

Dignitaries visit OKC, Tulsa; assess funding needs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2003

PR# 03-033

National leaders landed in Oklahoma this week in preparation for a tour of transportation corridors desperately needing funding. U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta along with Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters, Congressmen Ernest Istook and John Sullivan met with transportation officials and community leaders to have dialogue and explore projects in Tulsa and Oklahoma City Tuesday, May 27. Governor Brad Henry is expected to make welcoming remarks at the Oklahoma City event.

This is a very significant occasion for Oklahoma as the top two transportation officials in the U.S. visit Oklahoma together on the heel of the re-authorization of TEA-21, the latest six-year federal transportation funding bill, by Congress.

Congressman Sullivan who is on the U.S. House Transportation Committee will spearhead the press conference in Tulsa regarding Interstate 44's condition and funding hurdles. The project area extends between Yale and Riverside and is in need of widening at an estimated cost of \$263 million.

Currently, there are more than 85,000 vehicles traveling this stretch each day. Economic development along the corridor continues to expand, driving up the cost of right-of-way which is a significant portion of the total cost needed. This next widening phase is double the amount ODOT has already spent on other portions of I-44 from I-244 to Yale during the last 10 years.

Congressman Istook who was recently named the Chair of the House Appropriations Sub-Committee for Transportation will host the Oklahoma City press conference regarding Interstate 40 through downtown Oklahoma City also known as the Crosstown Expressway. Constructed in the sixties, this segment of roadway has been structurally ineffective and below today's engineering standards in recent years.

More than 100,000 vehicles travel this stretch each day. The I-40 Crosstown has national significance as it is a central link between the east and the west coasts. Sixty percent of all truck traffic on the Crosstown is from out of state. The realignment project has received about \$110 million of federal funds so far and an additional \$250 million is still needed to complete the reconstruction of this vital interstate.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation is seeking these improvements for the benefit and safety of its citizens. Tours and partnerships such as these are instrumental in demonstrating the desperate transportation needs of this state.