



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – December 10, 2025

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, December 10, 2025 at Houston TranStar and-via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Ronald A. Beeson, Robert A. Fry, Jr., Stephen Gilbreath, Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Kendric Jones, Jon Keeney, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, Allen Owen, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent was Director Robert Maldonado, Jr. 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: So, good afternoon, everyone. Regrettably, it's 2:07 p.m., so we're starting late. I'm going to apologize. My rationale, if you choose to accept it, was that this is finals week. I have to give a final tonight. And normally our grades have to be in at five o'clock the day after commencement. Now, today they sent us an email that said they now must be in by noon that day. So, I know people don't really care a lot.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Congratulations.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. Alright, let's get going and call to order. It's 2:07. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I'm going to call our meeting to order today. It is December 10th, 2024. Today's meeting is being conducted with options to participate in person by video conference. The public meeting location is Houston TranStar, 6922 Katy Road, Conference Room Center 12A. The video conference is conducted through Microsoft Teams, and that link can be found in the meeting invitation, agenda, and the public postings. Our meeting is open to the public. The public has the opportunity to address the board during our public comments section at three minutes per speaker. If you wish to address the board, if you're in the room, we ask that you come to the podium. If you're online, we ask that you raise your hand, and you will be acknowledged. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with provision of 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 Record Act requirements, the 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 your votes. Therefore, we're not going to be able to allow anyone to call in by telephone. As required, I'm physically present for the meeting and ask that the secretary conduct a roll call. Please be audible when your name is called. Director Keeney, please.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Ronald Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: I'm on virtually.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you, sir. Robert Maldonado? Veronica Chapa Gorczynski?
Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Present.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Stephen Gilbreath?
Director Stephen Gilbreath: Present.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Jeff Ross?
Director Jeff Ross: Virtual.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Carol Lewis is here. I'm here, I hope. Bruce Mann.
Director Bruce Mann: Yes, sir. I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you, sir. Angelique Bartholomew?
Director Angelique Bartholomew: I'm present, virtual.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Allen Owen?
Director Allen Owen: Present, virtually.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Kendric Jones?
Director Kendric Jones: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. And Jean Mann?
Director Jean Mann: Virtual.

Director Jon Keeney: And Robert Fry?
Director Robert Fry: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: We do in fact have a quorum, Madam Chair.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Awesome. Thanks, everyone, who's joining us today both in the room and online. Much appreciate your presence. I want to confirm that our meeting was posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act as of last Friday.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes, correct.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And now we're ready to go on to item number four, the minutes.
Director Keeney again please.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes. I assume everyone has read the minutes in detail, and I need a motion to approve these.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: So moved.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Second?

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you, sir. Any additional questions or concerns on the minutes?
Hearing none, all those in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Jon Keeney: Any opposed? It's unanimous.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, wonderful. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Owen, you have the report from the treasurer and then action on Resolution 24-20.

Director Allen Owen: Yes, ma'am. I see Arleste is on here, so I'll let her give us our financial report.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Yes, I'm here today. Can you all hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, we can.

Director Allen Owen: Yes.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Okay, wonderful. Okay, starting on page 15 in your packet is the bookkeeping packet. Turning past the cover page, this is the cash flow for your checking account. We've got receipts of \$20,000 coming in. That's a transfer from your money market. Under disbursements, you'll see check #2730 was signed at the last meeting. Checks 2731-2733 are being presented today. And that leaves a balance of \$17,731.70 in your checking account. Continuing on to page 17, this is your account balances. You'll see your CDs there, your money markets, and your checking account for a total in your operating funds of \$1,600,905. Pages 18 through 19 are your actual versus budget comparison, showing your monthly totals there and then your year to date totals in column three there. And continuing on to pages 20 through 23, this is your grant status report. And there are no changes on there from the last meeting. And that's all I have for you on the report. If anyone has any questions for me...

Director Allen Owen: Doesn't sound like it.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Okay.

Director Allen Owen: Are there any questions? If not, I'll entertain a motion to approve Resolution 24-20 ratifying our payments.

