

## **AGENDA ITEM 10 – SUMMARY SHEET**

**Executive Director’s Update – Presentation of the Executive Director’s Report**

**Department:** Administrative

**Associated Costs:** None

**Board Action Required:** No

**Description of Matter:**

**The Executive Director’s Report is attached for review and reference.**

**Contact for further information: Mike Heiligenstein**



# REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FEBRUARY 23, 2011

MIKE HEILIGENSTEIN - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## PRIORITY ISSUES



Manor Expressway Design/Build  
CDA procurement



Federal outlook for funding and  
financing tools

### ADMINISTRATION

#### UPDATE ON THE 82ND LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 82nd Session of the Texas Legislature convened on January 11, 2011. The Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee welcomes two new members, Senator Chris Harris of Arlington and Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa of McAllen. Senator Tommy Williams of Houston is the chairman of that committee, while Senator Kirk Watson continues to serve as vice-chair. Representative Larry Phillips of Sherman has been appointed to chair the House Transportation Committee, which includes six new members.

Legislation amending various provisions in the RMA Act has been filed in both the House and Senate by Representative Phillips and Senator Robert Nichols, respectively. This legislation would clarify issues related to project financing, add parking structures and transportation reinvestment zones to the list of authorized RMA projects, and give RMAs the same toll collection and enforcement tools as TxDOT, NTTA and HCTRA. Representative Joe Pickett and Senator Nichols have each filed legislation that would expand the purposes for which a transportation reinvestment zone may be used, and legislation that would facilitate the environmental review process for transportation projects. The Mobility Authority supports these important

legislative efforts. Additionally, the Mobility Authority continues to support efforts to extend the authority of RMAs to enter into design build comprehensive development agreements. We anticipate that legislation related to those issues will be filed in the days ahead.

### OPERATIONS

#### CUSTOMER TOLL ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In March 2010, the Mobility Authority began the process of seeking a private company or companies with customer account management experience interested in issuing their own branded toll tags to customers in Texas. The Mobility Authority issued a Request for Proposals on November 22nd, and proposals were due January 18th. A team composed of Mobility Authority staff and toll industry experts have been reviewing the proposals and meeting one on one with proposers throughout February.

#### HIGHWAY EMERGENCY RESPONSE OPERATOR (HERO) PATROL SERVICES PROGRAM

Since beginning service in September 2010, the HERO motorist assistance program has responded to more than 1,800 incidents along the I-35 corridor. Response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive. The HEROs were able to provide motorist assistance and emergency services support during the ice and snow events earlier this month as well as traffic

management support during the recent weekend closure of I-35 at Ben White.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

### MANOR EXPRESSWAY PHASE 1

#### CONSTRUCTION

Webber set the first bridge beams for the Manor Expressway interchange at US 183 on January 27th. With construction occurring at the intersection of two major US highways, traffic control has been a top priority. To prevent motorist frustration, road closures generally take place at night and are coordinated with TxDOT and emergency services. Webber also continues work on excavation, embankment and retaining walls.

### MANOR EXPRESSWAY PHASE 2

#### DESIGN/BUILD COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

Work is continuing on the Design/Build CDA procurement. An expert evaluation team composed of Everett Owen, Owen Consulting, John Fenner, J Fenner Limited, Eric Ploch, PBS&J an Atkins Company and Heather Reavey, HNTB has reviewed and scored the four responses and is making a Best Value recommendation to the Board this month.

#### RIGHT-OF-WAY

Right-of-way acquisition and negotiations with affected property owners continues for the Manor Expressway between US 183 and Parmer Lane. As parcels are acquired, contractors are doing asbestos testing, asbestos abatement, underground storage tank removal and general demolition on the acquired properties.

Acquisition of the parcels for the Manor Expressway from Chimney Hill Boulevard to Parmer Lane have been separated into priority groupings. Offer letters have been

sent, and negotiations are underway for priority parcels. Appraisals and offer letters are under development for lower priority parcels.

### MO-PAC IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

#### PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The draft Environmental Assessment has been finalized and will be submitted to TxDOT for review this month. The document review process is scheduled for completion in February 2012. Wilbur Smith Associates has completed their operational traffic modeling, which is being used to finalize phase 2 traffic and revenue studies. In addition, staff continues to coordinate with CapMetro on a wide range of issues including their existing and planned transit routes.

### 183A EXTENSION

#### CONSTRUCTION

Webber continues to make progress on the 183A Extension and is focusing its efforts on bridge structure construction, excavation of material and drainage facility construction.

