



The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority is Bad at Managing Money

January 2023

2015-2020 Driving Forward Program Went Massively Over Budget

Oklahoma's last major Turnpike Authority expansion project—the 2015-2020 Driving Forward program—was supposed to cost around \$850 million. Total project costs ended up around **\$1.5 billion—a 69.4% increase** over the original budget.

This happened because the Turnpike Authority likes to borrow millions of dollars to build roads based on questionable data.

Over-Leveraged, Limited Essentiality

In October 2020 Moody's released a report describing Gilcrease turnpike project in Tulsa as "**over-leveraged**" due to "**limited essentiality.**" This means OTA borrowed too much money to build an unnecessary road.¹

Highest Toll Rates

The Gilcrease has the **highest toll rates** of any road in the turnpike system.

Almost \$2 billion in debt and growing

The Turnpike Authority currently has the highest debt level of any state agency in Oklahoma—they owe nearly **\$2 billion**. Oklahoma has more toll roads per capita than any other state.

A toll is a tax on driving. Why should Oklahoma drivers pay for the OTA's bad decisions and poor financial management?

\$5-8 billion in new debt?

In 2022 the Turnpike Authority announced plans to borrow **\$5 billion** to build more unnecessary toll roads. The City of Norman has unanimously rejected ALL of the proposed ACCESS Oklahoma Turnpike extensions planned for Cleveland County. If OTA's pattern of excessive budget revisions and cost overruns continues the poorly planned ACCESS Oklahoma projects could end up costing over **\$8 billion**.

Application Denied

The Federal Bureau of Reclamation rejected OTA's application for a permit to build a turnpike near Lake Thunderbird, stating the impact of the project "would be perpetual and forever diminish the...benefits the...[Lake Thunderbird] project was authorized to provide."

¹ https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-assigns-first-time-Baa3-rating-to-Oklahoma-Turnpike-Authority--PR_906399093



Table of OTA's excessive spending and cost overruns for the 2015-2020 Driving Forward Program

Project	Length	2015 budgeted cost	Actual cost	Cost overrun	Notes
Gilcrease	2.5 miles expanded to 5.8	\$28 million	5 miles \$300+ million	+\$280 million	New construction
Muskogee	9.5 miles	\$42 million	\$46 million	+\$4 million	Reconstruction and modernization Completed Nov 2017
Turner	22 miles	\$300 million	\$440 (estimated)	+\$140 million	New lanes, safety enhancements
HE Bailey	7.5 miles	\$32 million	\$37 million	+\$5 million	Reconstruction modernization Completed Feb 2018
OKC KP extension SW	7 miles	\$190 million	\$235 million	+\$45 million	New construction
NE OKC / Kickapoo	21 miles	\$300 million	\$453 million (Yahoo news)	+\$153 million	New construction
Total		\$892 million	\$1.511 billion	+\$627 million	