

INFORMATION RELEASE



Office of the Director

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND
P. O. Box 2261 – Little Rock, Arkansas
Telephone (501) 569-2227

TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
ArkansasHighways.com
Twitter: @AHTD

Contact:
Randy Ort

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BIDS OPENED FOR BELLA VISTA SECTION ***FIRST CONNECTING ARKANSAS PROGRAM PROJECT SET***

LITTLE ROCK (2-26) – Bids were opened today by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) on the first project under the new Connecting Arkansas Program (CAP), according to AHTD Director Scott Bennett. Kolb Grading, of Weldon Spring, Missouri, is the apparent low bidder at \$52,725,640.98 to construct that first job which is for the next phase of the Bella Vista Bypass. Kolb is also the prime contractor on the section from Highway 72 north to County Road 34.

“Northwest Arkansas is proud and excited that the first CAP job is another section of the Bella Vista Bypass,” said Arkansas Highway Commissioner Dick Trammel, of Rogers. “This is such an important project for our part of the state. The CAP is going to allow us to finish the bypass which will greatly ease the traffic flow through Bella Vista.”

The job will extend the new bypass 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.

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.

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.

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. It is one of the largest highway construction programs ever undertaken by the AHTD.

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. 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).

