



INFORMATION RELEASE

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Groundbreaking kicks off start of I-44 widening project in Tulsa

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 16, 2009

PR# 09-004

With ceremonial gold shovels in hand, several local and state leaders teamed up today to break the first ground of the I-44 widening project from Riverside Dr. to Yale Ave. in Tulsa. The first construction phase will construct a 1.25 mile long underground drainage structure, along with a frontage road, from Riverside Dr. to Yorktown Ave. on the north side of I-44. This is the single most expensive project ever put up for bid by ODOT, and must be started before any widening work can begin on I-44.

"This is a huge undertaking to help improve the safety for drivers in this corridor," District 8 Transportation Commissioner Guy Berry said. "This project has been many years in the planning, and it is exciting to finally start this much-needed expansion."

The overall \$360 million project will expand traffic lanes between Riverside Dr. and Yale Ave. from four to six and improve ramps at the Riverside Dr., Peoria Ave., Lewis Ave. and Harvard Ave. interchanges. This first construction phase is scheduled to take 23 months to complete, however, incentives are in place to expedite the work. The contractor (Sherwood Construction Co., Inc.) anticipates beginning work on Monday, January 19th, weather permitting.

"This is the oldest section of interstate in Oklahoma, designed and built before the interstate system was created in 1956," ODOT Director Gary Ridley said. "We are pleased to start this project, and hope people are patient with us as the construction progresses."

Those attending today's dedication include U.S. Rep. John Sullivan (R-OK), Ruth Van Mark, the Environment and Public Works Aide for Senator Jim Inhofe, City of Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor, representatives from the Federal Highway Administration and the Tulsa Metro Chamber, Berry, Ridley and other ODOT officials.

"The Tulsa region to date has some 1,028 highway lane miles, but not a single lane is as important as this I-44 corridor," Tulsa Metro Chamber President and CEO Mike Neal said. "It is absolutely vital to the economic prosperity, safety and quality of life in our community."

The next construction phase of the overall I-44 expansion project will be in the area of Harvard Ave., which is tentatively scheduled to bid in mid-2009. This will be followed by the Riverside/Peoria corridor bid, tentatively scheduled for early 2010, and the Lewis Ave. corridor, tentatively scheduled for bid in mid-2011. The overall project is expected to be complete by late 2012.

