

Study predicts more traffic jams

by: ANGEL RIGGS World Capitol Bureau
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Oklahoma's worn-out bridges and bad roads also get a mention in the TRIP study.

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Unless the state's roads are expanded to allow more cars, urban Oklahomans can expect in the next 20 years traffic congestion comparable to St. Louis' or Salt Lake City's, according to a study released Thursday.

Rush-hour commutes will take about 26 percent longer by 2030, according to the study by TRIP, a transportation research group funded by the transportation, construction, engineering and manufacturing industries.

The study rates 40 percent of Oklahoma's roads as being in "poor" or "mediocre" condition.

Oklahoma has the largest percentage of "structurally deficient" bridges in the nation, the report says.

And fatal traffic accidents in Oklahoma happen at a rate 18 percent higher than the national average, it notes.

Roadway design is "an important" factor in one-third of all fatal and serious accidents, the study estimates.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation recently released a nearly \$4 billion, eight-year work program that focuses heavily on improving the safety of state roads, said Terri Angier, an ODOT spokeswoman.

"The eight-year program is an extremely good first step in beginning to reverse the underfunding trends that have been around for decades," she said.

However, about \$32.5 million of this year's increased funds remain in jeopardy.

The \$32.5 million is contingent on the state's revenues growing by 3 percent.

The funding question won't be answered until June 30, according to Neal McCaleb, a former Oklahoma transportation secretary who now is president of the TRUST Road Coalition, a road-funding advocacy group.

The study forecasts that commercial trucking will increase by 48 percent in Oklahoma by 2020.

Trucks now deliver about 79 percent of the goods shipped to sites in Oklahoma, according to the report.

Also, the number of annual miles traveled by vehicles in Oklahoma has increased by 42 percent in the last 15 years and is expected to increase 40 percent more by 2020.

How will state roads get fixed?

May 11, 2007

FRONT PAGE

By John Greiner, Staff Writer

Oklahoma's highways and bridges are getting worse, and a projected \$32.5 million shortfall for them this year would be a big setback for the state's new eight-year highway program, an official with a national transportation research group said Thursday.

The group says Oklahoma has:

- The nation's highest rate of deficient bridges.
- A high rate of deteriorating pavement.
- A traffic death rate higher than the national average.
- Rising traffic congestion.

The news was delivered by Frank Moretti, who helped develop the report by The Road Information Program. The nonprofit group is made up of small businesses, engineering firms, contractors, chambers of commerce, cities, counties and people.

Moretti, the group's director of policy and research, said he learned the funding program could be shorted by \$32.5 million this year, just as the state is embarking on its eight-year, \$4 billion highway and bridge program.

Neal McCaleb, former state transportation secretary and president of a highway booster group, said that under legislation passed in 2006, the Transportation Department will receive \$17 million in new money this year. Highways and bridges were due an additional \$32.5 million beyond that \$17 million in new money if state revenues grew by 3 percent, which they did not.

The Legislature might be able to use some of that money for the highway program, said Rep. Mike Thompson, R-Oklahoma City, and Sen. Jeff Rabon, D-Hugo, chairmen of House and Senate transportation committees.

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Highways and bridges: Program short millions

HOW WILL STATE ROADS GET FIXED?

By John Greiner
Staff Writer

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Weather: Relief may be in sight

Next task: Digging out

Jim Prince walks Thursday through his mud-filled sunroom. Prince's home in Cash had three feet of water in it, and he is still waiting to hear from his insurance company.

Flooding makes a mess

STREETS: More slow-moving storms flooded streets and forced Oklahoma City and Midwest City to close some streets Thursday. A 17-year-old swept away by deep water was taken to a trauma hospital in Oklahoma City.

HOME: Residents in Cash were still digging out of the mess floods brought Tuesday night.

FORECAST: The storm system that has drenched Oklahoma is beginning to move out.

The forecast TODAY
Partly sunny. Highs: 80s. Chance of storms: 40 percent.

SATURDAY
Partly sunny. Highs: 80s. Chance of storms: 20 percent.

SUNDAY
Partly sunny. Highs: 80s.

The full story, Page 4A
Source: National Weather Service

Heart donor's gift was more than life

By Josh Rabe
Staff Writer

GLENDON — Tammy Spargue's son died almost six years ago, but she knows a part of him is still alive in a man she'd never met before Thursday.

And it's not just the heart of her 14-year-old son that beats in the body of 62-year-old Steve Lewis.

It's something more, Spargue said.

"He was never a man of many words," said Lewis' wife, Julie. "He wasn't a very outgoing or emotional person at all either. But he is a changed man now."

"I know where it comes from," Spargue said.

Her son, Roger "Bubba" Porter Jr., was outgoing and fun.

