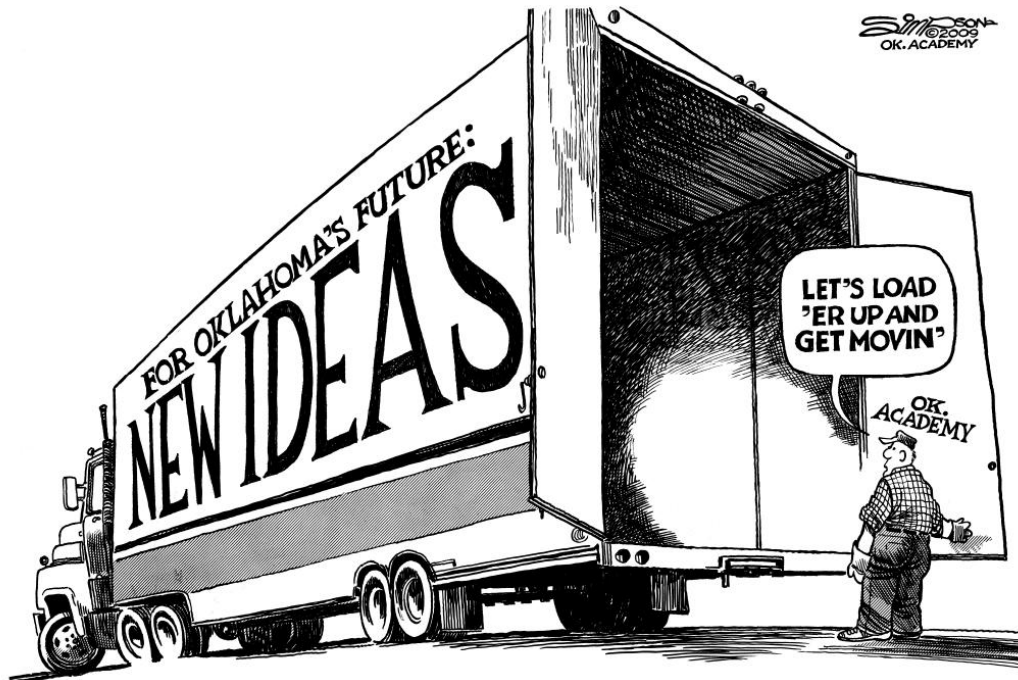




# ISSUE BRIEFS

## Town Hall Recommendations



# MOVING OKLAHOMA

## Improving our Transportation Infrastructure

The 2013 Oklahoma Academy Town Hall

# INTRODUCTION

## MOVING OKLAHOMA

### Improving our Transportation Infrastructure

#### 2013 Oklahoma Academy Town Hall Recommendations



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## 2013 Town Hall

Participants at the 2013 Town Hall had an opportunity to strategize how we can sustainably improve and fund Oklahoma's transportation infrastructure to successfully bring advantageous economic growth to all parts of the state.

Participants discussed roads, bridges, rail, water and transmission lines. Though the topic was broad, it was united by the theme of efficiently and safely moving people, products, resources and information to their desired destination. Town Hall participants identified the role of transportation infrastructure as, "essential to the strength of our economy and quality of life."

Panel discussions covered everything from the role of public transit to the impact transportation infrastructure has on economic competitiveness. Their discussions of infrastructure moved beyond pavement and asphalt to include water, high voltage transmission lines and high-speed broadband telecommunications systems.

These Issue Briefs present the consensus-driven prioritized recommendations as they were ranked by Town Hall participants after the Town Hall conference concluded. It is these recommendations that Town Hall participants believe to be the most essential in improving the transportation infrastructure in Oklahoma and thereby the economic competitiveness of the entire state.

These recommendations were initially developed during the final Town Hall panel discussion and can be found in the 2013 Town Hall Final Report under *XIII. Prioritized Recommendations to Improve Oklahoma's Transportation Infrastructure*.

The 2013 Town Hall Background Resource Document, distributed to participants prior to the Town Hall, and the full Final Report and all recommendations can be found on the Oklahoma Academy's online library at: <http://okacademy.org/library.html>.

## About Town Hall

There are many definitions of leadership. For the Oklahoma Academy, leadership is the ability to get people moving in a single direction. One of the most effective ways of achieving that goal is utilizing a consensus-driven, decision-making process like the Town Hall. The Town Hall incorporates all the elements of a successful consensus-driven process by emphasizing collaboration, cooperation, egalitarianism, inclusivity, and participation. Each must be in place to arrive at the destination (recommendations to improve the overall business climate and quality of life for Oklahoma). The Oklahoma Academy's Town Hall process allows for enhanced success in implementing recommendations because strong group relationships have been developed through the process, resulting in greater trust amongst the attendees. By "leading" a diverse group of Oklahomans through the Town Hall process, the Oklahoma Academy has provided a value-added service that no other organization has provided, with tangible results to further discuss, deliberate and decide upon.

