



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – September 10, 2024

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at Houston TranStar and via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Ronald A. Beeson, Kendric Jones, Carol Abel Lewis, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, and Allen Owen. Absent were Directors Robert A. Fry, Jr., Stephen Gilbreath, Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Jon Keeney, and Jeff Ross. Written notices of the meeting including the date, hour, place and agenda for the meeting were posted with Harris County, with the Secretary of State, and at the Gulf Coast Rail District office located at Houston TranStar in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. The inaudible portions of the recording were removed from these minutes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: It is two o'clock (2:00 p.m.), everyone. Hello, everyone. It is now two o'clock. I'm delighted everyone is here. Thank you so much. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, the presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I'm going to call our meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District to order. It is September 10th, 2024. And, again, it is two o'clock. Today's meeting is being conducted with options to participate in person or by video conference. Public meeting location is Houston TranStar, 6922 Katy Road, Conference Center 120A. The video conference is conducted through Microsoft Teams. That link can be found in our meeting invitations, the agenda, and the public postings. The meeting is open to the public. The public will have the opportunity to address the board during public comments with a limit of three minutes per speaker. If there is anyone who wishes to address the board, please approach the podium if you're in the room or raise your hand if you're online during our public comments period. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with the provisions in Section 551.127 of the Texas Government Code applicable to a governmental body that extends into three or more counties. Based on the Open Meetings Act requirements, Gulf Coast Rail District board members participating in Microsoft Teams will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and to record our voting. Therefore, if anyone is calling in by telephone we're not going to be able to count you for quorum or for the voting. As required, I'm physically present for the board meeting. I ask that our assistant secretary or vice secretary, Jean Mann... will you conduct the roll call for us please? Please answer her audibly when your name is called.

Director Jean Mann: Okay. Can you hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We can indeed.

Director Allen Owen: Yes.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, good. I was having a little issue there. Okay.

Director Jean Mann. Vice Chair Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: Yes, I'm on virtually.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, thank you. Director Maldonado?
Director Robert Maldonado: Here.

Director Jean Mann: Director Gorczynski? Is Veronica here?
Chairperson Carol Lewis: She's not. No, I don't think she is.

Director Jean Mann: Director Gilbreath?
Ms. Lisa Patke: Not attending.
Chairperson Carol Lewis: No, not at this point.

Director Jean Mann: Director Ross?
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Also not attending today.

Director Jean Mann: Chairperson Carol Lewis?
Chairperson Carol Lewis: She is here.

Director Jean Mann: Director Bruce Mann?
Director Bruce Mann: Present.

Director Jean Mann: Director Allen Owen?
Director Allen Owen: Present.

Director Jean Mann: Director Robert Fry? I guess he's not here.
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right, he's not here.

Director Jean Mann: I think we have a quorum.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Did you call Kendrick Jones?
Director Jean Mann: Oh, I'm sorry. Director Jones?
Director Kendrick Jones: Here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And Bartholomew?
Director Angelique Bartholomew: Director Bartholomew is here.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, good.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, so we do have a quorum. Thank you so much to Director Jean Mann. Appreciate that. Thank you again, all of you, for being here today. Our next item on our agenda is to confirm our meeting posting and compliance with the Open Meetings Act. I think the email from Ms. Patke confirmed that earlier this week, so that all did occur. We're on to item 4, discussion and possible action on our minutes from August 13th. Director Keeney is not here. Director Mann, that's on you also please.

Director Jean Mann: I'm sorry?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: If you could lead us in asking about the minutes and their approval or not.

Director Jean Mann: Oh, okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: You're on mute.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, your mic somehow got a line through it that says we can't hear you. Can you unclick yourself? Or maybe, Lisa, can you unclick her? Lisa can't...

Director Jean Mann: Yes, I'm unmuted.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right, you are.

Director Jean Mann: Did you want...? I'm sorry, did you ask me something?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, if you could carry us through number four, the discussion and action on the minutes for August 13th. That also falls under Director Keeney...

Director Jean Mann: Oh, okay.

Director Jean Mann: Do we have a motion to accept the minutes?

Director Kendrick Jones: So moved.

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Director Jean Mann: Discussion? Motion passes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Awesome. Thank you so much. Alright, now report from treasurer.