#### SHARED USE PATH

Construction of the 183A shared use path from South Brushy Creek to FM 1431 is 55% complete and the path is on schedule to open this summer.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

#### WEBSITE

The communications department has launched a new Mobility Authority web site. It is designed to be more modern and user-friendly. While the web address and content has not changed substantially, the menu structure has been re-organized to highlight our numerous projects and direct visitors quickly and easily to the information they're seeking. The new website design also supported the transition to electronic Board books.

## **HERO Media Coverage Summary**

- KXAN coverage – February 4, 2011
- KVUE coverage – February 8, 2011
- KXAN coverage – January 20, 2011
- Williamson County Sun article – November 28, 2010

### **Service helps stranded winter drivers Extra caution needed in snow and cold**

KXAN

Doug Shupe

<http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/local/service-helps-stranded-winter-drivers>

When snow accumulates on Central Texas roadways we're advised to stay off them since we're not used to it--but many don't do that.

Fortunately, if drivers get stranded help is only a phone call away.

They say country music fans are the most loyal - even in cold and snow.

Betsy Horton is proof of that.

"Oh, it's unbelievable. I'm so excited about Rascal Flatts. I've waited forever to see them. I wouldn't miss it - even if the weather is bad."

Nick James drove to Cedar Park from San Marcos for the Rascal Flatts concert .

"I got a 4-wheel drive truck, so I don't think it will be a big issue. I'm more worried about everyone else crashing into me."

"It's going to be a problem - you've just got to be careful."

Brad Tolliver, with the Highway Emergency Response Operation - or HERO patrol - provides a little gas or tire changes to people stranded on I-35 from Round Rock to Buda.

The free service began last September. Tolliver recommends drivers take steps to prevent breaking down in the cold.

"They need to make sure their vehicle is maintained - they have proper antifreeze fuel - tires are good," he said.

And Tolliver says always have blankets and water in your vehicle, just in case.

"You never know. We've had people stuck out here with kids and say they are freezing to death," said Tolliver.

And most importantly, he says, don't be distracted, tailgate or speed in wintry conditions.

"It's bad out here - even when we have clear weather," he said.

Winter won't stop many, like Horton, from living life. But, she said it will make her more cautious behind the wheel.

"We'll manage, and get home," said Horton.

HERO Patrol operates Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. The number to call is 974-HERO.

### **I-35 HERO project helps stranded motorists for free**

KVUE

Rebekah Hood

Drivers needing assistance on Interstate 35 need look no further than the free HERO program.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority have launched the Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) program to help motorists in need. HERO trucks patrol I-35 weekdays between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Stranded motorists can call 974-HERO for assistance.

HERO workers remove dangerous roadway debris, help move stalled vehicles off the road, provide basic repair like changing a flat tire, provide fuel, jump-start batteries, and help first responders after an accident.

So far, the HERO program has helped more than 1,600 drivers since the program's launch in September 2010.

### **Free roadside assistance helps hundreds HERO program helps 1,300 in three months**

KXAN

Kate Weidaw

If your car breaks down on Interstate 35, chances are the first person that will help you out won't be the tow truck driver but someone from the Highway Emergency Response Operation program.

It's been four months since the roadside assistance program relaunched <http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/local/hero-car-program-starts-monday> . And while they've helped out hundreds of people, turns out not many drivers know they're out there.

Every morning, HERO operator William Mackin loads up his HERO truck and heads out on the highway. He spends his day looking for drivers on the side of the road needing some help.

"We've moved quite a few vehicles," said Mackin.

Since September when HERO started patrolling I-35, they've helped out 1,300 motorists. And those numbers don't include the motorists helped in January.

Something as simple as a stall can quickly back up traffic for miles during rush hour. So the goal with the HERO trucks is to get them to the stranded motorist as quickly as possible so they can get moving again and so that traffic can, too.

"Everything from flat tires to radiators, to gas. People run out of fuel," said Mike Heiligenstein, exexecutive director of Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. <http://www.mobilityauthority.com>

The roadside assistance program is funded with \$2 million in stimulus funds. While the folks with the CTRMA know they've helped out hundreds of stranded motorist, they haven't studied the direct impact their efforts have had on improving traffic flow.

Their other big challenge is having motorists call them directly. Some 80 percent of the drivers that have been helped have been found by the HERO operators driving around.

"That's been one of the challenges: making sure we have a public awareness of that," said Heiligenstein.