Director Bruce Mann: So moved.

Director Allen Owen: Is there a motion?

Director Bruce Mann: Bruce Mann moved.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Bruce Mann...

Director Allen Owen: Is there a motion?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Second. Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, we have Bruce Mann and Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Mayor Owen, if you could not hear. Just confirming that for you.

Director Allen Owen: No, ma'am. I saw it. There were two or three seconds in there. I think Ron Beeson was trying to second as well. So, as long as we've got it in there then that's fine. All those in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Allen Owen: All opposed, the same. Madam Chair, that's our report.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you so much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That takes us to item number seven, discussion of possible action on Resolution 24-21 approving the Gulf Coast Rail District operating budget for fiscal year 25. If you would turn to page 28 in your packet and take a look at it. You'll see the contributions from our members listed in columns, 10-month actuals, 12-month annualized, and what we've

approved for 2024, and what we're proposing for 2025. Take a second to look at that, if you will. Mentioning our in-kind and our pro-bono are largely from the City for our executive director. You'll see our total revenue line there, and then you'll see our general purpose expenses anticipated for 2025. Are there any questions, comments, thoughts?

Director Jon Keeney: I move we approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, we've got a motion from Director Keeney.

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Second, Director Mann. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Any opposed? Alright, that carries. Thank you. We'll look forward to an awesome 2025.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Number eight, discussion of possible action on Resolution on 24-22, authorizing revisions to the bookkeeping services contract. I'm going to ask Executive Director Parker to say a word about that before we vote.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright. This represents our bookkeeping services contract. And the remaining reports that you'll see, we're trying to bring everything into a calendar year, if you will. So, you'll see these reports here in years past. You've seen them scattered throughout the years, Lisa and I worked to try to bring that into December. So, these are your upcoming 2025 contracts basically for professional services, and we're beginning with the bookkeeping service. The next will be the audit. And then the last will be Burton Accounting.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any questions for Executive Director Parker?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: I don't have a question. I just wanted to express gratitude for the reasonable rates on the rate schedule on this agreement.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you much. Alright. If there is nothing else, we'll accept a motion here.

Director Jon Keeney: Motion to approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, we've got Keeney.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Director Gilbreath.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And Gilbreath.

Stephen Gilbreath: I'll second. It's fine.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Second. Alright, thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Any opposition? Okay, we are approving that. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Moving on to item nine, discussion of possible action on Resolution 24-23, authorizing executive director to enter into a letter of agreement with McCall Gibson Swedlund Barfoot PLLC for the annual financial report. This is what we see with regularity on the annualization of that. Are there any questions? Okay. If not, I'll accept a motion.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: So moved.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, Veronica Chapa Gorczynski. Anyone else?

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Second, Bruce Mann. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposition? Alright, awesome. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Item ten, discussion and possible action on Resolution 24-24 authorizing executive director to enter into a letter of agreement with Burton Accounting PLLC for agreed upon policy engagement. Any questions about that?

Director Allen Owen: Director Owen, I make a motion to approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Thank you, Director Owen. Anyone seconding for him?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Second, Director Chapa Gorczynski. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposed? Alright, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Item 11, discussion and possible action on Resolution 24-25 for obtaining a corporate credit card. I think you all will understand how that would be advantageous. We've been using sort of Katherine's personal card and then her being reimbursed for many of the things we do, including travel, including in town events where we need to pay a registration fee. So, does anyone have any questions about that? There are a number of stipulations that we've got on that card in terms of the amount that can be spent. We've got information there about making sure we don't have any carryover month to month. Any questions about that?

Director Jon Keeney: I move to approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, Director Keeney.

Director Kendrick Jones: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Director Jones. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposition? Okay, wonderful. Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I want to thank Bylaws and Legislative Funding for quickly turning this around. I sent it out and asked for comments, and you all came through very quickly. Thank you so much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful, thank you.

Director Allen Owen: Yes, good idea.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Number 12, public comments. I don't think we have anyone in the room today. Is there anyone online that would like to speak?

