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Be prepared before you hit the highways this summer

By Matt Garrett

This Memorial Day marks the kickoff of one of the busiest construction seasons in Oregon's history. Work on the Oregon Department of Transportation's OTIA III State Bridge Delivery Program has shifted into high gear, with 63 bridges currently under construction and another 55 entering construction later this year. Already, 56 highway bridges have been completed and opened to traffic since the bridge program started in 2003.

Across the state, you'll see ODOT workers and Oregon contractors working hard to repair, replace and modernize vital highway corridors and highway bridges. Travelers on Interstate 5 alone will pass through 19 active work zones between Portland and Medford.

I can't overstate how important this work is for

Oregonians. Our highway system is the lifeline that keeps our state moving forward. Our economic competitiveness depends on our ability to move people, goods and services more efficiently in our growing economy. Our commitment to motorists is "Better roads ahead," and I'm happy to say we're seeing the truth in that

Better roads ahead means be careful during summer driving

statement every day.

No travelers, especially people on vacation, want to be slowed down on the way to their destination. That's why we've taken steps, wherever possible, to schedule work at night or during off-peak hours. We've also coordinated projects so that truckers, commuters and visitors get where they are

going as smoothly and safely as possible.

Still, it's possible that you may face delays. To minimize that inconvenience, ODOT has two great resources for up-to-date information about construction and traffic wherever you're traveling in Oregon. Be prepared before you hit the road by visiting www.keizertimes.com and click on NewsLinks.

And, when you see our construction teams, remember that they are working to make Oregon's roads and bridges safer for you. So please, slow down in construction work zones.

Visit www.keizertimes.com and click on NewsLinks for a video message from me about the 2007 construction season and how you can be prepared. Better roads are ahead for Oregon.

Matt Garrett is the director of the Oregon Department of Transportation.