Director Owen, please.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair, I think Arleste is there. Is she not? I think she's on here to give us the report.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Yes, I'm here today.

Director Allen Owen: There she is. There she is. Yes.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Okay, wonderful. You should have the bookkeeper report, starting on page 15 in your packet today. Turning past the cover page, this is the cash flow report for your checking account. And we're showing check 2722, which was presented at the last meeting but not on your last report. And then check 2723 through 2725 are being presented for payment today, leaving a balance of \$5,616 in your checking account. Continuing on to page 16, this is your account balances, showing a total of \$1,598,434 in all your accounts. Pages 17 and 18 are your actual versus budget report. And everything is trending nicely here. Nothing out of the ordinary. Continuing on to pages 19 through 22, this is your grant status report, and we are showing no changes here since 2019. And that is all I have for you, unless you have any questions for me.

Director Allen Owen: Anyone have any questions? If not, I'll entertain a motion to approve Resolution 24-17, ratifying our payments. Is there a motion?

Director Bruce Mann: So moved.

Director Ronald Beeson: Director Beeson.

Director Allen Owen: Second...

Director Ronald Beeson: Director Beeson seconds.

Director Allen Owen: Alright.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, we had Mann and Beeson.

Director Allen Owen: All those in favor?

Board: Aye

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Alright, thank you.

Director Allen Owen: Thank you. That concludes the report, Madam Chairman.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, great. Thank you so much. We're now on to item number 7, public comments. There isn't anyone in the room. Is there anyone online who would like to make comments during this period? Okay, we have I think Dominic Mazoch on. So, Dominic, I know you know the guidelines. Please go ahead.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay. Can you hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We can.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, great. Three minutes. A couple questions I have... Number one is the situation with the high-speed rail. Who's running this thing now? Is it Texas Central Rail? Is it Amtrak? Is it a combination thereof? And how does this board react with that? Second, are there any rail district groups like this that are adjacent to San Antonio or the DFW area? Why I'm saying that is because these areas come up with a plan to make their rail track smoother but there is no action in the Houston Terminal. It might make their situation better, but it can make our situation worse. So, I'm hoping if there are some other rail groups in the area, we have some coordination. Lastly, it's the article behind the public comments in the sense of how do we advertise. I found out about Gulf Coast Rail District from METRO. At METRO board meetings, Jim Robinson actually asked me to come to these meetings when he was the ex officio for METRO. And I think upon thinking if you could have... I would like to see what this group... That you are acting to market this organization, that's great, but I think there might be some other things that you could do. I know there's some laws, okay? But maybe some things like Operation Lifesaver. I know that's an international organization, a national organization, and operates in the State of Texas. I don't know if this group is on that. But maybe when we see that some of the Operation Lifesaver and you see Gulf Coast Rail District is one of the supporting members, then maybe that might be some things to do. And how do we get people involved? I mean look at the age groups of us in this group. We're not any younger. How do we get younger people involved not just in transportation but in government in general? I mean someone has got to pick up the lead to keep our Republican... let's call it democratic form of operating our nation alive. End of comments. Back to you, Dr. Carol. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you, Mr. Mazoch, for speaking today. Is there anyone else? Alright, that will conclude our public comments section. On to item 8, media strategies. So, Mr. Mazoch, you might want to kind of see here a partial response to our outreach efforts. So, we're going to ask Director Bartholomew to communicate with us now, please.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Great. Thank you so much for the opportunity. For the most part, we are at a stage where we will be receiving The HART video. There were some edits and additional details that needed to be added to that. Director Katherine and I are waiting to hear back from Erika with regard to that so that we can continue and get that video shared with the board. The next thing is that we're going to pace ourselves in terms of continuing the outreach strategy by developing possibly a quarterly campaign with Erika so that we will be able to at least maintain the presence on social media and continue to of course attract followers and be informative, but we have not agreed with regards to a budget on that as yet. Because as you all

know, the campaign or the project that Erika was on has come to an end. So, she's providing some final deliverables and will be in discussion with Director Katherine and I to determine what the next steps are and provide us with a quote on the media.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you so much for that report. Any questions or comments back for Director Bartholomew? Anyone? Okay. I will...