Ms. Lisa Patke: We have Dominic.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Mr. Mazoch, go ahead please.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Chairwoman, can you hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, we can.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, I got my phone fixed. Okay, great. I'm going to say what I said last month, and I also said this at the Transportation Policy Council. And I know you're trying to advertise the Gulf Coast Rail District. So, my thing would be people complain about trains and stuff. Like in crossings and stuff like that. But I think part of an ad campaign Gulf Coast could do with the local freight rail companies is a commercial to where, "Okay, folks, suppose there's

no railroad tracks in the Houston/Galveston area. You know what that means?" Then you could put on this ad the amount of truck traffic that would have to be placed on our fragile road system. We can't carry the 18-wheels we have now. And with no trains, that's going to put even more traffic on our highways. I think if people realize that the rails are taking a lot of the traffic that comes into and out of Houston and putting it in a commercial, I think that might be something positive. And I got the idea when my mother was still alive. We were down at Heights Boulevard on the UP Houston Terminal Sub, and this UP stack couldn't come in. And my mother said, "Wow, that's a long train." Well, I went... There was one of these double stacked platform container boxcars that came by, and I told my mom, "Mom, would you rather wait for this? Or if that particular platform was on the road, we would have to be fighting ten more 18-wheelers." And she said, "Dominic, we can wait." But that bah-humbug traffic... Happy holidays to you all and yours. And I'll see you next year.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you, Dominic. Happy holidays to you as well. Alright. Is there anyone else? Alright. That takes us to item 13, report from our project manager, Barbara Koslov.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Can I just borrow yours real quick? Thank you. Okay. Good afternoon. Mine is going to be quick. I didn't have a whole lot going on but two things I want to mention. I have been in contact with Thomas Gray at H-GAC, and I also spoke at length with Allie Isbell, who's one of the codirectors of the Transportation Division at H-GAC and spoke about our discussion we had last board meeting where we want to talk about the alignment alternatives. We definitely, one, told them the ones that aren't viable, let's get rid of them. Let's not waste any more time on them. We need to look at all the alternatives, whether they're coming from METRONext or a previous plan. We need to... Or the one that's on the Fort Bend Toll Road, but we need to talk about all of them. So, I've asked to set up a meeting. I have not heard back. But I do feel before they go on to their next steering committee or stakeholder committee, which I sit on those committees, we needed to share our input. So, I'm waiting to hear. I spoke with Allie. She said she'd get back with me. They're pretty busy, and it's holiday time. So, it probably will be the beginning of the new year, but we will talk with H-GAC I think before they keep taking this project forward and possibly in a direction that we're not all in the same place with. It doesn't mean it's going to change, but we need to have an opportunity to have input. So, that's probably what I worked on not a lot but the most right now. Then I have been working with TAG, and Carol has been more involved actually than I have... Chairman Lewis, about the legislative agenda and the rail funding through TxDOT. So, we had a meeting yesterday. We had a meeting Friday. So, we're trying to get this legislation or this LAR request written in a way that doesn't shut anyone out. It makes it kind of clear what we want but a little bit more global than what we were defining before. So, I've been working with TAG on that. And that's it from me right now unless you have any questions.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any questions for Ms. Koslov?

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. We do concur that we want to be able to look at those alignments for sure. Alright, onto the report from Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: So, this begins our short-end report for 2024. You can go to the next slide. And I wanted to first begin with thanking our illustrious board of directors for your effort, input, and influence in the work of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I also want to thank Lisa Patke for your

commitment to GCRD. Next slide. Your assistance... This is her. We talked about it last month, her receiving an award. This is a picture of her receiving this award. Director Ross's family is I think named for or one of his family members is named for that award from TTI on her work not only with the Rail District but her work in general with TTI. So, her assistance also has been an asset to the work at the Rail District. And so thank you to the board and to Ms. Patke.

Director Jeff Ross: That was my wife's uncle...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay.

