



# PRESS RELEASE

## New Chair and Vice Chair Selected for Regional Planning Organization & CEO Board

**Kilgore, TX, January 27, 2012:** Judges Dean Fowler (Upshur County) and Thomas Cravey (Camp County) have been elected to serve in new dual roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the ETCOG Rural (Transportation) Planning Organization and the Chief Elected Officials Board. Both boards are consisted of the county judges from each of the 14 counties served by ETCOG, Mayor Jay Dean (Longview) and Mayor Barbara Bass (Tyler), and the three Texas Department of Transportation District Engineers that serve the ETCOG region.

ETCOG began the process of forming a Rural (Transportation) Planning Organization (RPO) in May of 2009. The function of the RPO is to provide a forum for local elected officials to establish rural transportation project priorities and planning, and to provide direct input to TXDOT concerning those priorities for areas not included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Through the RPO, all fourteen of our counties and those cities that are not served by the Longview or Tyler MPOs will be able to deliver a unified message to decision makers in Austin and Washington D.C. concerning transportation needs and priorities.

Through the RPO, Judges Fowler and Cravey will also be involved in working with a 35 county transportation coalition that is a first of its kind in Texas. In a memorandum of agreement signed on December 2, 2010, the East Texas Council of Governments, Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Ark-Tex Council of Governments agreed to form the coalition to collaborate on transportation projects of mutual benefit.

ETCOG's CEO Board has been in place to address federal workforce training program requirements for many years, but has recently begun a transition to also focus on top priority regional issues and projects that require the County Judges attention.

*"The formation of the RPO and commensurate Transportation Coalition will help ensure that East Texas is well-represented at the state and federal levels. Our counties are always stronger together than standing alone. Judge Fowler and Judge Cravey will do a fantastic job leading these boards. I am very excited about the future!"*

The boards will meet quarterly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the months of January, April, July and October to address the business of both the RPO and CEO Board in a blended meeting. For more information, contact ETCOG's Executive Director, David Cleveland at 903.984.8641 x221.

### About ETCOG

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.