



CENTRAL TEXAS
Regional Mobility Authority

NEWS RELEASE

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HERO Program Assists Over 5,000 Motorists in First Year

(Austin, Texas) –A motorist assistance program designed to improve safety and speed up traffic on Interstate 35 has assisted more than 5,000 people in its first year of operation. The Highway Emergency Response Operator or HERO patrol service helps move disabled vehicles off the interstate, provides basic repair services and assists first responders at accident scenes.

“HERO has assisted me on countless occasions,” says Senior Austin Police Officer George D. Burbank. “With their help, I can safely clear a disabled vehicle from the roadway in a fraction of the time it used to take. The less time you spend dealing with a situation on the side of the road, the less chance there is of something bad happening.”

“On a corridor as busy as IH-35, keeping traffic moving is vital,” says Mobility Authority Executive Director Mike Heiligenstein. “Even the smallest of incidents can delay thousands of drivers, hurting our economy and damaging our quality of life. The HERO program is one of the best ways available to improve safety, minimize congestion and get stranded drivers moving again.”

Leslie Kuykendall is one of the five thousand people assisted by HERO. She was driving home from work when she heard a loud noise and pulled off the road. “I was on the phone with 911 when I looked up and there was a HERO truck parked next to me. The HERO technician changed my tire, filled my spare with air and got me on my way. I was so relieved that something like that existed here in Austin. He was a godsend. I could have hugged him.”

HERO vehicles patrol a 31-mile stretch of IH-35 from the Hays/Travis County Line to US 79 in Round Rock from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

The HERO program is set to end in September 2012 when a \$1.8 million grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act runs out. The Mobility Authority is currently working with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to identify additional funding to extend the program for an additional three years. The Mobility Authority is also seeking corporate sponsors to help underwrite the program and expand the service.

HERO vehicles are dispatched out of the Regional Emergency Communications Center in Austin. Drivers who need assistance can call 512-974-HERO (4376).

For more information about the HERO program, visit www.MobilityAuthority.com.

About the Mobility Authority

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is a local, independent government agency created to improve the regional transportation system. Our mission is to implement innovative solutions that reduce congestion and create transportation choices that enhance quality of life and economic vitality. The Mobility Authority is the state's first Regional Mobility Authority, created in October 2002 to serve Travis and Williamson counties. The Mobility Authority operates the 183A toll road in Williamson County and is currently working to extend the 183A project and construct the US 290 East (Manor Expressway) project.

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