Director Jean Mann: Oh, hang on. I have a question. Can you provide us with the following and the reach that our posts have gotten on each platform from the beginning and to now?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Absolutely. Erika has provided... they provided a report that shows that data, and I can get that and have it shared with the board members after this call. But, yes, that information was presented. I believe during the last campaign, she provided us with the numbers and the updates for the following from the beginning to the current status. But we will get a closeout from her once we...

Director Jean Mann: Dr. Lewis, can we include that in our core packets every month?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well, I don't know that we would want to do it... We can talk about it, but we're not paying her anymore, so her effort is completed. The point I also want to make is we talked at our last board meeting about the fact that we individually need to be reporting things that come up. So, it's not as if one portion of the work done is anticipated to do all the distribution by itself. It served as a seed and a conduit for each of us to pulse out to our markets and our particular links. And I'm the first to admit, I told you all, I am not a social media person. So, I still have not... And last time, Director Gilbreath showed me how to... I don't know the right even terminology—repost, but when you see something, you click it and tell other people to look at it. He showed me how to do it. I did not do it. But I do want to encourage...

Director Jean Mann: But there are ways that she can boost the post to get a better reach?

Director Kendric Jones: We got to pay for that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So...

Director Angelique Bartholomew: We've done those individual campaigns, Director Mann. She has that, and we did do small media buys on Facebook and things like that to boost the post towards the end of the campaign, towards the end of the project. So, she has both those... all of the campaigns that were run with an ad, and we have the following for each of the social media landing pages. So, we can provide that information to you. Erika was not able to join this particular call—she's on a huge project right after ours, but we will have that information and get The HART video as well as the final deliverable and then be able to provide an overall social media data analytics report to you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright.

Director Jean Mann: When you make these posts, could you... Is there any way that you could email all of us? If she could put us all on the same email and post links to the post so that we can get on and share them?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: The posts are on each of the pages. I will find out from her. I know that of course she is responsible for output with regard to the posts and everything. I'm not sure if she would like link everyone on an email to share, but I know that she has been tagging. So, I've just taken the liberty to go to the GCRD social media pages and follow them, and then it comes up in your feed. And then you're able to share and tag once you follow those pages. But we can inquire about that.

Director Jean Mann: Because I haven't seen anything in my feed on LinkedIn or Facebook, or... I haven't seen anything.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, if you could, Director Mann, I think that... I'm going to ask Director Jones to speak. To kind of follow up on this, but I want to make it clear that we were very pleased with the work she did during her contract. Her contract has now ended. So, everything now is on us. We're not going to ask her to do anything else because we would need to compensate her for doing anything else.

Director Jean Mann: Oh, okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Unless we enter into another agreement, which we are talking about, but we're not there yet. Director Jones, please. You had something to add.

Director Kendrick Jones: Yes. I just want the board to be aware that social media is an investment. You can use someone to be able to help you, and I do like that the conversation is going to try to try to continue those efforts because it's an investment and buy in from not just you hiring a marketing person, because I have one right now for my social medias and stuff like that, but it's an investment long-term that you see the benefit from over time. And, Director Mann, sometimes you don't see things pop up on your timeline because it's an algorithm. And so the more you go click the page, the more then whatever you show, whatever you click, whatever you like then pops up. And going forward, it would be... another suggestion for those pages is that if... You could sign up for the notification by going to the GCRD page. And then each time something is posted, it would automatically alert you that, "Hey, Gulf Coast Rail District posted something." So, therefore you would be alerted.

Director Jean Mann: Okay.

Director Kendrick Jones: There's not a way yet that links could be emailed and then you reshare them. It's a notification on those different social media outlets. But we can continue to either further it along ourselves, which takes a lot of time, effort, and energy, which is why people pay for these things, or you allow it to slowly organically grow, which as you build a platform over time, then that's when you see those returns on your investment, which we've just invested for the last six months into doing such a thing.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, most appreciated. I think we're all growing into this media and what it means for us to benefit and leverage it to its highest and best use. And I don't know a lot about it, but I do understand this algorithm expression. The fact that the more that you click on something that indicates you're interested in rail, the more the algorithm will feed you things about what you've already expressed an interest in. So, I understand... In English, that's what the algorithm is doing.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: And we have developed a great following. I'll make sure that I share that, Director Mann, with you. It was shared in the last meeting. She provided data. But we have developed a pretty good following on those platforms. So, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. I think we're excited about it. I appreciate Director Jones' point that it builds over time and requires a little bit... I'm going to reiterate this, it requires a little bit from us. And I'm going to keep saying it because I haven't done it yet, but next meeting you'll get a report about me doing better. Coming into 2024. Alright, thank you for that. Most appreciated.