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## REVENUE

Funding is critical when considering sustainable infrastructure. Funding must keep up with needs and be dedicated.

### 1. Rethink the Fuel Tax

The Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends that the fuel tax be based on a percentage of the wholesale price of fuel rather than a static per-gallon amount. This will enable the Fuel tax to index to the rate of inflation.

Neither federal nor state motor fuel taxes are indexed to inflation at the current time, yet nearly every input component to construction or repair of roadway surfaces and bridges has risen, at double-digit rates, over the past 25 years. Having an adequate and sustainable revenue source to fix, maintain and improve our transportation networks is critical to extending the life of our current infrastructure.

#### Town Hall Background Resource Book

“Some experts say the quickest and easiest thing to do is to simply index the 18.4 cent gasoline tax - which hasn’t changed since 1993 - to inflation.” *Carl Davis and Robert Poole, Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2013*

“Oklahoma’s per gallon gas taxes are lower than its neighbors...Some observers look at the numbers...and conclude the situation gives Oklahoma policy-makers room to increase our tax rates. And there is certainly latitude to do that and remain competitive with bordering states.” *Oklahoma Council for Public Affairs*

### 2. Increase Motor Vehicle Collections for Municipal Roads and Bridges

The Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends that the state motor vehicle collections for municipal roads and bridges be gradually increased over a five year period from its current level of 3.1 percent to 13.1 percent with a commensurate reduction in the apportionment to the general revenue fund. This will help insure that state transportation revenues are used strictly for transportation purposes.

#### Town Hall Background Resource Book

“After decades of neglect and growing safety and cost concerns...a new, more conservative state legislature... began taking steps to increase state funding for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and for county roads and bridges by allocating an increased share of state transportation-oriented revenues toward those ends... [now,] it is important that lawmakers also address funding for the long neglected municipal roads and bridges component, on which 54% of all lanes miles in our state are driven. Fortunately, the same methodology used to address county roads and bridges funding needs is available to law makers to make similar progress on this vital remaining (municipal) portion of Oklahoma’s transportation network.” *Doug Enevoldsen, City Manager, City of Bixby*

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### 3. Support Passage of the Federal Marketplace Fairness Act

The Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends that Oklahomans should support passage of the federal Marketplace Fairness act to enable the state and cities to sustain the transportation infrastructure. The Marketplace Fairness Act grants states the authority to compel online and catalog retailers, no matter where they are located, to collect sales tax at the time of a transaction.

#### 2010 Municipalities Town Hall Background Resource Book

“Poor sales tax revenues are crippling municipalities’ ability to provide basic safety and quality of life services that citizens expect and, until recently, have taken for granted...No one would draw up such a system today if starting from scratch...the ever-growing Internet-based sales are expected to cost Oklahoma state and local governments \$106 million in lost sales tax revenues this year and \$120 million next.” *Doug Enevoldsen, City Manager, City of Bixby*

### 4. Utilize the State’s Bonding Capacity, Build an Endowed Fund Specifically for Infrastructure & Sell Excess State Assets

For the purpose of generating necessary revenue to address critical infrastructure development, the Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends:

- Effectively utilize the bonding capacity of the state  
The low interest rate environment, coupled with a strong bond rating and a low state-funded debt ratio (both of which Oklahoma has), means that more bond dollars will go toward capital projects and less to pay interest to the bond holders. The use of bonds allows public agencies to complete projects more rapidly and have future residents, who will benefit from the completed projects, to contribute to the cost. As our population increases, as it has over the past decade, so too does our ability to retire those bonds.
- Build an endowed fund specifically committed to infrastructure improvements  
This merits serious consideration. The Oklahoma Academy presented a similar recommendation in 1998 for K-14 education that included broadening the sales tax base, lowering the rate but earmarking all new growth dollars for education. While the education endowment recommendation was never implemented, a similar concept would work well for infrastructure with all new dollars earmarked for infrastructure projects.
- Sell excess state assets  
This is not a new idea as the Oklahoma Academy has had similar discussions at past conferences and Town Halls. The most recent was the 2011 Economic Development Town Hall. Part of the Town Hall discussions focused on the Governor’s Task Force on Economic Development and Job Creation where, on page 33 of that report, it was recommended that a laundry list should be made of state assets that could/should be sold.

