

East Texas Council of Governments forms Citizens' Advisory Team

Kilgore News Herald, June 20, 2009

East Texas Council of Governments has formed a Citizens' Advisory Team to advise staff regarding the area's position on federal and other funding, as well as to prioritize regional transportation project needs.

The team will advise staff on the development of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO).

Citizens' Advisory Team members include: Harrison County Judge Richard Anderson; Jeff Austin III, chairman of the Northeast Texas Regional Mobility Authority; Smith County Judge Joel Baker; Randy Brogoitti, MB Construction Management, LLC; Randy Hopmann, TxDOT Tyler District; Griff Hubbard, AMTRAK; Bobby Littlefield, TxDOT Paris District; Robert Ratcliff, TxDOT Atlanta District; Gregg County Judge Bill Stoudt; Tim Vaughn, East Texas Corridor Council chairman; and staff members John Hedrick, director of transportation, and David Cleveland, executive director.

Staff and team efforts would place the region in front of proposed state legislation that would encourage RTPOs being linked to Councils of Governments. The team will consider best practice alternatives with the goal to present the ETCOG executive committee an RTPO framework that will strengthen the region's transportation, planning, consensus building and advocacy activities.

"ETCOG is always looking for ways to address regional needs. As a regional planning organization for nearly 40 years, this project is a perfect fit for us," said David Cleveland, ETCOG executive director.

"As the chairman of the advisory team, I am thrilled with the caliber of leaders that have agreed to serve on this team," said Tim Vaughn. "We want to do everything in our power to ensure that the East Texas region is unified in pursuing available transportation resources. This project represents one step in that direction."

ETCOG serves as the Rural Transit District for its 14-county region, providing public transportation services for Anderson, Camp, Cherokee, Gregg, Henderson, Harrison, Marion, Panola, Rains, Rusk, Smith, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood counties.

It also provides administrative support for the East Texas Corridor Council, which is seeking higher-speed rail along the I-20 Corridor.

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