Then item number 9, US 90A steering committee meeting and an update from Thomas Gray, H-GAC. Very thrilled that the 90A work is going forward at this point. Director Owen, I know you're happy, and so are we. A couple of meetings have been had, and we have information that the consultant has begun pulling together. And we're delighted that Thomas Gray is here today to share with us. So, go ahead, Thomas, please.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Thank you, Dr. Lewis. I'm Thomas Gray, principal transportation planner of the Houston-Galveston Area Council, and I would like to share my screen to provide a quick update as to the status of the US 90A transit corridor study. So, let's see if this works. I think you all can see that.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Mr. Thomas Gray: So, I will go ahead and present, just giving everybody an update as to where the study is right now. As everybody probably knows at this point, the US 90A corridor connects Fort Bend County with southwest Harris County and the Texas Medical Center. Over the years, it's been studied extensively with much of the focus being on commuter rail, using the Glidden Subdivision. Union Pacific has kind of made it clear that they do not want a commuter rail operated on the right of way, and recent legislation allows the Gulf Coast Rail District to consider technologies other than commuter rail for serving this corridor. So, that's the background of this study.

The goal is to identify one or more—preferably one but if we need multiple ones we can definitely take a look at that—transit alternatives for the US 90 corridor that is technologically and economically feasible that could have significant benefits to the mobility of the region. And this alternative can then be advanced by the Gulf Coast Rail District into a more detailed and studied analysis with an eye towards implementation. So, this is a kind of high-level study to put a line on a map that works, and we'll go from there.

So, here is the study area. Originally it was just US 90A and Interstate 69. We've added the Fort Bend Parkway coming out of 90, going through Missouri City and Sienna. That was actually a request made by some folks here on the GCRD board, so we are considering that as well.

Just quickly, our consultant has done some existing conditions analysis. Just very quickly, demographics of land use. There are almost 700,000 people in the study area. Ethnically, it's very diverse, very balanced. 400,000 jobs. 250,000 households, most of which have one or more cars. It's a spread of some urban and rural communities, primarily residential, but there is a lot of vacant and developable land as well. In terms of mobility, where are people in the study area going, well, three-quarters of daily work trips go to the Texas Medical Center, to downtown or to

Westchase. A quarter go to Galleria and Greenway Plaza. Transit in the study area is provided by METRO, as well as Fort Bend Transit. There is a lot of traffic volume on Interstate 69 and the Sam Houston Tollway. Over 100,000 vehicles daily. That doesn't surprise anybody. Daily traffic varies significantly across different segments of US 90A. The roadway geometry in terms of the lanes being provided varies along US 90A, while Interstate 69 has a consistent profile as an eight-lane divided highway.

So, here is where we are right now in terms of looking at the alignments. Right now, our consultant team is considering several alignments including the old Union Pacific alignment, the Fort Bend Tollway, and Interstate 69. And then looking at a line along the CenterPoint right of way. These are alright now just being considered and then sort of further being screened. We're breaking this study area down into zones, and we're going to take a look at these alignments by each zone—comparing the alignments and then maybe assembling a hybrid alignment that works for the study. And we're very early in this process.

One of the things that our consultant team is going to do is take a look at these performance metrics, which you see right here, for each alignment and each segment. Environmental constraints, society constraints, right of way constraints, potential for transit-oriented development, potential ridership, and stakeholder support.

These performance measures will then be considered into a valuation matrix. This is an example of what that evaluation matrix might look like. It will evaluate each zone, each segment within the zone, and come up with an evaluation for every possible alignment possibility and go from there in terms of nailing down a final alignment.

Transit modes that we are looking at. Obviously in the past, we've looked at commuter rail operating along the Union Pacific Railroad track. We know that that's not an option, but we need to be able to explain why it isn't. Other transit modes to be considered are light rail and bus rapid transit. And then of course commuter bus is also under consideration as well. Right now both METRO and Fort Bend Transit operate commuter bus in this corridor to downtown, Texas Medical Center, and Greenway Plaza.

