

Cherokeean Herald
June 17, 2009

The North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET RMA) and Rusk County will enter into an Interlocal Agreement for the further development of Loop 571 in Henderson on Friday, June 19, 2009 at a signing ceremony to be held north of the intersection of US 79 and Loop 571.

NET RMA Board Members, Rusk County and City of Henderson officials, as well as other state representatives and Texas Department of Transportation officials will be on hand for the ceremony.

The NET RMA and Rusk County have been in discussions regarding a possible agreement since 2008. Rusk County and the City of Henderson have been working to revive the Loop 571 project, which had been dormant since the first phase of the road was completed nearly a decade ago. The Interlocal Agreement gives Rusk County access to the professional and technical expertise of the NET RMA's engineering and financial teams. The final version of the agreement also provides a provision that the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will provide engineering and design work for the road surface, bridges and right-of-way plans.

Rusk County NET RMA Board Member John Cloutier said that TxDOT's commitment to the project is an important step in moving the project toward "shovel-ready" status.

"The quicker we can reach shovel-ready status, the better," Cloutier said. "Between the NET RMA, Rusk County, and TxDOT, we can move this project forward and get to a point where we can qualify for grants and other funding mechanisms that will help us construct this road."

The second phase of Loop 571 will stretch approximately 3.4 miles from US 79 to US 259 South. It will enable traffic on US 259 to bypass the city of Henderson, thereby easing congestion within Henderson city limits. The road will initially be two lanes with shoulders, with future plans to expand to a four-lane divided highway. TxDOT Tyler District Engineer Randy Hopmann told the Rusk County Commissioners Court that TxDOT intends to complete engineering plans by September 2010.

NET RMA Chairman Jeff Austin, III said the Interlocal Agreement is a prime example of the teamwork and partnership that key stakeholders have shown to address transportation issues in northeast Texas. He also thanked Rep. Chuck Hopson for his role in coordinating the efforts of Rusk County and TxDOT.

"We have many challenges that we need to face, and the only way we will solve them is to work together to find solutions. I'm grateful to leaders like Rep. Hopson who are making a difference in our region," Austin said. "Rusk County and the City of Henderson have worked very hard to bring the Loop 571 project back to the front burner, and now they are beginning to see how their hard work will pay off."

Event Details

WHAT: Signing Ceremony for the Interlocal Agreement between the NET RMA and Rusk County

WHERE: Loop 571, north of the Loop 571 / US 79 intersection

Please arrive at the site from the south via US 79 and the Loop 571 entrance ramp.

Parking is limited; please carpool or rideshare as appropriate.

WHEN: Friday, June 19, 2009, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.