Director Jeff Ross: ...that the award is named after.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay. So, yes, we had talked about that last meeting, and I said I wanted to make sure we pulled out that picture. Alright, next slide. So, I'll go through kind of our highlights for this year. Social media campaign. I want to thank marketing and outreach committee. Director Bartholomew is the chair. Director Jeff Ross and Andrea French worked to review each proposal and discuss ideas and goals for the social media consultant and the hiring of that consultant. Next slide. Social media strategy. We hired Culture Measures. She came up with a strategy that initiated a comprehensive four-part social media campaign that ran from March 10th to June 30th. The initiatives included engaging the community, promoting safety initiatives, highlighting community centered projects, and showcasing the organization's commitment to innovation and sustainability. There was a strategic mix of educational content and storytelling to foster a deeper connection between GCRD and its community, emphasizing the organization's values and mission. So, next slide. The target audience included local residents, the business community, transportation enthusiasts and professionals, and environmental and safety advocates. And this represents some of the highlights that she presented to us in the report about the impressions, and the growth, and engagement across the platforms that we engaged in for this social media campaign. We will explore options for maintenance of our social media presence with the marketing outreach committee in 2025. Next slide.

So, we heard a lot about the US 90 transit study. It launched in early 2024, though of course, we talked about it for a number of years before that. It's led by a steering committee that includes H-GAC, METRO, TxDOT, GCRD, and Fort Bend Transit. There is a stakeholder committee that's been mentioned earlier that includes the Cities of Houston, Missouri City, Sugarland, and Westbury. You can click to the next slide. And the Brays Oaks Super Neighborhoods. They're committed to finding effective transit solutions. So, we had an update from Thomas Gray on February 13, 2024. Next slide. He talked about this as our conceptual alignments. Those ones that Ms. Koslov talked about and how the changes that we want to see in those alignments and maybe ideas moving forward. The goal is to explore options such as light rail or bus rapid transit that could bring better transportation options to the region. Unlike previous studies that focus on commuter rail, we know that the option of UP's alignment is not feasible, if you will. So, we're looking for fresh alternatives. So, kind of a recap. We started with the study in 2024. They collected data from March to June of 2024. The alternatives evaluation is April to December, which means this month. There's currently a survey on H-GAC's Engage website. I encourage each of the directors and all those who are on the call to go on and put your comments. And you can also see comments that have been put in currently. They're working to have a public meeting. It says late 2024. It's probably going to be 2025 because we're kind of late now. Then

the final report will be early 2025, so we'll be expecting that. So, that is the work for US 90. Next slide.

So, we also had a goal of having a rail grants 101 workshop, which we had the opportunity to have on June 11th. Next slide. Of this year right here in this room. There were 51 people in attendance. Attendees included transportation stakeholders from Bay City, League City, Waller County, Galveston County, Matagorda County, Harris County, and Montgomery. There was a mix of transportation professionals as well as elected officials. Next slide. The purpose of the workshop... And these are some snapshots of people in the workshop on that day. The purpose was to present information about the FRA's grants for freight rail projects. The grants were available through the FRA. They are used to improve safety, efficiency, and reliability of freight rail systems. The efforts for the developments across the US include connections to our Houston/Galveston region. So, representatives on that day were from the FRA. They began our workshop with information from their agency. We had presentations from Goodman Corporation, H-GAC, Texas Northwestern Railway, Texas City Port and Terminal Railway Company, and TranSystems were all guests of ours on that day. Next slide.

THE HART. Of course, we met monthly this year to discuss collaborative efforts for grants, submittals, and potential projects. We provided the letters of support for those that you see on the screen. Texas City Terminal Railway, Griggs-Long-Mykawa, East End Triangle Study, and of course the LAR request that you heard about earlier and in previous meetings. Next slide.

