

# 2004 Annual Report

## *Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department*





# Letter from the Director



AHTD Director Dan Flowers

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department is pleased to present its 2004 Annual Report.

The many accomplishments in 2004 are a reflection of the hard work and dedication of both our Highway Commission members and the Department staff.

Early 2004 found our Commission and staff traveling to 10 communities across the state to share the results of the Arkansas State Highway Needs Study and to learn what transportation issues and projects are important to our citizens. Comments from these meetings helped emphasize the need for a statewide grid system of highways to facilitate interstate and regional movement of traffic. This brought about the adoption by the Commission of the Arkansas Primary Highway Network, which is a network of highways that makes up about 50 percent of our state highway system, but carries 92 percent of the traffic. The Primary Highway Network will be used as a planning tool for the Department in developing future projects.

Throughout the year the Department cut ribbons on major projects across the state. Some of those projects included the Forrest City Bypass, the Ashdown Bypass, Loop 245 in Texarkana and the new White River Bridge at DeValls Bluff.

During the summer, Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters came to Arkansas to see, firsthand, new technologies being used in highway construction in our state.

The hard work and professionalism of our staff was reflected throughout the year. Our employees took first place in the Regional Equipment Operators Rodeo for a second consecutive year and our Arkansas Highway Police celebrated their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Department's public involvement process was also honored by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

Over 300 miles of improvements were completed by the end of 2004 as part of our Interstate Rehabilitation Program, which finished its fourth year in 2004. We are proud of our entire staff for making this program such a success.

This Annual Report highlights these events and more. I hope that you will find this summation of 2004 informative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Flowers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Flowers  
Director of Highways  
and Transportation



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# Regional Meetings



Displays were set up for citizens to view.



Director Dan Flowers addresses the audience.



Citizens asked questions and made comments at each of the meetings.



Commissioners listened to citizens' questions and comments.

Sharing the 2003 Arkansas State Highway Needs Study and getting the opinions of residents across the state were the goals of a series of public meetings presented by the State Highway Commission during the first three months of 2004.

Each session featured a brief presentation on the current condition and future needs on the State Highway System. This was followed by comments from the audience and a question and answer period. Written comments were also accepted.

## TOTAL COST FOR NEEDS & OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Capacity Improvements \$3.1 billion

System Preservation \$7.0 billion

Congressionally-Designated  
High Priority Corridors \$4.7 billion

Economic Development  
Connectors \$1.3 billion

Total Needs &  
Other Improvements \$16.1 billion

Anticipated Funding \$ 4.3 billion

SHORTFALL \$11.8 billion

Findings presented at the 2004 Statewide Regional Meetings.

The citizens of Arkansas are interested in good highways and many of them have specific projects they want to see completed. The Commission was able to hear those ideas in person through this series of meetings, which were held in Jonesboro, Helena, Springdale, Fort Smith, Batesville, Little Rock, El Dorado, Pine

Bluff, Russellville and Texarkana.

The 2003 Highway Needs Study addressed the costs associated with Arkansas' highway transportation needs over the next ten years, as well as the expected funding over that time period.

The bottom line is that more than \$16 billion in

needs have been identified, with anticipated funding of just more than \$4 billion. Input from these meetings was used to develop the Arkansas Primary Highway Network, a system of about 8,400 miles that will be used as a tool for future planning.

# Recognition

The AHTD and several of its employees were recognized for outstanding achievements in 2004.

District Engineer Harold Beaver was named Engineer of the Year by the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers.

The Regional Equipment Operators' Rodeo was hosted by the Mississippi Department of Transportation and was held in Gulfport. Teams from Arkansas and Mississippi were joined by their peers from Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina for the competition.

Participants from each state competed in events such as Tractor/Lowboy, Tandem Axle Dump Truck, Single Axle Dump Truck/Trailer, Tractor/Mower, Backhoe and Motor Patrol.

Arkansas edged out Mississippi to retain the trophy for a second year and was crowned as 2004 Regional Equipment Operators' Rodeo Champion.

At the Governor's annual address to the tourism industry in December, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and Miss Arkansas Whitney Kirk presented the AHTD with "The Natural State Award."

The award is presented annually to a community,

organization, special event or attraction which "stands out in the crowd" because of its unique appeal, media coverage, creative approach and/or enhancement of community pride, thus benefiting the state's quality of life. The AHTD's "Pave the Way" campaign was this year's winner.

In October, the University of Arkansas honored AHTD Director Dan Flowers, a 1969 graduate of the University. Flowers became the namesake of the Engineering Research Center's newest addition, the Dan Flowers Education and Training Facility.

The facility is part of the Center for Training Transportation Professionals (CTTP) located within the Engineering Research Center. It features complete multi-media capabilities and a video conferencing system. The CTTP is the education and training arm of the Mack Blackwell Transportation Center, a national research center located on the UA campus. The CTTP provides technical training and certifications for AHTD personnel and contractors from Arkansas and many other states.



