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**ST. CLAIR, BLOUNT COUNTIES RECEIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING GRANTS**

Regional Planning Commission awards \$18,000 to fund retail market studies

**BIRMINGHAM, ALA. – February 13, 2008** — The St. Clair – Blount Economic Development Council today received grants totaling \$18,000 from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.

The grants will be used to conduct Retail Market Opportunity Analysis Research studies through the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Business Analysis Laboratory, located in the Innovation Depot in Birmingham. The studies, which will be conducted under the supervision of Robert A. Robicheaux, Ph.D., will focus on Blount County, Ashville and Springville on the I-59 corridor in St. Clair County, and Moody and Pell City on the I-20 corridor in St. Clair County, though all municipalities in St. Clair County will be covered in the trade area studies. The studies will identify appropriate retail development opportunities for these areas.

"Charles Ball, Steve Ostaseski and others of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham are helping make a real difference for our students and for the Moody, Pell City and City of Clay communities," said Dr. Robert Robicheaux, University of Alabama at Birmingham Professor and Chair of the Department of Marketing & Industrial Distribution. "With RPCGB Community Planning Grant support, we can teach our students how to do sound business research and make a significant contribution to the communities' economic development efforts. These are real Win-Win relationships."

An award ceremony was held today at the RPC to recognize the recipients of these Community Planning Assistance Grants. The grant program is designed to assist county and municipal governments within the RPC's planning area, which includes Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, St. Clair, Shelby and Walker counties. Each local government was required to match the dollars requested in its grant applications.

The St. Clair – Blount Economic Development Council was among 21 local governments which applied for the grants and one of 17 selected to receive an award.

“One of our main goals in Blount and St. Clair counties is to develop the retail sector,” said Ed Gardner, Jr., Executive Director of the St. Clair – Blount Economic Development Council. “With this grant award, we will be able to conduct an in-depth analysis of strengths and weaknesses and identify viable retail development options for our key retail corridors.”

**About St. Clair – Blount Economic Development Council:**

The St. Clair County Economic Development Council (EDC) is a six-member body appointed by the St. Clair County Commission and Industrial Development Board and the city councils of Ashville, Moody and Pell City. Established in 1818, St. Clair County is located at the end of the Appalachian mountain range, in north-central Alabama. With a population of more than 64,000, St. Clair County is the sixth fastest-growing county in the state and is considered a part of the Birmingham-Hoover metropolitan statistical area, the largest in the state. In 2008, the Blount County Commission formed a partnership with the St. Clair County EDC, forming the St. Clair – Blount Economic Development Council.

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