So, 2025 will be a continuation really of all of those, but we wanted to identify and sponsor rail improvement projects for the Houston region. For example, that includes advanced technologies and safety improvements. As we know, the grade separations are high ticket dollar projects and the length to get that on the ground takes a while. So, we are looking to identify those projects that we'll be able to do faster and of course will be felt more quickly by the residents, quite honestly. People who are affected by rail issues in their communities. We'll continue the social media campaign with ideas for marketing and outreach. We talked about student interns, and a number of other options that would help us to continue with that campaign. And I hear you, Dominic. I'm writing down notes as each person comes to speak about the work, we've done on that so far. We would like to host another rail workshop. I will look to the directors to come up with our focus this time. We started with grants last time because that was the beginning of the IJA work, but there are many other topics related to rail that we would be able to provide education and information for our communities. We will continue to support participation with US 90A, the West Belt project progress, and the additional of METRO as a full voting member. We will continue with THE HART initiatives and potential funding sources through legislative and partnership opportunities. And of course, our block crossing and safety programs for the Houston area region. Next slide.

Alright, so these last two slides just kind of represent some of the engagement throughout the year—meetings that I've attended, our board meetings, and just the opportunity to get the Rail District's name out there and to talk about some of our projects and our goals, our value, and mission. Next slide.

That's all that I have. Any questions? And there may have been something that I left off. 365 days is a long time. So, if there's anything that you all would like to add, please let me know.

Director Bruce Mann: Just one quick question. High level, what's the schedule for the West Belt project? So, complete design, start construction, that kind of...?

Ms. Katherine Parker: They are currently in preliminary design—the engineer of record. We had the kickoff meeting on Friday, so the Engage website... the City of Houston's Engage website actually had an update today. So, they'll provide updates as we go along, and I'll keep you all up to speed. I don't have a calendar just yet, but TranSystems is the engineer of record and Tom Munson met with us, and we went through... Of course, you know how those meetings go into all the details of everything from the project to the administrative pieces of the invoices being paid, but the kickoff has started, so we are moving forward.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Bartholomew?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I just wanted to mention thanking the board of directors for the engagement on the social media platforms and allowing us to really capture video and everything during this year. It was really I think fruitful in terms of putting information out there. So, thank you all so much for the opportunity to head that up.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. We're going to be looking forward to springboarding that. I'd like to mention a couple things in just a second. Anyone else? Alright, thank you, Ms. Parker, for that. It's been a busy year. I wanted to mention a couple of things on the heels of what you were saying. So, H-GAC has a link for comments on 90A, right?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And the City has a link for...?

Ms. Katherine Parker: West Belt.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Let's get both of those on our... both of those links on our webpage. And actually I'm thinking we should do a social media blip about those links. Then that would allow people like Steve and myself to post it out to other people. And I called him out because he showed me how to do it. So, let's leverage that and really help get some more comments to H-GAC as well as people viewing things with the City.

So, the other thought I had as we look at our agenda next year, I have been quite unhappy, as I know everyone has been, with the young man who was hit by the train yesterday on the track. The Chronicle had an editorial today where they... They didn't call GCRD by name, but they referred to us as the officials working for grade separations. But as part of the article... And I'd suggest everyone go back and read it. They had a recommendation that everyone working on this or not working on this should get together with the HISD, the educators, etc., etc. And so as I was thinking about... And one of the other things they had, which they don't... I mean they're the media. So, they had in there that we should more aggressively pursue federal grants. I mean... Okay, they don't know what they said. But what that did say to me is we've been looking at the railroad grants from FRA, and I know there have been a couple of DOTs... But the USDOT has a program called Safe Routes to Schools. I think we should do a targeted focus on Safe Routes to Schools to see if we can... if GCRD can help from the perspective of Safe Routes to Schools. Because I was thinking, I don't know who else would do Safe Routes to Schools. So, I think it would fall under our umbrella, so I want to get that on our list for next year

and start figuring out what that means and really pursue it, get the railroads in, HISD in, and pull together stakeholders and collaborators to pursue that. We know about McReynolds but, from even what we know, that pedestrian crossing is proceeding so slowly. And the children are going to school every day. So, I guess I'm feeling some urgency here, and I want to put that on our agenda. Alright. Okay. Is there anything else for Ms. Parker?

Director Jon Keeney: Just a couple things. Can we be more proactive? Can we be more proactive as a railway agency in fostering rail safety in these schools?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I think we can.

