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Alamo RMA to seek Environmental Impact Statement on US 281

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(SAN ANTONIO) – October 23, 2008 – On Wednesday, at a special called board meeting, the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority (Alamo RMA) Board voted to position the authority in the lead role for a new environmental study on the US 281 project, as well as for environmental studies on Loop 1604 and IH 35.

Three weeks ago, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced that it was withdrawing the “*Finding of No Significant Impact*” for US 281, therefore requiring that a new study be completed before any new lanes can be built within the US 281 corridor.

“County Judge Wolff requested the Alamo RMA take the lead role in developing a new environmental document for 281 and to take the lead on Loop 1604 and IH 35. The board has accepted this charge,” said Dr. William Thornton, Chairman of the Alamo RMA, “We have a duty to our community to not only protect our environment, but also to find ways to balance today’s needs with the responsibility of protecting our community for the future.”

“The Alamo RMA will be recommending to our partner agencies, FHWA and TXDOT, that an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for US 281 starting immediately, and we will determine the appropriate environmental studies needed for Loop 1604 and IH 35 in the coming months,” said Jim Reed, Chair of the RMA Planning Committee.

The new environmental study on US 281 is estimated to take between three to five years to complete and has stalled any additional capacity on US 281 until environmental clearance is granted by the FHWA. In the interim, the Alamo RMA will work with partner agencies to explore options for safety improvements to the corridor.

Safety projects will not add any additional capacity to US 281 or make any meaningful improvements to reduce congestion in the corridor. They will, however, improve the safety of travel within the corridor. In line with the withdrawal of the environmental clearance, the Alamo RMA will not move forward with any safety project that would be deemed in conflict with federal and state laws until a new environmental clearance is granted.

“While we know three years may sound like an eternity to motorists stuck in traffic, it is critical that we conduct a comprehensive study of realistic long-term improvements,” said Terry Brechtel, Executive Director of the Alamo RMA. “Our environment and our community deserve nothing less than the highest attention and the Alamo RMA is committed to finding ways to bring congestion relief as soon as possible. While the study is ongoing, we will work with our partner agencies to implement safety improvements immediately.”

About the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority

Overseen by a seven-member Board of Directors, the Alamo RMA includes a professional staff and consultant team that are committed to finding ways to empower our local community to take charge of our transportation future. The purpose of the Alamo RMA is to provide Bexar County with opportunities to accelerate needed transportation projects - through the direction of a local board making local choices about local mobility needs - that enhance the quality of life and economic growth for all residents in our region.

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