



INFORMATION RELEASE

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NEXT BELLA VISTA CONTRACT TO BE AWARDED *FIRST CONNECTING ARKANSAS PROGRAM PROJECT SET*

LITTLE ROCK (2-18) – The voter-approved Connecting Arkansas Program (CAP) will make another historic mark on Wednesday, February 26, when bids are opened for the first project under the new state highway program, according to Scott Bennett, Director of the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD).

“The CAP is one of the largest highway construction programs ever undertaken by the Department,” said Bennett. “Voters of the state spoke up with the passage of the program. Now it’s time for us to get the construction going, starting with another phase of the new Bella Vista Bypass.”

The CAP is the result of a 2012 voter-approved constitutional amendment. The program is funded with a 10-year, half-cent sales tax. Thirty one projects, covering approximately 180 miles of highways, will represent an estimated \$1.8 billion investment into the Arkansas highway system.

The Bella Vista Bypass is a multi-phased project to construct a new highway that will extend approximately 19 miles between Highway 71 in Bentonville and Interstate 49 at Pineville, Missouri. It will initially be built as a two-lane highway and ultimately become four lanes. The section will be part of the eventual route of I-49, a proposed Interstate from Canada to New Orleans.

The first phase of the Bella Vista Bypass was a \$20 million contract awarded in February 2011 to APAC-Central for work around Hiwasse. A second contract was awarded in May 2012 for \$13.5 million to continue work from Hiwasse to County Road 34. Both jobs are estimated to be completed by the end of 2014.

The project scheduled for bid opening on February 26 extends the new highway approximately six miles from Highway 72 southeast of Hiwasse to Highway 71 in Bentonville. Upon completion, the new roadway will open from Highway 71 to County Road 34 on the west side of Bella Vista.

Two more contracts, both funded under the CAP, are needed to complete the initial two lanes of the ultimate four-lane bypass. One will complete the full interchange at Highway 71 in Bentonville and the second will extend north from County Road 34 to the Missouri state line. The construction scheduled for these sections of the bypass will be coordinated with the Missouri Department of Transportation.

A new AHTD website has been developed to inform the public about progress of the CAP. ConnectingArkansasProgram.com provides an overview of the program and includes project descriptions, maps and general schedules. As the program progresses, additional information such as lane closures, news releases and public involvement meetings will be posted on the site. The site can also be found at IDriveArkansas.com.

“The CAP website is a great way to provide the people of Arkansas with updates on the 31 projects being funded with their vote,” said Bennett. “We will continue to add information to the site as the projects develop.”

Bennett added that visitors to IDriveArkansas.com will be able to follow construction information of the Bella Vista Bypass, as well as other construction projects across the state.

Motorists should exercise caution when approaching and traveling through all highway work zones. Additional travel information can be found at IDriveArkansas.com or ArkansasHighways.com. You can also follow us on [Twitter @AHTD](https://twitter.com/AHTD).

