







Correction: The following correction was submitted by Ian Grossman and Jim Ray from FHWA regarding the story we ran two weeks ago under the title FHWA Approves I-80 Toll Plan. "The Federal Highway Administration has recently received but not yet decided on Pennsylvania's application to toll I-80. The proposal is currently under review." (See story below) We always appreciate our vigilant readers to correct what was printed in the articles we summarize each week. TW

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Impact Statement Paves Way for I-69

WLF1.com, IN - Oct 23, 2007

Indiana - Federal and state officials in Indiana released a 1,000-page environmental impact statement this week, paving the way for federal funding and construction to begin on the Interstate 69 extension from Indianapolis northeast to Evansville. The FHWA approved the route for the long-debated 142-mile corridor two years ago, contingent upon a more detailed study of the environmental impact for each of the six sections.

The \$1.7 billion project will require relocation of over 300 homes and 68 businesses; however developers say the interstate will give the area a huge economic boost. Construction in Evansville is set to begin at this time next year once the FHWA reviews the environmental impact statement and releases funding for the first section of the project.

The project is still being debated, as a judge heard arguments on Tuesday for a lawsuit challenging the extension. The extension has also been targeted by legislators for possible tolls between certain cities.



Just a note about EIS documents. Last week the Utah DOT released the Draft EIS for their Mountain View Corridor in Salt Lake County; 2,238 pages in all. TW

Fed says I-80 Tolls not a Done Deal

CBS 21, PA - Oct 22, 2007

WASHINGTON - A Federal Highway Administration official says plans for tolling Interstate 80 are still under review and Pennsylvania should not assume they will be approved. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and PennDOT signed a 50-year lease to turn I-80 into a toll road last week, and the state applied for federal permission. The 300-mile interstate runs between the New Jersey and Ohio state lines.

FHWA chief counsel James Ray responded that a decision has not been made yet; the review process has just begun. Gov. Edward Rendell signed legislation in July that authorized borrowing over the next 16 years, and I-80 tolls are one of the included funding sources.

The commission has applied for a \$532 million loan this week toward a possible record \$9.6 billion to supply funding for bridges, roads and 73 public transit systems across the state.

City Proposes Major Transit Service Cuts

Colorado Springs Gazette, CO - Oct 21, 2007

Colorado - City officials in Colorado Springs are considering cutting 14,000 hours of transit service next year to make up for declining sales tax revenue that is forcing the city to cut about \$9.3 million from its 2008 budget. All departments are facing spending reductions, but the \$1.1 million transit cut from what is needed to maintain current service levels will affect thousands of residents in the region who depend on the service each day.

Under the proposal, transportation will actually get a \$170,000 boost; however, that is not enough to offset rising costs, said city budget officer Lisa Bigelow. If the council approves the cutback, Metro will decide which routes and times to cut and meet with the public before making a final decision.

The \$5.6 million decrease in sales tax for 2008, forecasted by Interim City Manager Mike Anderson, is attributed to volatile energy prices, the struggling housing market and slowing job growth.

The city's \$235.8 million proposed budget, paid for by taxes, would be \$6.5 million lower than the 2007 budget.

Lawsuit Seeks to Delay I-73

Danville Register and Bee, VA - Oct 20, 2007

Virginia - Environmentalists seeking to delay the construction of I-73 for several years have filed a lawsuit against the Federal Highway Administration and the Virginia Department of Transportation. The Virginia Forest Watch and the Virginians for Appropriate Roads are seeking an injunction to prohibit highway officials from providing financial assistance for the project as well as restrict VDOT and its contractors from beginning construction on I-73.

The plaintiff's attorney, Andrea Ferster, said the highway construction is not legal because the

highway administration did not evaluate improvements to U.S. 220 as an alternative to constructing I-73. "The law has a requirement that highway agencies consider all reasonable alternatives to their course of action," Ferster said. "This is just the first step in the litigation process."

Ferster said not only would U.S. 220 be less damaging to the health of nearby residents and the surrounding air quality, but it would also be less costly. I-73, which will run through Roanoke, Franklin and Henry counties, will cost an estimated \$4 billion. Construction is slated to begin in 2012.

Inner Loop Project Kicks Off

KVIA, TX - Oct 20, 2007

EL PASO, TX. – Hundreds of residents gathered in El Paso Saturday for the groundbreaking ceremony to begin construction on the Inner Loop last Saturday, a project promising to change the way El Pasoans drive across the city. The Spur 601 Project – commonly known as the Inner Loop Project – should be completed in about 3 years, just in time to accommodate the additional tens of thousands of soldiers to be stationed at nearby Fort Bliss.

The \$367 million cost for the Inner Loop is being financed by private contractor JD Abrams. The state will reimburse the company for the 7-mile roadway, which will connect U.S. Highway 54 to Loop 375 through Fort Bliss. "Those people who live in far east El Paso who need to get to Northeast or get to Fort Bliss no longer have to travel to Montana, they can get on Loop 375," said Texas Transportation Commissioner Ted Houghton, Jr.

"You can just imagine trying to get 25,000 soldiers off and on every morning, not including their family members who might be going to commissaries or school. It would have been a horrendous traffic issue," added El Paso Mayor John Cook. The Inner Loop is the first time a private company has ever paid for state highway construction, and TXDOT says that will help the project get done faster than with state financing.