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## Oklahoma Turnpike Authority

Given the national and international uses tollways support in interconnecting Oklahoma people and product to the rest of the nation/world, improved efficiencies and collaborations will yield greater productivities for all who use them.

### Enhance the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority

The Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends that OTA take the following steps to enhance efficiency:

- Streamline toll collection to make it more user friendly and seamless for coordination with other states
- Streamline the Pike Pass purchasing process
- Coordinate planning with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, so the system compliments, rather than competes with, other state highways.

### Town Hall Resource Book

“Ten turnpikes crisscross the state of Oklahoma today covering 606 miles, helping motorists get across the state quicker and safer than ever...Every road in Oklahoma is paid for by taxpayers, whether it is through state taxes or tolls. The only difference is that turnpikes are paid for by the motorists who use them. The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority is funded purely by toll revenue...38 percent of which is collected from out-of-state customers.” *Tim Stewart, Executive Director, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority*

# ISSUE BRIEF

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## Long-term, Comprehensive Planning

Oklahoma should adopt a statewide approach to longterm infrastructure planning.

### I. Adopt a State-wide, Long-term, Collaborative Approach to Infrastructure Planning

The Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends that the Governor create a Task Force composed of key stakeholders including representatives from the four quadrants of the state. This Task Force shall:

- Identify what infrastructure issues and deficiencies Oklahoma faces
- Establish the estimated cost of solving the identified infrastructure issues and deficiencies
- Identify barriers to solving issues and deficiencies
- Establish specific solutions to issues and deficiencies

Planning should include collaboration with neighboring states. Additionally, each state agency responsible for the oversight of a state infrastructure system should be involved in planning and responsible for the development of a long-range plan for infrastructure needs, current revenue streams, allocations of such revenues and the anticipated return on investment for the implementation of the infrastructure plan.

### Town Hall Resource Book

“We know that investing in infrastructure is essential to support healthy, vibrant communities. Infrastructure is also critical for long-term economic growth, increasing GDP, employment, household income, and exports. The reverse is also true - without prioritizing our nation’s infrastructure needs, deteriorating conditions can become a drag on the economy...While modest progress is encouraging, it is clear that we have a significant backlog of overdue maintenance across our infrastructure system, a pressing need for modernization, and an immense opportunity to create reliable, long-term funding sources to avoid wiping out our recent gains.” *Craig Knutson, Town Hall Planning Co-Chair*

“For Central Oklahoma to thrive, we must create new policies to confront sprawl and fragmentation and our region’s inability to move people around...Consider also, our suburban and rural youth, with mobile access to new ideas, arts and culture, but few opportunities to engage with [metropolitan] cultural districts...During the next high period, which will begin sometime between 2020 and 2027, American society will become more stable. We are rocketing toward this post-crisis era now. How can we leverage our foreknowledge to build the kind of transportation infrastructure we will want once we get there?” *John G. Johnson, Executive Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments*

