to partly allow for targeted agency budget increases and the elimination of the state portion (4.5%) of the grocery tax that was approved by both chambers early in the session and promptly signed by Governor Stitt. The bill takes effect in August. Leaders of both parties joined forces in continuing to set funds aside in state savings accounts while also making a multi-million-dollar relief fund appropriation to assist Oklahomans and



A capacity crowd attends the annual TRUST Transportation Day at the Capitol.

communities impacted by tornadoes and severe weather this spring. Regarding the income tax, Governor Stitt and term-limited Speaker of the House Charles McCall (HD 22) made a special session and regular session push for a .25% cut in the state income tax (4.75% to 4.5%) which was consistently rejected by term-limited Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (SD 47). The most notable occurrence during the four-month session was the rollout of public transparency related to the negotiations of the FY-25 budget which began in the Senate. Weekly public meetings were held at the state Capitol in which appropriations for each agency and other appropriated areas of state government were discussed, vetted and streamed online. The House of Representatives followed with their 'Budget

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

TRUST MEMBERS SUPPORT ADVOCACY EVENTS



ACCO Executive Director Chris Schroder, Rep. Bob Ed Culver and ODOT Chief Engineer Brian Taylor at the House Transportation Committee Dinner.

TRUST HELD ITS ANNUAL EVENTS DURING THE STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION WITH MEMBERS TURNING OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS TO ADVOCATE FOR TRANSPORTATION

revenues to be used strictly for transportation purposes. The event schedule kicked off with Transportation Day at the Capitol March 6 with a legislative luncheon and program.

Making remarks were Governor Stitt, Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat, Senate Aerospace and Transportation Committee and A&B Subcommittee Chairman John Haste, Speaker of the House Charles McCall, House President Pro Tempore and Speaker-Designate Kyle Hilbert, House Transportation Committee Chairman Ronny Johns, House A&B Subcommittee Chairwoman Nicole Miller and Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma Executive Director Chris Schroder. ODOT Executive Director Tim Gatz provided a complete status report on Oklahoma's eight-year highway and bridge construction work plan and the many important projects awaiting to commence.

To complete the spring event schedule, TRUST hosted the House and Senate Transportation Committee Dinners April 29 and May 1 respectively at the headquarters of TRUST member, the Association of Oklahoma General Contractors. Guest speakers included Gatz, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Executive Director

Joe Echelle, Treat, Haste, Johns and Miller.

The TRUST Transportation Innovative Luncheon is planned for Fall 2024.

TRUST is recognized broadly as the preeminent transportation funding advocacy organization in the state and it is because of our growing membership. Thank you to all TRUST members for supporting these important events and continuing to recruit new members to TRUST. ■



House Transportation Committee Chairman Ronny Johns addresses attendees at the House Transportation Committee Dinner.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Portal' which was posted online and regularly updated. Early in May, when budget negotiations appeared to stall, Governor Stitt called for a budget summit where he and leaders from both chambers would meet in a public forum to hash out a final budget. Several subsequent public meetings were held over the following days without the Governor in attendance until the Senate and House reached an agreement May 22. Once the agreement was reached, the full Legislature debated and passed the FY-25 general appropriation bill.

Within the transportation sector, ODOT Executive Director Tim Gatz was confirmed by the Senate to continue to serve in that role. ODOT received a general appropriation of just over \$880 million which is separate from the off-the-top ROADS fund allocation of \$590 million. In addition, the CIRB fund was funded at its annual cap of \$150 million. The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority commenced the 15-year, \$5 billion ACCESS Oklahoma plan as its first major project began on the Turner Turnpike through the widening (four to six lanes) of the six-mile stretch between Heyburn and Bristow. The OTA also continued to advance its 'PlatePay' cashless tolling program which saw the Turner Turnpike, the state's busiest, convert in May.

The ODOT eight-year highway and bridge construction work plan remains the single most influential policy and funding development for transportation in Oklahoma history. Highway and bridge modernization is occurring statewide with additional projects bid monthly by the Oklahoma Transportation Commission. Coupled with federal funding, ODOT can now complete projects more quickly and focus additional monies on new statewide initiatives like two-lane highway development, pavement and

widening projects. The CIRB fund continues to make notable progress on the county highway system by providing millions of dollars for priority bridge and highway projects.

In Washington, D.C., Oklahoma junior Senator Markwayne Mullin, a former member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, sits on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation which is a significant feather in the cap for Oklahoma. The United States is in year three of the five-year federal funding bill approved by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden that includes transportation infrastructure appropriations for highways, bridges, rail, waterways and airports.

Oklahoma's most valued physical commodity is its highway and bridge infrastructure. Funding challenges grow each year making the mission of TRUST even more important. The professionals at ODOT are the best in the business and the agency is a model to other state transportation departments. The progress ODOT has made in advancing Oklahoma's surface transportation infrastructure in the last 20 years is remarkable, however their job is never over. New challenges abound. There are more and heavier vehicles on highways and bridges than ever before. The state gasoline tax has not increased in many years and is no longer able to keep pace with maintenance needs. The advent of electric vehicles was not present just a short time ago. TRUST and its partners will continue to advocate with the executive and legislative branches at the state Capitol and with Oklahoma's congressional delegation to place transportation funding as a core priority. TRUST members are the best voices to ensure Oklahoma continues to build a first-class, safe and modern surface transportation network. Thank you for your past, current and future support! ■

TRUST LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2024

“The mission of TRUST is continuously reflected in our legislative agenda which serves as the main driver of our advocacy efforts at the state Capitol”

Neal McCaleb - TRUST President

- **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 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 work plan, asset preservation plan and highway maintenance. TRUST opposes the diversion of funds from ODOT’s general budget and/or the eight-year work 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.
- **Support full 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.
- **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 transportation needs to service the bond debt. This allows for no revenue impact or increased taxes while utilizing transportation fees to support transportation needs.



Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat speaks at the Senate Transportation Committee Dinner.

- **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 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

Jami Longacre – Executive Director

John Cox – Communications Director

Helra Han – Membership Director

Sponsors of SURFACE



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-2024. Any dues paid used for lobbying efforts are not tax deductible.



The TRUST Coalition
Post Office Box 16112
Oklahoma City, OK 73113



A capacity crowd listens to TRUST board member Terri Angier at the Senate Transportation Committee Dinner.



Governor Kevin Stitt was a featured speaker during TRUST Transportation Day at the Capitol.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING TRUST!