See HEART, Page 2A

Steve Lewis, right, congratulates Drew Hays for receiving the first Bubba Porter Gift of Life Scholarship on Thursday during the Glenrose High School awards assembly. Looking on: Lewis' wife, Julie.

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Inside The Oklahoman
Highlights from the transportation safety report
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Thu May 10, 2007

Study: State roads, bridges deficient

*By John Greiner
Staff Writer*

Oklahoma's highways and bridges are getting worse, and a projected \$32 million cut for them this year would be a significant setback for the state's new eight-year highway program, an official with a national transportation research group said today.

According to a new report, Oklahoma has the nation's highest rate of deficient bridges, a high rate of deteriorating pavement, a traffic death rate higher than the national average and increasing levels of traffic congestion, said Frank Moretti, who helped develop the report by The Road Information Program based in Washington.

Moretti, director of policy and research for the group, said he learned while compiling the report that the funding program could be shorted by \$32 million this year, just as the state is embarking on its new highway and bridge program.

When a new funding program authorized by a previous Legislature is shorted, it creates a concern that it may happen in subsequent years, he said.

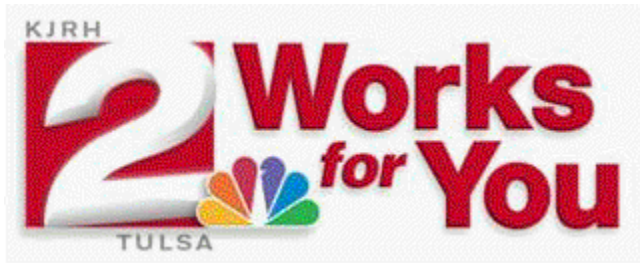
Neal McCaleb, former state transportation director and head of a highway booster group, said that under a bill passed in 2006, the Transportation Department was supposed to get \$17 million plus another \$32 million if state revenues grew by 3 percent.

They didn't, he said, but the state legislature now has \$175 million more available than it did when the session began.

The report Moretti unveiled Thursday is called "Future Mobility in Oklahoma: An Analysis of the Ability of Oklahoma's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility."

Its findings include:

- If fully funded, Oklahoma's eight-year highway construction program likely will improve traffic safety and road and bridge conditions.
- In 2005, the latest year data is available, 18 percent of major roads in Oklahoma were rated in poor condition and 22 percent were rated in mediocre condition.
- Oklahoma's traffic fatality rate was 1.71 fatalities per 100 million miles of travel in 2005, 18 percent higher than the national average of 1.45.
- Vehicle travel on Oklahoma's major highways increased by 42 percent from 1990 to 2005, jumping from 33 billion miles traveled in 1990 to 47 billion in 2005.
- Vehicle travel in Oklahoma is expected to increase by another 40 percent by 2020, reaching 66 billion miles.



May 10, 2007

Heavy Trucks Tearing Roads Up

Posted By: [Marla Carter](#)



A whopping 80% of our Oklahoma roads are in bad shape according to one national study. Some say patching them up is just a waste of money, if state officials don't fix the real problems.

Along with crumbling roads are crumbling weigh stations, "The weigh stations in Oklahoma are in deplorable conditions," said John Fuller with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

In fact, there are only 9 functioning weigh stations in the state. Our neighbor, Missouri, has almost three times that. As for the ones that do work, "(They) were constructed in the 50's-60's and basically have been ignored since then as far as maintaining them," said Fuller.

Plus, the weigh stations are only open eight hours a day. So if a truck driver is on the road after hours or on the weekend he/she won't get weighed. ODOT says that means there's a greater potential for overweight trucks on our highways. Fuller says those added pounds on the pavement are taking a toll on our roads, "A truck that's 5% overweight will decrease the pavement by 17%," said Fuller.

Fuller also says the more damage we have on our roads, means a rougher and more dangerous road for driver, "If you have a road that's not in good condition, that if it's rough or if it's rutted, certainly it's at a higher risk not only for trucks, but for all traffic."

O-DOT says they need about \$77 million to entirely revamp and replace the state's weigh stations, but it's up to the legislature to fork over the cash.



Report: Transportation Funding In Jeopardy

Thursday May 10, 2007

Oklahoma City (AP) - A new report shows that a plan to divert more tax dollars for transportation needs in Oklahoma could be in danger of losing 32-point-5 (M) million dollars this year.

That's according to the report by Washington, D-C-based The Road Information Program, a nonprofit transportation research group.

The group's director -- Frank Moretti -- says legislation approved last year would provide an additional 1-point-6 (B) billion dollars over the next eight years to repair bridges and improve roads and highways.

But the program may be cut this year because the state's revenues did not increase by at least three percent in 2006, a trigger for the release of some of the additional money.