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**EAST TEXAS COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**



PRESS RELEASE

Funding Awarded for Transportation Call Center in East Texas

\$231,000 Allocated by USDOT and TxDOT for Project to Benefit Veterans and Other Citizens

Kilgore, TX, July 9, 2012: The East Texas Council of Governments in partnership with the North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NET-RMA), Smith County Commissioners Court, NDMJ, LLC Transportation and EasTexConnects have been awarded a \$231,000 Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative Capital Grant from the United States Department of Transportation through the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The grant is to establish a One-Stop Regional Transportation Call Center to provide a resource for transportation and mobility information in the fourteen county East Texas region. The regional Call Center is a major component of the Smith County Regional Coordinated Traveler Management System (CTMS) which will be located in Smith County.

The Call Center not only seeks to increase the value of transportation assets to veterans and other East Texans but also has long term goals including reducing congestion, enhancing safety, improving air quality, and expanding economic opportunity. Providing better coordination of regional transportation, the One-Stop Regional Call Center will enable more efficient use of transportation investments and assets, especially customer service personnel and communications infrastructure.

The Call Center will include joint dispatching operation capabilities and offer all residents of the region, particularly veterans and those with mobility challenges, a streamlined service to assist them in meeting their mobility needs. Advanced systems such as inter-operable communications, automated vehicle locators and GPS technologies will be utilized in the call center to improve accessibility and contribute to broader traveler mobility.

The Call Center will enhance accessibility to users by providing information from GoBus, Longview Transit, Tyler Transit, Amtrak, NDMJ, Greyhound, regional Medicaid transportation services and local private taxis and shuttles in the East Texas region. With transportation information and the capability to dispatch, East Texas veterans and residents will have improved service that provides time-effective and convenient transportation options for travelers.

“As Smith County continues to grow, our goal is to provide the same types of efficient, streamlined public transportation services for East Texans that you would find in the Metroplex. Having a central transportation call station that is easily accessible to all East Texans is a big step in the right direction as we look to the future of transportation in our region,” said Smith County Judge Joel Baker.

“One of the challenges in public transportation is ensuring that citizens can easily obtain all the transportation information and services they need. The Call Center will provide a single source of transportation information and solutions for veterans and all the citizens of our region,” said David Cleveland, Executive Director of ETCOG. “This grant represents a big win for all East Texans, and affirms our commitment to its regional partners”.

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Smith County Precinct 4 Commissioner JoAnn Hampton added that the call center will open the doors to new transportation opportunities for the Smith County area. "This is the infrastructure we need to expand our transportation system to meet the growing needs of our area. County residents will have the means to plan a trip to the grocery store or to the DFW airport with a simple phone call."

EasTexConnects, a transportation coordination committee administered by ETCOG, identified the Call Center as a high-priority strategy in their 2006 Regional Transportation Coordination Plan which was recently updated in 2011. A planning "blueprint" for the Call Center had been funded by TxDOT and will be used to advance the Regional CTMS serving the fourteen counties of East Texas.

For more information, contact David Cleveland at 903.984.8641 x242 or Adrienne Graham with Smith County at 903-590-4607.

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.

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