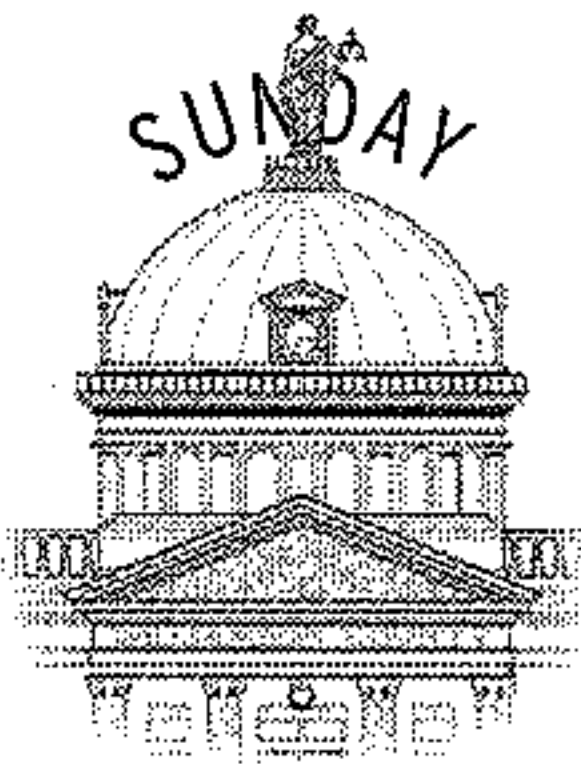
Now with only a year and a half left in funding, Mobility Authority officials said they hope to keep it going because they believe it's making an impact on traffic.

"We need to keep it going if we can, so we're looking for sponsors in the corporate community," said Heiligenstein.

Right now, the HERO program patrols I-35 from Williamson to Hays counties, but officials said they hope to expand it to U.S. Highway 183.

Those who are stranded on the side of the road can contact the HERO program by calling 512-974-HERO.





## Stimulus service a good Samaritan on highway

By ANDREW McLEMORE

It's been two months since the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority launched its motorist assistance program, and officials say more than 500 people have received help.

The program uses pickup trucks to patrol Interstate Highway 35 and reduce traffic congestion and air pollution by getting broken-down cars and debris off the area's busiest roadway.

Williamson County Commissioner Cynthia Long advocated for the program because it has been used successfully in other parts of the country to keep traffic flowing, she said.

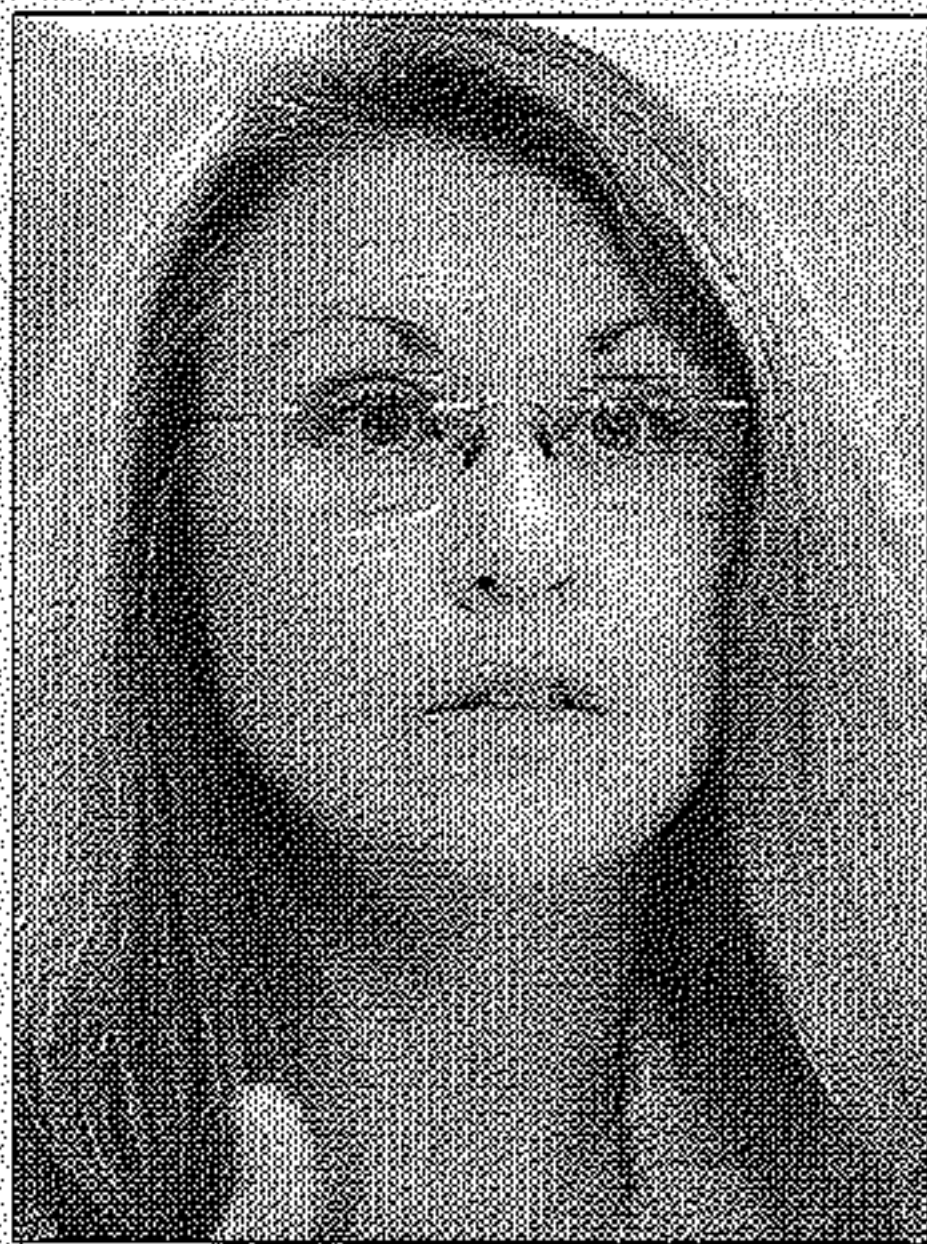
Transportation officials described it as a safety net for anyone who experiences trouble on the interstate.