Director Jon Keeney: I certainly would, although I'm not an expert, I certainly can understand what's going on. And I certainly would devote the time and energy, as I suspect other members here would, too, just to get these young people thinking about their behaviors around rail because rail is not going anywhere.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: It's not.

Director Jon Keeney: And when I read this in the paper, and I read what you're talking about in here, that and the editorial... And it just touches my soul.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Me, too.

Director Jon Keeney: That these young people have to deal with that sort of thing. And I think it would... we should devote some funds and some effort to try to improve safety awareness.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I could not agree more. And so we probably might want to give that charge to our marketing folks to think about. So, Dr. Lewis, with her nonmarketing mind this morning on the heels of what you were saying, had these letters, write DDE—Don't Do It Ever. I mean when you're sitting there looking at the train, DDE, do not do it. I don't care how late you are for school. I don't care. Just don't do it. And our following through on something like that is going to have a more rapid response than trying to get pedestrian overpasses and money for safe crosses or that kind of thing is just going to take forever. As we said, they're going to school every day.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, the railroad is not here, but it would be interesting to see when was the last time Operation Lifesaver went to these communities and these schools that are having these issues because what we ought to talk to them about is at least getting in there at least once a year, if not more. Because like you said, it's an everyday risk.

Director Jon Keeney: And the mix of kids in schools changes every year.

Director Bruce Mann: Right.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's true. That's very true.

Director Jon Keeney: There are always people who don't know.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's very true. That's very true.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Well, and administrations as well.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And administrations as well. Yes, that is so true.

Ms. Katherine Parker: So, different principals and teachers.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Another hand? Director Bartholomew?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I'm wondering if there... Thank you, Director. I wanted to know if there is a current list of schools that are in the particular areas that we collaborate with or already correspond with, with regard to messaging or imaging. As Director Mann said, Bruce Mann said, the last communication or operation that we've had to address this level of communication around safety, especially at that age group. If we are able to target a particular campaign during the school year in those areas, is there funding around that to promote that or developing a campaign to create that safety net? And how often can we do something like that?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, I think those would be the questions that the Marketing Committee would address at your first meeting to start communicating about this. I don't think we have the list of schools right now. I don't know. Are you aware of it, Bruce? So... Go ahead.

Ms. Katherine Parker: For the East end, yes, there is a list of schools and work to date that has been done. So, we would need to develop for our adjacent counties because this applies throughout. So that that same program could be taken to Waller, Montgomery, Galveston, Fort Bend, and with the same information near those rail crossings or just railroad in general.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: It would be great if we were able... I'm sorry to jump in. It would be great if we were able to develop some series of campaign prior to the start of school, especially for 2025.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: This is Director Chapa Gorczynski. With regard, we've done some of this outreach in the East End, and I don't want to take away... is a really good resource for us. I will say that one of the partners that we really need at the table is the school principals from the schools that are most impacted in these areas. There is this challenge where... And I think of kind of two examples. So, one is where the principal is trying to be really appropriately strict with students about tardies but having to talk about the fear and anxiety that comes with what happens if a train stops, what kind of grace is a principal or district going to give when there's a train stopped near the intersection of a school. The second one quite candidly has to do with around breakfast times and food. Because what we have found is that if children are food insecure and they have to eat breakfast at school and the train is stopped, and that is the meal that they get before they start the day, that's an added pressure. And so while I absolutely agree on educational programs and partnering, when it comes to students, unless we're prepared to operate completely autonomously outside the school, there has to be really candid conversations with campus principals about how we can support them. Because ultimately it's their enforcement on the ground that builds anxiety and expectations and why we have kids... One of the reasons, not all of the reasons, that we have kids kind of crossing over and under is

because they have to beat the bell, and they want to be in on time. We are devastated in the east end that this has happened. And we know that we've collectively as a community have been mourning and talking about the issue for many years, so we would welcome not just support for the family at this time, but we need even education about what it means to have a grade separation because nobody knows. "They sound very fancy. What's a grade separation? Why do we use them? Why do we need investment in it?" This is a moment that we really need partners from the Gulf Coast Rail District and other counties to talk about the critical importance of these, especially near school crossings.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, what you say obviously further complicates what was already a complicated matter, but we're bright people. I think we shouldn't try to keep not trying to figure it out and make it better because obviously everyone is affected by it. I don't think anyone who hears or reads it cannot be affected. And I think us, we feel we're like somewhat in a position to do something. Like as I'm reading the editorial, I'm like, "Okay, well, that's us, too." Right? So, we do want to try to respond.