We also want to consider at a high level the operating scenarios. For example, do we want a service that stops every three to five miles that would provide faster travel time, but it wouldn't serve as many people? Or you could have a service that stops more frequently and serves more people but has slower travel times. So, we have to look at the balance and tradeoffs there. And then considering our operating parameters. How long does it take to travel the corridor, how many vehicles do we need, what would the vehicles look like, layover and deadhead time? Those kinds of things are going to be considered.

Public involvement. Right now, we do have a webpage on our Engagement HQ site. There is a QR code there. If you scan that, you can go to the website. The area maps, survey, interactive map. So, take a look at that if you're able to and pass it along. Pass that link along to anybody who you think might be interested.

In terms of public involvement, in addition to the webpage, we are planning two stakeholder meetings. Right now we're in the final stages of setting up the stakeholder group. Hopefully, we will hold our meeting later this month, hopefully, and then maybe in November. And then we also want to have a meeting for the general public close to the conclusion of this effort, probably

early 2025. Obviously with the holidays coming up, it's difficult to hold public meetings during and around Thanksgiving and Christmas. So, we're probably looking at early 2025.

In terms of a schedule, that means... I have September highlighted. We're here right now. We've completed the existing conditions. We're screening the additional alternatives. We will then use those alignments and segments to evaluate a final alternative, come up with an alternative that we think... the line on the map that we think the Gulf Coast Rail District should carry forward and issue a final report. That's where we are right now. I want to note that Scott Barker from HDR Incorporated is here on the virtual meeting with us today. He is the project manager for HDR. And both myself and he are available to answer any questions that you might have.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Questions?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I do want to say, Thomas, the QR is not active. I wanted to go on and check it. It's showing that it's not active. I just tried to scan it.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Alright.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Yes, it didn't pop up and say to choose a code or something or a plan for your QR.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you for that, Dr. Bartholomew.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Okay. We'll take a look at that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any other comments from you? That's sort of the area where you reside. I don't know if you have any thoughts or not. I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but just in case you had any. I didn't to move on after the QR comment. Alright. Mr. Moeller? Tyson?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Good afternoon.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Good afternoon.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Thomas, just so you're aware of, we've been working... TxDOT sponsored a couple studies. They're currently into phase three of studying that Highway 90 corridor and Glidden Sub as well. And so you might have some opportunities to collaborate on some initiatives that HNTB is working on there as well. And so the Rail District is part of that initiative. And so the key there is they're looking at potential grade separations, as well as rail improvements. And so as you know that Glidden Sub is a critical corridor for all three freight railroads...

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: ...the Amtrak there, right? So, they might be able to help with some of your analysis as far as why that's not a great corridor to add additional passenger and why is it critical from a freight standpoint while you're looking at some of these other alternatives there.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Right.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: So, that study is currently going on. I'm not sure what phase those are on. Katherine Parker will have tabs on that. She will help in that.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Very good. We'll make a note of that, and we'll follow up with HNTB. I think we are aware of it, but we definitely should make sure that we're all coordinated.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. And if you need anything from UP, you've got Richard Zientek and myself...

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: I just take lead as far as anything that you need, as far as how we would look at that corridor there and that right of way there.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Right. But you are on my contact list for the stakeholder committee, so you'll be hearing from me shortly.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Okay. Yes, you got Richard on there. Go ahead and you can add myself on there as well.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Awesome. Thanks, guys.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. Anyone else? Alright, well, I've got some questions, thoughts. First question is there were three quarters of the folks who are headed to Westchase, Med Center, and downtown... Alright, so Med Center and downtown are basically far enough away that I could see how those would be combined. Help me understand how Westchase would fit into that because Westchase would have to peel off at roughly the Beltway, I guess.

Mr. Thomas Gray: That's potential. Scott, do you have something to add there?

Mr. Scott Barker: I think that just would kind of indicate where we would want to have the connection, like connecting to a crossing bus route, or to a station location, or something like that. Realizing that if somebody wanted to get to Westchase via this route, there would be an opportunity to make that transfer. It's not necessarily going to affect the overall alignment, just where potential stations or connections would be.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I guess the other thing though would be the ridership. But I guess I'm thinking if you're preparing ridership from there in, you'd need to have some kind of service option for those folks also. So, I guess that was my... So, are we thinking that this corridor would run buses both into the interior of the urban as well as run buses northbound?