This is a first ever "shadow tolling" project for Texas where JD Abrams provides the up-front financing and builds the facility and then TxDOT pays them back based on traffic volumes. The financial transaction is transparent to the user since the money goes from TxDOT to Abrams with no tollbooths or tags involved. It is a classic application for design-build where everyone will benefit from early completion. On-site work at Ft. Bliss represents one of the largest capital investments currently being made by the Department of the Army so this is a big deal for everyone involved. In the spirit of disclosure, I provide the partnering facilitation services for this team. TW

UDOT Celebrates Completion of U.S. 189

Deseret Morning News – October 24, 2007

PROVO, Utah – The Utah Department of Transportation held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday to celebrate the completion of U.S. 189 in Provo Canyon from the Sundance turnoff to east of Deer Creek Dam. Lt. Gov. Gary Herbert and officials from several cities attended the celebration of the finishing of the \$90 million, four-and-a-half mile section of highway, which ended a decade of construction in the canyon.

UDOT Executive Director John Njord thanked Ames Construction, the company that built the road, saying the project was a milestone. The new highway section includes four lanes and two new

bridges next to Deer Creek Dam. Crews softened turns on the highway that were once sharp and dangerous, which county officials hope will make the road safer.



I first became familiar with this project as an engineering student at BYU 30 years ago. Those seeking to stop the work were suing UDOT at that time. Twenty years later in 1995, as the Executive Director of UDOT, my name was on the current lawsuit. All that is past and this final project has been a great one for UDOT and Ames. It is nice to finally have this section of US 189 finished. TW

Tacoma Bridge Closed over Safety Concerns

KIROtv.com, WA - Oct 23, 2007

TACOMA, Wash. – The 94-year-old Murray Morgan bridge is being closed for “life safety reasons” by the Washington Department of Transportation, according to an announcement by the department’s new secretary, Paula Hammond. She told the Tacoma City Council Tuesday afternoon that the closure is because Governor Christine Gregoire believes public safety is a top priority.

The state made a planned inspection on the Tacoma bridge early after the I-35W collapse heightened bridge safety concerns. The I-35W bridge was a steel-truss bridge like the Murray Morgan bridge, which has a 10-ton vehicle weight limit.

The Tacoma bridge was once a main connector between downtown and the Port of Tacoma. The route became less popular after the state rerouted Highway 509 from the East 11th Street corridor.

First I-64-I-70 Flyover Ramp Opens

Suburban Journals, MO - Oct 24, 2007

Missouri - This week the Missouri Department of Transportation opened the first new flyover ramp at the I-64 and I-170 interchange, providing commuters with a smoother connection going north between the two interstates. The interchange is part of the \$535 million, 10-mile I-64 reconstruction, stretching from west of Spoede Road in Frontenac to Kingshighway Boulevard in St. Louis.

“This is the first direct Interstate 170 ramp with Interstate 64 which we did not have before,” said Linda Wilson, public information manager for MoDOT. Wilson said that during construction on the highway, the ramp will make it possible for two lanes of traffic to go north. In early January, another ramp will open for southbound I-170 traffic to go east on I-64.

MoDOT project director Lesley Hoffarth said the ramp will be a critical connection when I-64 is closed from I-170 to Ballas Road. MoDOT will soon be announcing a date for that closure.

Maine Turnpike Scraps Toll Expansion Study

Kennebec Journal, ME - Oct 23, 2007

Maine – An unpopular study of whether to implement tolls on Maine’s interstate system has been abandoned by the Maine Turnpike Authority. The authority received authorization from a

legislative committee last month to look into the feasibility of tolls on I-95 north of Augusta and I-295 as an alternative to raise funding for improving and maintaining state roads and bridges.

The concept was strongly protested, however, by everyone from commuters to Gov. John Baldacci, who vowed the interstates would not be tolled while he is in office, through 2011. The governor's opposition was mentioned as the turnpike board of directors unanimously passed a resolution Friday not to undertake the \$40,000 study, authority spokesman Dan Paradee reported. The board originally voted 12-1 to authorize the study, and the co-chairmen expressed disappointment that the study will not commence.

The authority was scheduled to report the findings of the self-funded study to the legislature in January.

Sen. Dennis Damon, D-Trenton and Rep. Boyd Marley, D-Portland emphasized that the committee was not endorsing tolls but thought everything should be put on the table in the effort to find a solution to the state transportation system's \$2.2 billion funding shortfall over the next ten years.

Dye Appointed to WSDOT Chief Operating Officer

WSDOT News – October 22, 2007

Washington - The new head of the Washington state department of transportation has announced organizational changes and appointments throughout the agency this week. Secretary Paula Hammond, appointed last week by Gov. Christine Gregoire, said, "These changes reflect the Governor's desire that we operate more like a business and my commitment to her to continue to find ways to innovate."

Hammond's appointments include Dave Dye, to serve as Chief Operating Officer, a new position focusing on the daily operations of the department across all lines of business. He will also be responsible for maintaining a presence on the Puget Sound region project teams and their major projects. Dye will also assist in the coordination with the Regional Transportation Improvement District and will work with the project teams in the area working on mega projects such as the SR 520 bridge replacement, the Alaskan Way Viaduct and seawall replacement and I-405 corridor improvements.



Dave has aptly headed the Urban Corridors Office (UCO) for a long time and has been responsible for most of WSDOT's major projects in that role. This is a logical move on Paula's part and reflects the changing nature of the DOT's business and how they deliver projects. Congratulations to Dave. TW

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