

Under Construction...Please Pardon Our Mess

Winter 2008

Signs like the one captioned in the title above are observed regularly, especially during robust economic times. While the U.S. economy has certainly chilled in recent months, for those of us that consistently travel, it is not uncommon to encounter construction or remodeling activities at those hotels that are trying to keep pace with the latest luxuries that are important to keeping customers coming back.



Honestly, I can think of no better summary phrase to capture the current state of affairs at the East Texas Council of Governments. Consider the following examples: Our transportation programs are undergoing an extreme makeover, moving from a singular Para-transit focus to an expanded multi-modal focus. We are moving as rapidly as possible to strengthen, diversify and most importantly build a strong contingency plan for the meals on wheels program. "Finishing touches" are being applied to business plan for expansion of our housing programs. ETCOG has contracted with Texas' Manufacturing Extension Partnership to conduct an organization-wide LEAN assessment of our organization with the objective of identifying and eliminating waste and inefficiency. These are just a few of many examples I could provide of the simultaneous wave of positive, customer driven change that is sweeping over our organization.

Within this context, I want to draw your attention to an issue we are seeking to address with our Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) systems. As you may know, included within the ICT systems are telephones, internet, computers, printers, cell phones, and copiers. I have received a number of calls over the last few months from internal staff and external customers indicating that it is sometimes difficult to access outside telephone lines or to navigate through busy signals to speak to the ETCOG staff member of choice. Clearly, this is a problem, and I want you to know we are taking steps to resolve it. ETCOG recently competitively procured the services of a top-notch ICT services firm. In the coming months and as resources allow, our newest strategic partner will be helping us replace old and unstable ICT infrastructure with a modern, reliable system that is dependable and cost efficient. We are starting with our computer systems which are most at risk, and then our telephone systems will be addressed next. As you might imagine, this is a costly process and we will most likely have to digest the cost over time.

So, next time you encounter a busy signal, please do call again until you get through, or send an email to customerhelp@etcog.org. In your email or telephone message (if you do not reach a live person), be sure to advise us of your need, provide a phone number and/or email address where you can be reached, and one of our staff will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your patience as we undergo this transition. Remember, ETCOG is "under construction...please pardon our mess".