Mr. Scott Barker: Well, it would be to tie the METRO... Like if METRO has the Gessner route for instance. You'd want to be able to connect to that route because it goes north and would reach Westchase or one of the... Whatever happens with say the Silver Line or anything like that

that would go to the Galleria area. We don't necessarily have the network fully in place right now, but the opportunity would be there.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright, so then the second question I have is are you all presuming any first mile/last mile as underlined? Because I think I read that Fort Bend is doing its own sort of circulator services now. So, are you all considering thinking about that as a connector and feeder to what we talked about in the primary corridor?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Well, obviously METRO already has curb to curb service in Missouri City that could operate as first mile/last mile feeder for this corridor. Also, the City of Sugar Land is considering a microtransit service center as well. They've actually been working with us to secure a CMAT, Commuter and Transit Pilot Project Fund, to help start up that service probably early next year. And then of course, Fort Bend County does have a county wide demand response service as well that could feed into this service. So, yes, there are definitely some options for first mile/last mile kind of operations that could potentially feed into this service.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Great. Thank you.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: They could all support each other some kind of way. Playing connect the dots.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's what we want. And thank you. It was Sugar Land that I was reading about. It wasn't Fort Bend. But I could just remember reading that someone was starting that, so that's what that it was Thomas so thank you for that. The next thing I was going to ask about is have you all thought about where the stations will be, or will that come later as part of the ridership estimate?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Right. And Scott can answer that as well. But, yes, that is something we are looking at or will be looking at as part of this alignments alternatives analysis.

Mr. Scott Barker: Yes, correct. Yes, ideally in the second phase when we're doing a little bit more detailed analysis, when we have the feasible alternatives identified. But, yes, we're looking at... we're developing some station criteria, and we'll be looking at that combination of commuter versus express. You know, if we have to go fewer stations, what would be some good locations or more frequent. And of course these would be conceptual locations. We could identify reasonable locations, but station areas are really subject to a whole lot of internal input, community input, things like that. So, kind of like the Westchase. We'd be looking in the vicinity of whether it's Grand Parkway or Highway 6 or Gessner or something. But yes, we'd be looking at where stations could be located.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. Thank you. That was my last question. Director Owen?

Director Allen Owen: Thomas, one of the questions that I asked when we had the meeting the other day that I haven't got a response. How are they going to pay for this?

Mr. Thomas Gray: We don't know yet.

Director Allen Owen: Yes, because Missouri City is going to want to tell METRO. How are they going to pay it with the others that are trying to participate?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Right, we're aware of that. This is a higher study that we realize that there are challenges. This is a higher-level study that's focused more on the alignment. Obviously, the next phase would be a more I guess engineering type study that would be focused more on capital, O&M cost detail that would provide more than an order of magnitude of how much this is going to cost. I think that would probably be the appropriate time to look at funding and financing issues, but we know that it's a challenge.

Director Allen Owen: Yes, because we looked at the Transit District at one time, that they could pay into it because I can tell you, none of them are going to get in METRO. They made it very clear.

Mr. Thomas Gray: They're capped...

Director Allen Owen: Yes, because they're capped and they're paying for economic development. But they were somewhat agreeable to looking at a Transit District where they paid for their fair share of the operating costs. I mean Missouri City is already paying for theirs. But yes, so I think funding is going to be as important as the alignment.

Mr. Thomas Gray: I would agree. And I do apologize, as I did get your email about this, and it got buried.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And the answer was still the same. You don't really have an answer. We're working. We're going to work on the answer, too, at some point, right? So, the only other thought about that, Director Owen, that we might want to talk about with folks is about the transportation reinvestment zones that Fort Bend has had the opportunity to embrace. And so I don't think they've done that, so we want to probably get in front of those commissioners and the county judge and get them thinking about that in regard to something like this.

Director Allen Owen: Thomas, did you ever hear from Stafford? I sent them the invitation.

Mr. Thomas Gray: No, I have not so far.

Director Allen Owen: I'll rattle their chain again.

Mr. Thomas Gray: I would appreciate it because we do want to get our steering committee...

Director Allen Owen: I know they've had a lot of turnover, so...

