



INFORMATION RELEASE

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ARDOT's Connecting Arkansas Program Marks 5-Year Anniversary

PULASKI COUNTY (8-21) – Midway into its 10-year highway improvement program, the Arkansas Department of Transportation's (ARDOT) Connecting Arkansas Program (CAP) is busy with construction projects throughout the State.

Since July 2013, ARDOT has completed 11 construction projects and has another six under construction, equating to more than 85 miles of highway and interstate improvements. Another eight projects with 60 miles of widening or new-alignment construction are scheduled for bid openings later this year.

The CAP is one of the largest highway construction programs ever undertaken by ARDOT. Through a voter-approved constitutional amendment, Arkansans passed the half-cent sales tax to construct more than 30 projects in 19 corridors.

"The people of Arkansas voted for a half-cent sales tax to pay for capacity and safety improvements on our State's Highway and Interstate System," said ARDOT Director Scott Bennett. "The CAP program has provided a way to accelerate many of our construction projects, and it's exciting to see new lanes opening and ribbon-cutting ceremonies."

Much of the work accomplished in the first half of the program has focused on project development that includes design, environmental handling, right-of-way and utility coordination. A majority of design tasks are now complete, and the projects are transitioning into the construction phase.

To date, a number of high-profile corridors have been improved with the completion of \$431.5 million in CAP construction projects, while several others will open new lanes to traffic this year.

- **Completing the Interstate 40 widening between Conway and North Little Rock**
The final section of I-40 to be widened from four to six lanes opened in 2016. The \$38.4 million job stretched 5.1 miles from State Highway 365 to the Interstate 430 interchange.

- **Connecting the Bella Vista Bypass with Interstate 49**
With this \$52.6 million job, more than six miles of newly constructed lanes opened between I-49 and State Highway 72 in 2017. This enabled traffic in western Benton County to travel 12.1 miles without a stoplight on the new bypass.
- **Widening Interstate 49 in Washington and Benton Counties**
Construction of four CAP projects at \$116.3 million has widened more than 15 miles of I-49 to six lanes in populous northwest Arkansas between Fayetteville and Bentonville.
- **Completing the first section of the U.S. Highway 412 Bypass in Springdale**
As the largest single contract ever awarded by the Highway Commission at \$100.6 million, this first leg of the long-envisioned bypass in northern Springdale opened in April. More than 4.5 miles of four-lane divided freeway on new alignment is one of the foundational pieces in helping to alleviate east-west traffic in Springdale and provide an improved and easier route to the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport.
- **Widening U.S. Highway 70 between Interstate 30 and Hot Springs**
More than 18 miles and \$78.5 million of widening on U.S. Highway 70 in Garland and Saline counties opened to traffic in June. The work improved safety on this busy route between Hot Springs and I-30 by straightening curves and flattening hills.
- **Widening U.S. Highway 64 in Crittenden County**
This \$23.3 million job widened 5.5 miles of U.S. Highway 64 to four lanes east of Earle. A ribbon-cutting was held in June on this project that contributes to the continued widening of the highway between Wynne and Marion.
- **Widening U.S. Highway 64 in White County**
This \$8 million project contributes to the four-lane widening of U.S. Highway 64 between Conway and Beebe. The project completed in August 2017 and widened three miles of highway west of Beebe.
- **Constructing the Monette Bypass in Craighead County**
A 3.2-mile bypass north of Monette opened to traffic in November 2017. Constructed for \$13.7 million, the four-lane bypass on new alignment contributes to widening State Highway 18 between Jonesboro and Blytheville.

Six projects are currently in construction:

- Boone County: Widening U.S. Highway 65 for 4.5 miles through Valley Springs.
- Calhoun County: Two projects are widening U.S. Highway 167 for more than 11 miles between Hampton and Fordyce.
- Mississippi County: Widening State Highway 18 for 1.8 miles east of Manila.
- Pulaski County: Widening Interstate 630 for 2.2 miles between Baptist Hospital and University Avenue.
- Pulaski/Lonoke Counties: Widening U.S. Highway 67 for 4.6 miles between Jacksonville and Cabot.

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Additional widening projects will begin over the next two years, which include U.S. Highway 67 within Jacksonville city limits, Interstate 30 southwest of Benton and Interstate 30 corridor improvements associated with the 30 Crossing project in Little Rock and North Little Rock. By the end of the program in 2023, two sections of U.S. Highways 82/425 will widen 15 miles between Hamburg and Louisiana, and another two projects in Columbia and Union counties will contribute 11.5 miles of work on U.S. Highway 82 toward the four-lane widening between El Dorado and Texarkana.

Although these construction projects are the core of the program's focus, every city and county in Arkansas also benefits from the half-cent sales tax. In addition to the \$1.8 billion that has been projected to accrue from 70 percent of the tax revenue, another 30 percent of the tax is turned back to local governments for local road and street projects, an estimated \$700 million.

"The CAP truly is a statewide improvement program," Bennett said. "Because Arkansans supported this program, we're able to improve vital parts of our statewide system that may have been delayed years into the future due to funding constraints. The CAP's success has gained national attention among highway and transportation agencies across the country."

The website ConnectingArkansasProgram.com provides both program and project information, including maps, schedules, project updates, lane closure announcements, public meeting documents and ways to submit questions and comments.

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