

Fallin gives positive nod to idea of another Bixby bridge



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(Bixby, OK) Gov. Mary Fallin on Friday told a group of 130 Bixby Metro Chamber members she supported the building of another bridge across the Arkansas River in Bixby, calling it “a great idea” and later, “a wonderful idea.” Her comments came in response to a question asked at the close of her State of the State Address delivered during a luncheon in Bixby sponsored by the chamber. Much of the Governor’s prepared remarks focused on her administration’s efforts to work with the Oklahoma legislature to grow our state economy and her newest role as Chairman of the National Governor’s Conference.

Bixby city officials and Bixby Metro Chamber members have long heralded a second bridge as being the key to unlocking the region’s true economic growth potential, improving public safety and maintaining the area’s high quality of life amidst its burgeoning population growth. At present, the State Highway 64 or Memorial Drive Bridge located in the center of Bixby is the only means to cross the Arkansas River from south Bixby to north Bixby, and vice-versa.

An additional bridge crossing in the area would provide motorists a nearby alternative during those times when the Memorial Drive bridge is blocked by traffic accidents, and significantly improve mobility in the region at all times. City officials indicated the addition of a second bridge would greatly stimulate growth in area residential housing, commercial development, jobs, and both retail and dining opportunities, and in turn, considerably boost the tax base for Tulsa County and local school districts.

Governor Fallin indicated she was very familiar with the benefits of such a bridge, citing her many past conversations with area chamber members, saying, “many of you have talked to me about how important it was to open up different areas ...around the river..., and having that bridge across the river would open up new areas for development and businesses and jobs.” The Governor further noted the ongoing efforts of her administration’s Secretary of Transportation and Bixby officials to explore different ways the community might build the bridge. “I do think it’s a great idea. I hope it can happen.”

While acknowledging it will be a complex process, with certain restrictions since the bridge is not on the state highway system, the Governor concluded her response by saying, “I certainly think it’s a wonderful idea.”

Following the chamber event, Bixby Mayor Ray Bowen said he was thrilled by the Governor’s remarks. “The Governor clearly understands the attractiveness of Bixby, from our premier school system, to our highly positive demographics and great quality of life, which are the reasons we’ve grown by 69 percent over the past 11 years. We especially appreciate her continued support for our community’s number one policy goal, that being a second bridge across the Arkansas River in our area to handle both the tremendous growth we’ve already experienced, as well as that yet to come,” Bowen said.

Bixby Metro Chamber President Krystal Crockett said her group appreciated the Governor's understanding and support of their goals and concerns. "The Bixby Metro Chamber was proud to have been able to host Governor Fallin in our community. She has time and time again proved she believes in Oklahoma and has worked tirelessly to better our business environment. With yesterday's luncheon, she showed her dedication to Bixby and our issues, including her support for a second bridge across the Arkansas River. We are excited to have her support, which she has always shown, and has now verbalized," Crockett said.

City Manager Doug Enevoldsen said he was very pleased but not surprised by Governor Fallin's support for a second Bixby bridge. "Governor Fallin understands how critical it is that government at all levels in Oklahoma work together to create the infrastructure required for business, education, health care and other institutions to prosper. She knows we're all in this together," Enevoldsen said.

"That's why you've seen the Governor championing the cause of improving deficient roads and bridges throughout Oklahoma, and ensuring more of the road user taxes which citizens pay is allocated to provide good roads and bridges at all levels, as citizens expect. I commend her and thank her for her continued leadership on this front."

"We look forward to working with Transportation Secretary Gary Ridley and our regional stakeholders to find a creative way to build a second bridge in our area which does not require Oklahoma Department of Transportation funding. I believe it can be done," adding, "Where there's a will, there's a way." A video recording of the Governor's address to the Bixby Metro Chamber, provided by TulsaLiveEvents.com may be reviewed by visiting <http://new.livestream.com/TulsaLiveEvents/governorfallin>.