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: ...we'll see if they can rattle the chain again.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. Anything from anyone else? Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Gray, Mr. Barker, and all of our board members who have been participating in the steps along the way. I'm looking forward to where this is going. Next spring is when you had the outcome, right? Basically?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes. We will have a final report this spring.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful. Alright, thank you so much.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright.

Mr. Scott Barker: Thank you, everybody. Bye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Bye. Alright, so, that brings us to number ten, update from Barbara Koslov about what she's been undertaking. She's...

Ms. Lisa Patke: She's online.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, she's on the screen. We had an email, Barbara. I don't know if you wanted to do it or if you wanted Katherine to do the report for you. Whichever way.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: This is Barbara. I am online, but I'm not... I can turn on my camera. Anyway, I just logged on. This particular month I haven't been as engaged. I've reviewed all the information that went into the 90A study and the second steering committee, and I've visited with Scott Barker about some of the issues. And I will continue to work on that. I believe we have a stakeholder meeting later this month, and I'll be engaged with that also.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: That's about it for this month. Any questions or anything?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And you also did the last HART meeting in person. That was this month.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: I didn't hear you very well. What was that?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I was reminding you, you also participated in the last HART meeting that was a couple weeks ago.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Oh, yes. I did attend the last HART meeting and took notes on that, which I need to submit. But yes, I was in the last HART meeting and was engaged with that also. And I've been engaged with TAG, but there hasn't been that much new information as they continue to work on their legislative agenda.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. Great, thank you. Any questions for Ms. Koslov? Alright, that takes us to number 11, report from Executive Director Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you all so much for being here. I want to say a special thank you to Thomas Gray and Scott Barker. I've known Scott for 30 years. For coming on last minute, they pulled it together. I appreciate that. Lisa, do you have my presentation? It's short. Meetings that I've attended between July and September as I was out last month. Of course, TAC, RTP, TPC, Transportation Policy Council, and THE HART. Barbara talked about being a part of THE HART. We had a few people there in person. We had updates during that meeting from TxDOT about the Texas Rail Plan—the LAR, of which Dr. Lewis will

talk about later. And also Sydni and I... Sydni Ligons from H-GAC are working on updating the rail crossing list submitted from various groups to ultimately a project list for submittal for FRA grant and hopefully TxDOT related funding as well. We also talked about the update with the Glidden Sub that Tyson referred to. October is the timeframe that HNTB has said that they will have an update for the Glidden Sub and also the East End Technical Report work that they're doing. Here are two pictures of me presenting at the Texas Transportation Commission on July 30th to endorse the LAR. And then the second picture is September 3rd. We had a rail tour. The East End Rail Tour with State Representative Ana Hernandez. She had nine locations on her route. We were able to make it to seven. I don't think people realize how long it takes to get from one location to the next, but we had a great conversation. The attendees were of course the Rail District, Harris County Proper, Commissioner Garcia's office, Precinct 2, Union Pacific, Super Neighborhood presidents—I think we had three presidents, and representatives from the area as well as the City of Houston and the East End District were all on that bus that you see behind us that Commissioner Garcia allowed us to use for the tour, which was great to be on a bus. Most times I'm used to putting on my reflective jacket and hard hat and walking along the crossings, so being able to be on a bus was great. We talked about the issues at each crossing. Hernandez is very involved in her district and has been hearing from a lot of her residents about rail issues and also about school related issues. I got the chance to put on my old hat of being a school coordinator to talk about some of the concerns with car riders, pedestrians, and the various modes that are a part of a school plan and what that means and adding that layer of rail to that whole scenario.

Next slide. Oh, I'm sorry. Rail Corridor Collaborative was one other line on there. We meet monthly, July and August, of course to talk about safety and mobility corridors along the Houston Railroad Corridors. That meeting in particular, Class I railroads come to talk about issues that happened within the past month. We're able to ask questions. It really is I like to say the pulse of the community. This is where we're able to see whether what we ask is being done. And the citizens are, quite frankly, able to say what they felt the operations changes or not. So, I'm happy to be a part of that. It's a monthly effort. They're making big changes within the east end and throughout the Houston area.

