

Toll Project Timeline Could Shorten

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The completion of a 9.7-mile stretch of highway on Loop 49 toll project from Texas Highway 31 to Interstate 20 could wrap up earlier than previously expected.

The North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET RMA) is hiring multiple design firms to expedite the completion of Loop 49 Segment 3B, NET RMA Project Director Everett Owen said.

During a May board meeting NET RMA approved general engineering consultant PBS&J to move forward with a proposed scope of services for environmental permitting and plans, specifications, and estimates for Loop 49 Segment 3B.

According to information provided by NET RMA, coordination and oversight on the Loop 49 Segment 3B project will be provided by PBS&J, while construction plans will be designed by two separate engineers, Bucher, Willis & Ratliff (BWR) and Chiang, Patel & Yerby (CPY).

"This particular segment has quite a few bridges and creeks, and putting both BWR and CPY on the job will reduce the timeline from 14 to 18 months down to approximately a year or less," Owen said in a prepared statement.

NET RMA hopes the project, which will open as a two-lane toll road, will be ready for letting by summer 2010 or earlier.

The completion of the highway will provide an alternate route to I-20 from South Tyler.

During the meeting, board members also chose Merrill Lynch and Estrada Hinojosa to lead a team of 10 financial firms to provide underwriting services to NET RMA.

NET RMA Chairman Jeff Austin III said that RMA is aggressively taking steps so that Segment 3B will be ready to go to the bond market as soon as possible.

The NET RMA, an independent government agency, was established in October 2004 to accelerate the development of transportation projects in Northeast Texas. NET RMA is governed by a 19-member board that represents 12 counties.