

Gary Ridley, Director
Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Longtime transportation executive Gary Ridley was named Director of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) on August 7, 2001.

Ridley's journey up through the ranks provided him with first-hand insights into the whole spectrum of Department operations. His ODOT service dates back to 1965, when he joined the Department as an equipment operator. He moved up to maintenance superintendent at Kingfisher in 1970 and traffic superintendent at Perry in 1979.

In 1983, he became field maintenance engineer at Perry and then advanced to Division Five Maintenance Engineer at Clinton in 1986. He became Division Engineer at Clinton in 1995.

He left ODOT in 1997 to work in the private sector and returned to ODOT in January, 2001 as Assistant Director of Operations. He remained in that position until August, 2001 when he was named Director of ODOT.

Mr. Ridley is a registered Professional Engineer. He is a native of Chicago and he and his wife, Eula live in Yukon and have two children, Daphne and Joe.

**National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission
Chicago Field Hearing
April 18-19, 2007**

**Remarks by Gary Ridley, Director
Oklahoma Department of Transportation**

We all appreciate the work of the committee and staff in trying to get their arms around the magnitude of the problem concerning the future of surface transportation in our country. I realize that my colleagues and others have testified before the committee on the crisis facing all modes of transportation both present and future. These needs are well documented, accurate and critical to our nation's vitality. This same situation confronted our nation not long after World War II in the late 1940's and early 1950's. It was decided then, as it should be now, that bold new initiatives need to be implemented to provide a long-term financial solution to our critical transportation needs.

There have been many suggestions dealing with innovative financing to rebuild and build anew our infrastructure. However good these proposals are, they will not satisfy the current and future needs of a national highway system. States and local units of government have and continue to make major investments into our system but cannot do this alone. If we are to have a world-class national transportation network, the federal government must play an important part in providing both revenue and direction.

What I would like to discuss with the committee is a solution to the well publicized problem:

(1) The volumetric taxation of gas and diesel have served us well in developing our current system; however, in the future, these revenue generation methods become an antiquated system of funding our transportation needs. But in order to solve our short-term critical needs, I would recommend that we increase the federal taxation on gasoline and diesel by eight cents with 25%

(approximately 3.8 billion annually) of this revenue going to improve our ever-increasing demand on mass transit. The remaining six cents (11.4 billion) should be distributed by formula to the major categories excluding the interstate maintenance funds. These new revenues will increase real dollars into these categories by over 40%.

(2) Our interstate system, when originally developed and built, was the crown jewel of transportation worldwide. It has provided us with the economic vitality that our nation enjoys today. This system, as we all know, is out-living its useful life and is becoming more and more of a liability rather than an asset. Because it is the nation's highway, our national leaders must take ownership to its problems. The financial solution to increase capacity, and rehabilitate and/or replace this 47,000 mile system must include an ever-increasing revenue stream. I believe this can be accomplished by a user-fee system that would create a national interstate toll road that could be, and must be, rebuilt over the next twenty years. A less than modest user fee of 1.5 cents per mile for light vehicles and 3 cents per mile for trucks would generate over 12.3 billion annually. This coupled with our current IM formula funds would more than triple our annual investment into this system.

(3) Future movement of freight in this country and in the North American continent will be staggering. We must set, as our vision of the future, a system that will connect our coastal ports with our markets of our major metropolitan areas, as well as our connections with our neighboring countries. We must have in the future, twenty years and beyond a reliable system that will allow the freedom of moving freight on both rail and highways and it must be separated from our current system. These freight corridors should allow trucks to move at very high speeds and with super divisible loads of 250,000 to 300,000 pounds. These corridors must also have a rail component that will allow railroads to move goods across the continent at the highest rate of speed possible. These freight corridors should interconnect at decision points with our current system to

provide for the "last mile delivery" of the divisible loads. These truck-trains and rail-trains should be separated from all other traffic and be financed with a user fee that would pay for the system's construction and maintenance. The location of these corridors need to be determined based solely on critical need and expanded only when the demands make it necessary. In addition, by providing an alternative to address the ever-increasing freight volumes and to remove such vehicle trips from our current system, we cannot only decrease congestion, but also increase the life cycle of the facilities.

We, as transportation professionals, are in the problem-solving business and we should not come to the Commission with problems without bringing possible solutions. The recommendations above should be fully debated and vetted but they are solutions nonetheless and should be open for discussion. We cannot over-emphasize the fact that individual states and local communities cannot provide a national highway system. This is a feat made possible ONLY by the federal government. Again, I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss openly with the Commission these ideas and our rationale behind them.