District 4 Engineer Harold Beaver (r) accepts the “Engineer of the Year” Award from the Society of Professional Engineers.



The AHTD Regional Rodeo Team Champions with Director Dan Flowers (center).



(l to r) Commissioner Jonathan Barnett, Vice Chairman Prissy Hickerson, Sara and Dan Flowers, and Chairman Buddy Benafield at the dedication of the Dan Flowers Education and Training Facility at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.



# Dedications

The long-awaited Loop 245 around the southern edge of Texarkana was opened to traffic on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Dignitaries from Arkansas and Texas came together for a ribbon cutting to celebrate the meeting of Loop 245 in Arkansas and Loop 151 in Texas at South State Line Avenue.

The loop will connect with future Interstate 49, which is currently under construction between Texarkana and Doddridge.

A large crowd gathered on May 27 on the new Highway 70 White River Bridge at DeValls Bluff to cut a ribbon and officially open the structure to traffic. The new \$16.7 million bridge is just over 3,300 feet long, 40 feet wide and rises a minimum of 52 feet over the river. The original DeValls Bluff Bridge, constructed in 1925, was removed by a Department contractor with a series of explosions in July.

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee joined Commission Vice Chairman Prissy Hickerson, Director Flowers and local officials on June 8 to dedicate the Ashdown Bypass, extending from Highway 32 west to Highway 71.

With much fanfare, the famous Cotter Bridge on Highway 62B was rededicated on September 24.

Commissioner Jonathan Barnett was among the dignitaries that cut the ribbon and opened a weekend of celebration for the town of Cotter. The historic structure, over the White River, was constructed in 1929 and opened as a toll bridge in 1930 to replace the Cotter and Denton ferries. The bridge has been restored to original construction standards.

Officials gathered to cut the ceremonial ribbon for completion of the first phase of the Forrest City Bypass on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The eight-mile, two-lane roadway on new location cost just over \$26 million. It includes new interchanges at Interstate 40 and Highway 70, and a railroad overpass. An additional set of lanes will be added in the future which will result in a four-lane divided highway.

The morning of December 16<sup>th</sup> marked the opening of a new 13 mile stretch of Highway 549 in Texarkana. Governor Mike Huckabee and U.S. Representative Mike Ross addressed the large gathering as the \$90 million section of future Interstate 49 was opened from Loop 245, on the south side of Texarkana, to Fouke. Highway Commissioner Prissy Hickerson noted that the next 12 mile section between Fouke and



Doddridge should open in late 2005.

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee led a large contingent of dignitaries as new Arkansas Welcome Centers in El Dorado and Texarkana were dedicated in November and December.

Welcome Centers are a joint venture of two state agencies. The AHTD builds and maintains the Centers while the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism staffs and operates them.

The El Dorado Center is 3,000 square feet and is located on Highway 167 south of town. The Texarkana Center is 6,000 square feet and is on Interstate 30 east of town. Each facility is constructed with a rock and log exterior. They offer visitors large screen televisions broadcasting news, weather and tourist information videos, as well as computer kiosks that feature Internet hook-up.

Explosion of the old Highway 70 White River Bridge in DeValls Bluff.



Ribbon Cutting at the new Highway 70 White River Bridge in DeValls Bluff.



Dedication of the Cotter Bridge.



Dedication and Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies at the new Arkansas Welcome Centers in El Dorado (l) and Texarkana (r).

# Groundbreakings

Arkansas Highway Commissioners and Department officials were on hand for groundbreakings at several locations during 2004.

In March, ground was broken on a seven-mile, \$13 million project to widen Highway 63 between Hoxie and the Craighead County line. This was the final project to be awarded for the widening of Highway 63 between Jonesboro and Hoxie, a distance of ap-

proximately 17 miles. This project brought the total amount to be spent on the Jonesboro-to-Hoxie widening to over \$43 million.

In August, ground was broken for the Stuttgart Bypass. It is an extension of Highway 165 around the north side of town, connecting to Highway 79 on the east side of Stuttgart. The \$3.2 million contract is expected to be complete by the end of 2005.



Groundbreaking for the Stuttgart Bypass.



Groundbreaking at Highway 63 in Hoxie.



# Innovations

To better protect motorists from cross-over accidents, the Highway and Transportation Department has installed a unique wire cable barrier system on a segment of Interstate 430 in Little Rock. The new system features a design never used before on a state highway in Arkansas.

The “Brifen Safety Fence” features four strands of tensioned cable secured along a series of metal posts. The barrier is designed so the posts and wire cables absorb the energy of a vehicle striking the barrier. After a vehicle strikes the barrier, it is guided along the fence by the cables until it slows to a stop.