"It can translate to real dollars saved for the commuter," Ms. Long said. "If you're leaving Georgetown and trying to get to Austin, you've just spent 20 minutes less in traffic. Or if you're trying to get to daycare in time and you're late, you can pay a lot of money for that."

The program is funded with \$1.8 million from the February 2009 stimulus package and pays for a private company contracted with the mobility authority to patrol a 31-mile stretch of IH-35 from the Travis/Hays County line up to Highway 79 in Round Rock.

"I am very hopeful that this is going to help us with I-35," Ms. Long said. "Anything we can do to relieve some of the congestion is a plus."

Four extended cab pickup



**Cynthia Long**  
County Commissioner

trucks equipped for basic repair services move stalled vehicles off the road, assist first responders at accident scenes and remove potentially dangerous debris.

The Highway Emergency Response Operator service — called the HERO patrol — has responded to 570 incidents since the program began September 22.

Though motorists stranded on the highway can call for assistance, most of those incidents were in the course of patrols, mobility authority spokesman Steve Pustelnyk said.

"We've gotten a tremendous amount of positive feedback," Mr. Pustelnyk said. "It's really intended to be a roving program where hopefully they get to you before you have to make a call."

He shared several of the comments, which are voluntary for recipients of the service.

They included, "Saved my butt today!" "Very nice and he saved my job interview," "I had kids in the car with no gas, thank you," and

"Y'all are guardian angels, thanks for the assistance."

Those responses should prove the program is worthwhile, Mr. Pustelnyk said.

"These are the kinds of things you like to hear when you work for a government agency," he said.

The stimulus money will keep the program going into 2012, and then alternative sources of funding must be found, said Mike Heiligenstein, the agency's executive director.

He knew when he saw the opportunity to start the program that paying for it indefinitely would be problematic, Mr. Heiligenstein said, but he's willing to try anything that will reduce congestion on Interstate 35.

"We have always struggled in our political history to figure out: What can we do about I-35?" said Mr. Heiligenstein, who served 15 years as a WilCo commissioner for Precinct 1. "That's what we have to look at: What value does this program provide the region?"

Unless the agency can find corporate sponsorship, funding the program will require a combination of sources, he said.

HERO vehicles provide service from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, targeting peak traffic hours on the interstate.

The program is a partnership between the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, the Texas Department of Transportation, which monitors the service, and the Texas Transportation Institute, which has helped conduct similar programs elsewhere and

provides advice.

So far, the HERO patrols have proven their value to the community, and Mr. Heiligenstein said his agency wants to continue funding them as long as possible.

"It's every parent's worst thought: to have a child with a flat tire on I-35. If you're from Minnesota and you break down on I-35 between Georgetown and Round Rock, who do you call?" he said. "It's keeping something that is stressful from turning into something that is dramatic."

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