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Contact: Jeff Austin, III
903-541-2093
Fax: 903-593-2518
www.netrma.org

NET RMA AND RUSK COUNTY PARTNER ON INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

Linden, Texas – February 18, 2009 – The North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET RMA) and Rusk County have decided to enter into an Interlocal Agreement to further develop Loop 571 around Henderson. The agreement was ratified by the NET RMA during its monthly board meeting after the Rusk County Commissioners Court voted to affirm the agreement during its meeting on Feb. 9, 2009. The formal contract will be signed by Rusk County Judge Sandra Hodges and NET RMA Chairman Jeff Austin, III now that the paperwork is finalized.

Texas Government Code allows government agencies to enter into Interlocal Agreements in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. The agreement between Rusk County and the NET RMA allows Rusk County to access the professional and technical expertise of the NET RMA's team to complete preliminary schematics; preparation of plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E); and preparation of environmental studies, reports, and permits.

"The Interlocal Agreement will make a difference because we can get started sooner," Judge Hodges said. "We've worked to do our part as a county, and now the RMA will be able to help get the project started."

The Loop 571 project has been dormant since the first phase of the road was completed nearly a decade ago. Rusk County and the City of Henderson have worked to revive the project through the designation of funding and political support, with the hope that the second phase of the project could be realized.

"The Interlocal Agreement gives Rusk County a new breath of life in transportation going forward," said Rusk County NET RMA Board Member John Cloutier. "This partnership with the NET RMA will use the strength of the entire region to elevate a rural priority project. Loop 571 could not have been resurrected were it not for this team concept."

Phase two 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.

NET RMA Chairman Jeff Austin, III said that the Loop 571 project has long been identified as a priority project for Rusk County, and that the NET RMA is pleased to be able to assist one of its member counties in meeting its transportation goals.

"This is a great example of what regional partnerships can do," Austin said. "By working together to establish priorities and pool resources, we will begin to see projects take off. I am excited for the citizens of Rusk County and northeast Texas."

About the NET RMA

The NET RMA is an independent government agency created to accelerate the development of transportation projects in North East Texas. Our mission is to implement transportation solutions that will enhance the quality of life and the economic environment in our area. The NET RMA is governed by a 19-member board of directors that represent each of the member counties: Bowie, Cass, Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, Panola, Rusk, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Wood, and Van Zandt. Texas RMAs were made possible through an initiative passed by state legislature in 2001. The NET RMA was established in October 2004.

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