

## **NET RMA board discusses requests for qualifications, acquisition of rail line**

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**Longview, Texas** –The North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET RMA) Board of Directors met Thursday for its Board Meeting at Kilgore College in Longview. Among the topics of discussion were two separate Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) that have been or will be released, and the possible acquisition of an abandoned rail line.

On Monday, Sept. 14, 2009, the NET RMA released an RFQ for development of the Toll 49 Segment 3B project through a Design/Build Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA). The move will accelerate the design and construction process, allowing Segment 3B to be completed in a shorter timeframe. NET RMA Project Director Everett Owen said that proposals would be accepted until 4:00 p.m., (CST) on Oct. 14, 2009. Toll 49 Segment 3B is a 9.7-mile section of roadway that stretches between State Highway 31 and Interstate 20. The entity selected for the project will be responsible for the design and construction of the project through a Design/Build CDA.

The NET RMA Board also voted during the meeting to release an RFQ for Bond Counsel Services. In May 2009, the NET RMA secured a pool of underwriters in preparation for taking Toll 49 Segment 3B to the bond market. The hiring of Bond Counsel Services is the next step in the process, since the NET RMA will need legal services related to the issuance of bonds and future financing of NET RMA projects.

“As the NET RMA begins to issue bonds for the Toll 49 project, our Bond Counsel will be essential to our operations,” said NET RMA Chairman Jeff Austin, III. “These individuals will help us navigate the financing side of our projects.”

Also during the meeting the NET RMA Board considered Resolution 09-25 for the possible acquisition of the abandoned Union Pacific Railroad corridor between Troup and Whitehouse. The Board affirmed the action, citing its commitment to supporting needed transportation solutions that will enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of northeast Texas.

“Rail links are a vital component of our transportation system,” said NET RMA Rail Committee Chairman Celia Boswell. “Preserving this line is important for all in our area.” If the NET RMA is able to acquire the rail line, it could be used for future freight or passenger rail projects, as well as public utility improvements. The passing of the resolution authorized Chairman Austin to initiate negotiations with Union Pacific that will hopefully result in a funding mechanism to facilitate the purchase.

In other action, Board Member Dave Spurrier led a discussion on the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO), and Board Member Jamal Moharer presented a report on the request from the Smith County Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC) to apply for state planning dollars.

Discussions regarding NET RMA projects included:

- An update from NET RMA Project Director Everett Owen on Toll 49.
- Board Member John Cloutier provided an update on Rusk County’s Loop 571.