# Town Hall Participants

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**Justin Alberty**, Grand River Dam Authority, Vinita; **Jeremy Allen**, The University of Oklahoma, Norman; **Blayne Arthur**, OK Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Oklahoma City; **Joseph Badan**, SE OSU, Durant; **Mike Ballard**, OGE Energy Corp., Oklahoma City; **Roger Blais**, The University of Tulsa, Tulsa; **John Bowman**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City; **Thomas Boxley**, OU-Tulsa, Tisdale Speciality Health Clinic, Tulsa; **Lauren Branch**, New View Oklahoma, Oklahoma City; **Diana Buechle**, ONG, A Division of OneOK, Oklahoma City; **Tim Burg**, Shawnee Economic Development Foundation, Shawnee; **Jason Burnette**, Girl Scouts of Eastern Oklahoma, Owasso; **Ivan Clark**, City of Guymon, Guymon; **Terri Cleveland**, City of Broken Arrow, Broken Arrow; **Kevin Conner**, USAO, Chickasha; **Conner Cox**, University of Oklahoma, Norman; **Ron Diggs**, St. Gregory's University, Shawnee; **Josh Driskell**, Jenks Chamber of Commerce, Jenks; **George Eischen**, Pete Eischen Chevrolet, Fairview; **Doug Enevoldsen**, City of Bixby, Bixby; **Randy Entz**, City of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma City; **John Feaver**, USAO, Chickasha; **Pageant Ferriabough**, Business's Resources Unlimited, Inc., Tulsa; **Alan Freeman**, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, Oklahoma City; **Matt Gard**, Flying G. Farms, LLC, Fairview; **Tim Gatz**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City; **Judy Gibson**, Indian Health Clinic, Tulsa; **Paul Daniel Gilchrist**, OSU-Tulsa, Broken Arrow; **Kay Goebel**, Psychologist, Oklahoma City; **Michael Gordon**, PSO, Tulsa; **Paul Green**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City; **Brandi Green**, Rogers State University, Collinsville; **Bo Hannaford**, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva; **John Harper**, PSO, Tulsa; **David Hawkins**, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva; **Jim Hazeldine**, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, Oklahoma City; **Justin Hazzard**, OSU Center for International Trade and Development, Stillwater; **Katie Henke**, Oklahoma House of Representatives, Oklahoma City; **Stacy Howeth**, OAEC, Oklahoma City; **Tim Hushbeck**, PSO, Lawton; **Josiah Irwin**, University of Oklahoma, Norman; **Jarrett Jobe**, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond; **Charlie Joyner**, Oklahoma House of Representatives, Oklahoma City; **Aleisha Karjala**, USAO, Norman; **Danny King**, Francis Tuttle Technology Center, Oklahoma City; **Brent Kisling**, Enid Regional Development Alliance, Enid; **Craig Knutson**, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City; **Thomas Lewis**, Continental Resources, Edmond; **Marty Lewis**, Gordon Cooper Technology Center, Shawnee; **Jami Longacre**, TRUST, Kellyville; **Tiffini Lyda Kelley**, PSO, Weatherford; **David Machamer**, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, Oklahoma City; **Nick McBrayer**, SE OSU, Idabel; **Neal McCaleb**, The Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma/McCaleb Assoc., Edmond; **Josh McClintock**, Creative Capitol Strategies, LLC, Edmond; **Brian McDougal**, City of Shawnee, Shawnee; **Scott McLain**, Oklahoma City; **Jerry McPeak**, Oklahoma House of Representatives, Oklahoma City; **Kyle Meade**, Oklahoma House of Representatives, Oklahoma City; **Teresa Meinders Burkett**, Conner & Winter, LLP, Tulsa; **Chris Meyers**, OAEC, Oklahoma City; **Wes Miller**, City of Alva; **Brian Mitchell**, CH2M Hill, Oklahoma City; **Michael Nealeigh**, USAO, Chickasha; **Homer Nicholson**, City of Ponca City, Ponca City; **Jaclyn O'Neil**, University of Oklahoma, Norman; **Susan Paddack**, Oklahoma State Senate, Oklahoma City; **Todd Pauley**, U.S. House of Representatives Office of Congressman Lankford, Oklahoma City; **Gene Perry-McKee**, Oklahoma Policy Institute, Tulsa; **Toni Pickle**, Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Kingfisher; **Pamela Polk**, City of Collinsville, Collinsville; **J. Christopher Proctor**, University of Tulsa, Tulsa; **Viplava Putta**, INCOG, Tulsa; **Anne Roberts**, INTEGRIS Health, Oklahoma City; **Randy Robinson**, Oklahoma Cooperative Circuit Engineering District Board, Oklahoma City; **Amanda Robinson**, USAO, Chickasha; **Jim Rodriguez**, Oklahoma Aggregates Association, Oklahoma City; **Michelle Rodriguez-Pico**, OGE Energy Corp., Oklahoma City; **Cynthia Rolfe**, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond; **Cindy Rosenthal**, The University of Oklahoma, Norman; **Casey Shell**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City; **Dave Slezickey**, City of Kingfisher, Kingfisher; **Jason Smalley**, Oklahoma House of Representatives, Stroud; **Sara-Jane Smallwood**, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Durant; **Deidre Smith**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Tulsa; **Clark Southard**, Washita Valley Regional Partnership, Ft. Cobb; **Sidney Kyle Sperry**, OAEC, Oklahoma City; **Carolyn Stager**, Oklahoma Municipal League, Oklahoma City; **Gary Stanislawski**, Oklahoma Senate, Tulsa; **Craig Stephenson**, City of Ponca City, Ponca City; **Shane Stuart**, Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Norman; **Brian Taylor**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Perry; **Marnie Taylor**, Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits, Oklahoma City; **Clayton Taylor**, The Taylor Group, Oklahoma City; **Phillip Teel**, Clean Line Energy, Oklahoma City; **Timothy Tegeler**, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma City; **French Thompson**, BNSF, Fort Worth; **David Tillotson**, City of Glenpool, Glenpool; **James Wagner**, Indian Nations Council of Governments, Tulsa; **Scott Williams**, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative, Anadarko; **Susan Winchester**, Research Institute for Economic Development, Oklahoma City; **Lori Wrotenbery**, Oklahoma Corporation Commission, Oklahoma City; **Waldo Zerger**, PSO, Edmond; **Tom Zigler**, ASCOG, Duncan

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