

ODOT and staff honored with two prestigious awards

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The Oklahoma Department of Transportation and members of its staff were presented with two separate awards this fall recognizing leadership in furthering regional and national transportation and for support of public art initiatives. The award's recipients were recognized in Monday's Transportation Commission Meeting in Oklahoma City.

ODOT's Rail Programs Division, under the leadership of Division Manager Joe Kyle, was honored with the esteemed President's Transportation Award during last month's American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials annual meeting in California.

The national award recognizes leadership based on exemplary service in furthering transportation activities having an impact on transportation regionally or nationwide.

ODOT executed a groundbreaking railroad crossing inventory and developed a state-of-the-art suite of computer applications for statewide railroad crossing inventory management information, crash data and safety projects.

This program, OK.Rail, improves and automates procedures for identifying and prioritizing crossings that require improvements. It also ensures funds are spent most effectively at the most critical crossings thereby increasing safety in Oklahoma. The department has been asked by other transportation departments to come speak about the program so it can be used as a model by other states.

"We are very honored to be presented the prestigious President's Transportation Award," Kyle said. "This recognition highlights the countless hours and tireless work that our ODOT staff and partners put into the OK.Rail program."

On behalf of ODOT, Secretary of Transportation/ODOT Director Gary Ridley accepted the George Nigh Public Service in the Arts Award, which recognizes a government official for outstanding support of the arts. Gov. Brad Henry presented this Oklahoma Arts Council award to the Department during the Annual Governor's Arts Award ceremony at the State Capitol on October 20.

Ridley has played a major role in spearheading projects to incorporate artistic elements into roadway construction projects and has encouraged ODOT's participation in the Oklahoma Art in Public Places Program. The program, launched in 2004 after the passage of Senate Bill 1347, requires artwork to be incorporated into new state capital projects or projects undergoing major renovations. While the program specifically applies only to buildings, ODOT has chosen to participate by consulting the program staff to help incorporate aesthetic elements into road and bridge projects.

Examples of artistic enhancements included on recent ODOT construction projects can be found in Oklahoma City along I-235 at 36th St. and on the Broadway Extension (US-77) bridges over Memorial Rd. and Kelley Ave. Additional artistic features can be found in Tulsa/Catoosa at the I-44 at 193rd St. and US-412/I-44 interchanges. Aesthetic features are also being included on multiple bridges over I-35 in Norman as part of ongoing interstate widening and interchange reconstruction projects and on the I-40 Crosstown relocation projects.

"By adding aesthetic elements on some projects on heavily traveled routes, we not only improve our roadways and bridges, but also add character and beauty to our state," Ridley said.

Oklahoma's public art reflects the area where it is built – usually celebrating local history. To do so, local community involvement is central in the process of selecting art work.

In order to spend tax dollars effectively, the projects are planned for high-visibility areas where public art makes economic sense. Because installation is a one-time expense, the art may actually cost less than other aesthetic treatments, such as landscaping, and will last the 50 to 75 year life span of a structure.

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(Editors and News Directors: For more information, call the ODOT Media and Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)



ODOT Rail Programs Division Manager Joe Kyle displays the President's Transportation Award at the Monday, Nov. 2, Transportation Commission meeting. The award, sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, recognizes leadership based on exemplary service in furthering transportation activities having an impact on transportation regionally or nationwide. Pictured (L to R) ODOT Director of Engineering David Streb, Oklahoma Transportation Commission Chairman Dan Overland, Kyle and Sec. of Transportation/ODOT Director Gary Ridley.



Accepting on behalf of ODOT at the Nov. 2 Transportation Commission meeting, Sec. of Transportation/ODOT Director Gary Ridley is congratulated by Oklahoma Arts Council Executive Director Suzanne Tate for receiving the George Nigh Public Service in the Arts Award. The award, which recognizes a government official for outstanding support of the arts, was presented to the Department during the Annual Governor's Arts Award ceremony at the State Capitol on October 20. Pictured (L to R), Ridley, Tate and Oklahoma Art in Public Places Director Debby Williams.