

INFORMATION RELEASE



Office of the Director

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AHTD MODIFIES PLANS FOR NEW WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

LITTLE ROCK (5-3) -- The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) has cut the number of new weight-restricted miles it plans to implement virtually in half on highways in north-central Arkansas by agreeing to further postpone weight restrictions on sections of three highways, according to Department officials.

“Based on comments heard at public meetings held recently, we have decided to hold off posting weight restrictions on sections of three highways, said Highway Commission member John Burkhalter of Little Rock. “That’s about a 50 percent reduction from the 133 miles we announced in January.

“Comments received at the meetings didn’t changed the rapidly deteriorating conditions that are occurring on those highways,” Burkhalter noted, “but they have been useful in helping us determine how to best utilize the limited financial resources we have available. We believe that focusing on these sections of highway will provide reasonable transportation options for the industries and citizens that travel through that part of the state.”

The sections that will currently remain unposted include: Highway 92 between Drasco and Center Ridge in Cleburne, Van Buren, and Conway Counties; Highway 124 from Quitman west to Highway 65 in Cleburne and Van Buren Counties; and Highway 157 from Pleasant Plains south to Highway 258 in Independence and White Counties,”

The AHTD will complete resurfacing projects already planned or underway on portions of Highways 92, 124, and 157, then re-evaluate those routes to determine the useful roadway life that can be achieved without weight restrictions. They will then determine the additional improvements needed to continue allowing 80,000-pound loads on those highways and seek funding for that work. Weight restrictions will remain an option if funding is not found for the additional work.

During upcoming months, the AHTD will increase its efforts to secure additional funding by pursuing partnerships with gas exploration companies for highway projects in the Fayetteville Shale area. Over the past decade, partnerships have been successfully formed on many projects around the state. “We believe that same concept can be applied to the gas exploration industry on highways in the Fayetteville Shale area,” Burkhalter said.

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“We do not want to adversely impact economic activity and commerce in the area, but we have to preserve the infrastructure that’s there,” Burkhalter said. “The gas exploration industry has provided great economic benefit and jobs during these tough times. But those benefits have come at a cost, that being the rapid deterioration to our highways. We hope the gas exploration companies share our desire to keep the highways in good shape, not only for their industry, but for the citizens in the area.”

Beginning Monday, May 16, 2011, weight restrictions will be imposed on approximately 64 miles of highways in Cleburne, Conway, Faulkner, Van Buren and White Counties.

Highways that will be reduced from 80,000 to 73,280 pounds include:

- Highway 31, from Hwy 267 to Hwy 5 in White County
- Highway 36, from Hwy 385 to Hwy 323 in White County
- Highway 356, from Hwy 92 to Hwy 225 in Van Buren and Cleburne Counties

Routes that will be reduced from 80,000 to 64,000 pounds include:

- Highway 107, from Hwy 36 to Hwy 25 in Faulkner County
- Highway 124, from Hwy 92 to Hwy 285 in Conway and Faulkner Counties
- Highway 285, from Hwy 65 to Hwy 92 in Van Buren County
- Highway 310, from Hwy 36 to County Road C-41 in Faulkner County

****Electronic maps of the affected sections are available upon request

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