

MDA E-News February 2, 2010

MDA Awards Funding for State Improvement Projects, Noteworthy 2009 Economic Development Accomplishments, Upcoming Webinar to Provide Information on Converting Fleet Vehicles to Propane and Natural Gas, 2010 Official Mississippi Tour Guide Now Available, MP Foods Expands to Morton; Creates 90 New Jobs

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MDA Awards Funding for Five Improvement Projects in the State

MDA's Community Service Division recently awarded **CDBG Community Self-Help, CDBG Economic Development (CDBG ED)** and **Capital Improvement Revolving (CAP) Loan Program** funding for eight improvement projects located throughout the state. CDBG Community Self-Help funds are designed to address local community needs such as water, wastewater, downtown improvements and recreation. CDBG ED funds help local units of government ensure basic community services, environmental quality and economic opportunities for their residents. The CAP Loan Program provides loans in order to finance capital improvements.

The awards, which total over \$3 million, include:

- **CAP Loan**
 - City of Laurel - \$250,477 for a new fire truck
 - Monroe County - \$1.5 million to purchase a building for economic development
 - Town of Richton - \$500,000 for water and sewer improvements
- **CDBG Community Self-Help**
 - Town of Cruger - \$100,000 to construct a community recreational park

- **CDBG ED**
 - Washington County (Regional Jail) - \$650,000 for infrastructure improvements

To learn more about the funding programs available through MDA's Community Services Division, please visit www.mississippi.org and select the Community and Asset Development link located near the top of the page.

Ten Reasons to Feel Better About Last Year

The past year has been characterized by negative sentiment which has been echoed in headlines, boardrooms and in state government. But even at a time of great economic challenge, MDA, along with its partners, made great strides in job creation and retention and in building capacity in the state. Significant economic development initiatives and accomplishments have been realized in Mississippi over the past 12 months. In no particular order, here is a list, compiled by MDA, of just a few of the most noteworthy projects, programs and events of 2009 that have benefitted our state's economy:

- **A local/state partnership saved Cooper Tire's Tupelo facility** after the company announced its plans to close one of its four U.S. manufacturing plants in 2008; these efforts saved 1500 jobs and \$81 million in payroll.
- **Mississippi's aviation and aerospace industries grew** with expansions announced by Alliant Techsystems (ATK), Stark Aerospace and GE Aviation that will create over 1000 new jobs over the next several years.
- **The logistics/distribution sector continued to grow** in Mississippi, with Handy Hardware announcing a \$20 million new distribution facility in Meridian; Wis-Pak, a consortium of bottlers, announcing a \$49 million Pepsi bottling and distribution facility in Hattiesburg; and Fortune 20 company Cardinal Health announcing it was relocating a distribution facility to Olive Branch.
- **The four-state Aerospace Alliance was launched**, creating a partnership between Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Northwest Florida to establish the Southeast region of the U.S. as a world-class aerospace and aviation corridor to further grow the sector in the region.
- **The Mississippi Blues Trail hit its stride, with the placement of the 99th Blues Trail Marker.** Visitors attracted by the state's cultural heritage, such as the history of the Blues, have had a significant, positive economic impact which is already being realized in some communities around the state.
- **MDA encouraged strategic research and development partnerships.** GE Aviation announced a partnership with the University of Southern Mississippi to further develop the composite

materials and advanced manufacturing processes used at the company's Batesville facility. This is the second such partnership for GE Aviation; the company partnered with Mississippi State University's Raspet Flight Lab in 2006.

- **The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) announced it would relocate its headquarters and museum to Horn Lake,** becoming the first company or organization to take advantage of Mississippi's headquarters incentives program. ACBL brought 70 new jobs to the state.
- **MDA continued to support Mississippi's furniture industry** by helping start-up furniture companies Homestretch, Meridian Furniture and Kidz World launch their new businesses; assisting existing Mississippi furniture manufacturers United Chair and United Furniture to expand operations; helping Lane, H.M. Richards and Bauhaus USA obtain Foreign Trade Zone authority and retain approximately 950 jobs; and continuing to give advertising support to the Mississippi Furniture Market.
- **The Model Contractor Development Program,** which teaches minority and small construction contractors the business practices needed to improve company operations and to improve their bonding capacity, continued to grow, with 380 contractors around the state now graduated from the program.
- **The Priority One Program was launched** by MDA's Existing Industry and Business (EIB) Division to focus resources on existing businesses in the state, providing a valuable tool to gather information to assist with business retention and expansion programs at the state level and in local communities around Mississippi.