After minor hits, the safety fence typically re-

turns to its original alignment. A damaged section of fence can be repaired in less than 30 minutes.

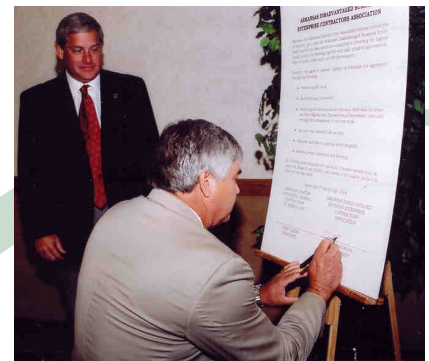
A concept formulated by the AHTD, the Associated General Contractors (AGC) and the Arkansas Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Contractors (DBE) Association became a reality when a partnering agreement to benefit the AGC and DBE was signed in July.

The agreement features a commitment to providing the highest quality product and working together with skill, integrity and responsibility in a safe, timely and cost effective manner.

The result will build customer satisfaction and enhance the image of the industry.



The new safety fence on Interstate 430 in Little Rock.



Joel Burgos, President of the Arkansas Chapter of the DBE Association, signs the agreement as Jimmy Alessi, AGC President, watches.

# National Attention

Throughout the year, the AHTD was in the national spotlight.

Dan Flowers, Arkansas' Director of Highways and Transportation, received the Thomas H. MacDonald Award. It was awarded by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) for his service in the transportation industry.

AASHTO's Thomas H. MacDonald Award is the

most prestigious award given by the association. It is given to a state transportation professional who has either rendered continuous outstanding service over an extended period, or who has made an exceptional contribution to the art and science of highway engineering.

Mary Peters, Federal Highway Administrator, came to Arkansas in June to get a firsthand look at



AHTD Director Dan Flowers (l) was presented the Thomas H. MacDonald Award by John Njord of Utah, President of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.



Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters speaks to a reporter. Also on hand are (l to r in vests) Commission Chairman Buddy Benafield, Commissioner Carl Rosenbaum and Director Dan Flowers.

the construction on Highway 67/167 in North Little Rock.

Administrator Peters met with members of the Highway Commission and Department Staff to not only see the new technologies being utilized, but also to discuss the Highway Reauthorization Bill as well as alternative methods of financing construction, and to learn how that financing might be used on upcoming projects in Arkansas.

The Department's Public Involvement process

received recognition at the American Road & Transportation Builders Association Transportation Development Foundation's (ARTBA-TDF) "PRIDE Awards."

The PRIDE Awards honor excellence in community relations and public education enhancing the image of transportation construction.

Recognition was also received at the annual Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) conference hosted in Little Rock.

The CVSA is a non-profit organization of federal, state and provincial government agencies and private industry in the United States, Canada and Mexico. The CVSA is dedicated to improving commercial vehicle safety.

A highlight of the conference was the naming of Arkansas Highway Police First Lieutenant Paul Claunch as the International President of the CVSA for 2004.



AHTD Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning Scott Bennett (l) accepts the ARTBA PRIDE Award in Washington D.C.



Arkansas Highway Police Chief Ron Burks (l) and CVSA Executive Director Steven Campbell (r) with newly elected CVSA President, Arkansas Highway Police First Lieutenant Paul Claunch.



# Interstate Rehab

As the Interstate Rehabilitation Program moved through its fourth year, a majority of the rural projects reached completion. Finishing these projects brought the total miles completed to nearly 333.

By the end of the year, only five projects remained under construction totaling just over 23 miles. These projects represent the most challenging miles of construction. These final miles are located in the most heavily traveled urban areas of Central Arkansas.





# Public Involvement

The Department held many public involvement meetings around the state in 2004. Thousands of citizens and local officials attended nearly 60 public meetings and hearings. These meetings allowed the Department to exchange information with the general public and gave citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions on specific projects.

The Department occasionally receives requests from citizens to designate particular highways across the state as scenic byways. Such was the case in the summer of 2004 in northern Arkansas as requests were received to consider making Highways 10, 21, 23, 71 and 96 part of the scenic byway system. A series of public meetings were held in Berryville, Clarksville, Huntsville and Booneville to gain citizen input.

The Highway and Transportation Department encourages early and ongoing input from citizens, and places a great emphasis on the public involvement process.



Citizens view a display at a public involvement meeting.



Maps of the area were shown at each public involvement session.



Citizens had an opportunity to make oral comments at the meetings.

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2004  
Arkansas State Highway Commission  
Seated (l to r) Jonathan Barnett,  
Chairman Buddy Benafield,  
Vice Chairman Prissy Hickerson.  
Standing (l to r) Madison Murphy  
and Carl Rosenbaum.





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