Next slide. Thank you. Alright, so we have an update. I know we talked about at the last meeting our grant writing request for proposals. And thank you to the board for allowing us to be able to move that forward. Unfortunately, we did not receive any proposals. And when I reached out to a few groups, the short turnaround time was what was cited. So, we will be prepared for CRISI the next opportunity in 2025. And the way the resolution was written, we wouldn't have to come back to the board. We'll just be hoping for some additional proposals and hopefully more than one application. We talked about Fort Bend/FM 762 being the submittal that we wanted to work on. We will continue to work with Fort Bend on that request for a planning grant. And by the time CRISI comes back around or RCE we may even have additional ones that would allow us to be able to actually make a selection. That would be great if we have as much input as possible.

And there's a Texas Rail Plan update. They just recently closed their comment period, but this is a four-year plan that TxDOT puts together and they talk about their policies and procedures, what their system looks like today, what future plans, stakeholder input, and actually the railroad that they are charged with maintaining. Those are all a part of the rail plan update. Our relationship with TxDOT is a good one, so they hear and know what the Rail District is needing and wanting. So, just kind of an update for you all to know that they do that every four years.

Any questions? I know a lot of the things we talk about are all kind of interrelated. But any questions about my portion of it?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. No questions or comments for Ms. Parker? We'll go on to item 12. So, first item there is the Texas Transportation Commission update, the LAR extension, which we're pursuing. Ms. Parker mentioned she spoke in July about it. We're staying on top of it. She and Director Bruce Mann and I had a conversation last week about next steps. A couple of things that we learned. The September 18th meeting of the Transportation Committee that we talked about does not allow for anyone to make comment. They talk and ask questions. So, TxDOT will be there to answer questions themselves about the LAR, but there wouldn't be an opportunity for us to make any comment. We're working with TAG to see if we can identify someone to speak on September 20th, And that will be the Appropriations Committee. And so we're working on that now. Really not just TAG but others to speak about this particular LAR. The thing I would remind everyone of is this is not just a GCRD initiative. It's 175 million dollars for the entire state. So, that means that our portion of it, while we would hope and pursue to be very important, it's not going to be the majority of that 175 million. The other 25 million that is there and often talked about at the same time is for short line improvements. So, as we think about how we continue to encourage this initiative, we will be working with others throughout the state. Again, because it is a statewide initiative, and GCRD will play a part and will be a very important voice in getting it to go through. So, when it's June next year, we'll anticipate being successful in that and then figuring out what we have to do to make sure we're in queue to getting a nice portion of some of the funds that are there.

The next thing, West Belt. So, what's going on with our Commerce/Navigation, which we're continuing to work on, is the actual final decision about whether we can get those funds moved from CMAT and Federal Highway Administration to FRA. There is absolutely no one who is shaking their head, saying they don't want this to happen. So, everyone from our side and from FRA as far as we can tell is nodding yes. Everyone wants it to happen. Getting it to happen though is the glitch, the hurdle. So, we are still working on that. And I feel like we're in a pretty good state. We have someone that's fairly high ranking in FRA working with us to try to get that done. So, again, these things sometimes take a little longer than we ever understand on our side why, but that is still happening. And so, so far it's still good news in trying to get that transfer to occur. So, that's that for those two items. Are there any questions about either of those or comments from anyone?

Director Jean Mann: Yes, on the transfer, is that anything a congressman can help you with?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I don't know.

Director Jean Mann: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Because from the best we understand, it's caught up in the attorneys figuring out how to do it. The thing we've heard is that it's been done before is what people say. It's been done before. But it sounds like it's in the sort of... an in the weeds thing about how to do it. So, I think Congress could help maybe if FRA didn't want to do it, but that's not what's happening. FRA wants to do it, too. It's just how to do it. So, it's more of a... What would you...?

Director Bruce Mann: Mechanics.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Practical.

Director Bruce Mann: Mechanics of it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Mechanics of it. Exactly, mechanics of it as opposed to anybody sort of dragging their heels on wanting to do it. But thank you for that question because sometimes that could be the answer, but I think this time it's just... Like I said, from what I understand, it's the attorneys figuring out the mechanics for it. So, anything else from anyone? Okay.


Chairperson Carol Lewis: If not, our next meeting is October 8th. And I would entertain a motion for adjournment.

Director Kendric Jones: So moved.

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Got it. Got a motion and a second here at the table, so we are adjourned. Thank you everyone for being here. Most appreciated (adjourned at 2:53 p.m.).

ATTEST:

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Jon Keeney, Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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