Honorable Mentions Include:

- **Downtown Jackson's historic King Edward Hotel reopened** after extensive renovations. This mixed-used economic development project benefitted from the GO Zone Bond Program, which is administered by MDA for the state of Mississippi. MDA also certified a sizeable portion of the project's expenses for rebate under the agency's Tourism Rebate Program.
- **Through its innovative asset mapping program, MDA's Asset Development team assisted nine communities and counties** around the state in identifying and building upon their own unique assets and developing strategic plans for long-term growth, bringing the total number of communities and counties assisted to 19.

- **MDA worked with local economic developers, elected officials and business leaders in communities around southwest Mississippi to form the Southwest Mississippi Partnership**, a 10-county regional economic development organization, to develop a common regional economic development strategy to better market their communities' shared assets.

MDA to Host Webinar to Provide Information on Converting Fleet Vehicles to Propane and Natural Gas

On **Thursday, February 18 at 10:00 a.m.**, MDA's Energy Division, on behalf of the Mississippi Clean Cities Coalition, will host a Webinar to provide beneficial information regarding retrofitting or converting fleet vehicles to propane and natural gas, both of which produce lower emissions than petroleum while helping to reduce dependence on foreign oil.

Speakers at event will be **Mark Denton, vice president of Business Development for Blossman Gas** and **Bill Calvert, vice president of Sales for BAF Technologies**. Denton will discuss the options for converting vehicles to accept propane, the most accessible alternative fuel. Calvert will discuss the options for converting vehicles to accept natural gas and establishing natural gas fueling stations.

The information to be covered in this event will benefit anyone overseeing a fleet of vehicles, including fleet managers, county supervisors, school officials and more. To register for the event, please visit www.mississippi.org/webinars . MDA encourages its partners to share this information with their communities. For more information, please contact MDA's Energy Division at (601) 359-6600.

MDA is a member of the Mississippi Clean Cities Coalition, a government/industry partnership created to help reduce petroleum consumption in the transportation sector by advancing the use of alternative fuels and vehicles, idle reduction technologies, hybrid electric vehicles, fuel blends and fuel economy measures.

2010 Official Mississippi Tour Guide Now Available

MDA, in partnership with the Mississippi Tourism Association, has released its *2010 Official Tour Guide*, a comprehensive handbook that encourages visitors to see the Hospitality State while helping them plan their next Mississippi vacation.

This year's publication features an Elvis Presley commemorative cover photograph from 1956, his breakthrough year, when the King of Rock 'n

Roll returned to his hometown of Tupelo to perform at the Mississippi-Alabama Fair and Dairy Show. The annual guide, which is distributed free to visitors around the world, celebrates Mississippi's cultural, recreational, historical and entertainment travel offerings. The book includes an easy-to-read pullout state map with routes, cities and state parks and informs visitors how to locate state welcome centers, statewide resources and other travel information. Visitors in search of city travel information will also find URLs to local Web sites.

[Click here](#) to request printed copies of the tour guide from Mississippi's tourism Web site. A digital copy of the book, which allows viewers to turn pages, search and click through to advertisers' Web sites, is also available through the tourism site. [Click here](#) for a direct link to this online version.

For more information on tourism in Mississippi, visit www.visitMississippi.org.

MP Foods Expands to Morton; Creates 90 New Jobs

MP Foods recently expanded its Mississippi operations to Morton, Miss., and the new poultry processing facility is now open for business. The company created approximately 90 jobs with the business expansion and has plans to add a second shift of approximately 70 jobs. The company's Morton operations are located in the facility previously used by Peavey Electronics, which was remodeled to include a production area, blast freezers and a cooler.

MDA provided the company with guidance on available incentives including recent initiatives to offset the cost of new hires. The agency also provided direction regarding Department of Environmental Quality regulations.

The Morton MP Foods facility is an expansion of the company's operation near Pelahatchie.

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