Director Jon Keeney: Just one other component, just to build on Ms. Gorczynski's comments. We received that presentation from the folks who are beginning to monitor and give feedback. If that mechanism could be specifically targeted for those schools that are involved here with a signal going out to the principal or whoever within the school system, that gives the kids the credibility that they lack if they just say, "I was just late because of the train." I want to make it easy for the kids and also easy for the administration because they really do have to control the little darlings. And it's difficult.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And the principals are accountable to someone else who's going to look at these tardies and...

Director Jon Keeney: Of course.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...say, "Why do you have so many tardies?"

Director Jon Keeney: Of course.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: It rolls up.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, I think having been in the rail industry for a while, it's never one thing that causes something. It's 3 or 4 or 5 or 17 different things that had to go wrong for something to happen. And we need to look at this holistically. And talking to the principals is a great example because no kid should have to make the choice between getting detention or dying. That's just... We're all smart enough to know that. So, as a community we have to look at this holistically and how can we all work together to ensure that this never happens again.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's the goal. Alright. Thank you, everyone, for the thoughts. And we will continue to talk about this and work on it and look at it. Number 15, that takes us to my announcements. As Ms. Koslov mentioned, we are still working on the legislative agenda. It's still there. And as we know from having done this before, we'll monitor it basically sort of week to week. And as long as it's still there, and we aren't getting any hits, we're in good shape. The complexity that came up last week about the language from the TAG, the Transportation Advocacy Group, was about the confusion with the Rail Relocation Fund, which we had

advocated previously. So, it was... And I guess people had rail relocation in their minds, so it was very difficult to get people to recognize that's not what we're asking for this time. And as a matter of fact, if we ask for that this time, we actually are supporting the people from San Antonio to Dallas who are working for passenger rail.

So, they are asking for the Rail Relocation Fund to be funded, but they're asking for it to be funded for passenger rail. What we've learned from Chad at TxDOT is that the Rail Relocation Fund... See, that's one of the things about how legislation is worded and the depth of our lack of understanding, quite frankly, of the legislation. Last time we worked so hard for rail relocation thinking we would get funding for grade separations. Then we learned from Chad that language in that legislation prohibits it from being used on grade separations. So, anyway, now where we are is that we have been able to get the language so that it's still... And I guess because people had this rail relocation on their brain and maybe they're trying to embrace with the rest of the state, the request for rail relocation did not get removed from the TAG request. But we got another statement in about rail and roadway safety improvements, and then it has an "and" rail relocation. And so TAG is still asking for rail relocation. And I guess my takeaway away from it is maybe some year, once it gets into 2040, we in Harris County will have some kind of passenger rail, and we can benefit from it. Okay. That's kind of a joke, kind of not. But from where we are, our pursuit for the LAR is for the grade separations, and now we've even started talking to TxDOT about the LAR allowing us to do the signalization and the technology improvements. So, it's not just grade separations. So, keep that little drip going so that when the money comes out it's not just the grade separations. As we pursue this... And I know every... You have things that you can think about, but you don't let the thought really gel. It takes a long time for us to get grade separations, and they are very expensive. So, we are not going to have grade separations at most of our locations. But what we can do is have safety technology improvements at most of our locations. So, as soon as... I think for me, I'm kind of going through a mind change of what we actually need to be pursuing. Not that we stopped doing grade separations but that we really can sort of add to our focus in a big, deep way these other types of improvements that cost less money and that we can get more widely around the region. So, that's the Texas Legislature story for now. Any questions or thoughts on that? By the next time we meet they'll be going forward full blast. TAG is going out the end of February for Green Light Houston Day. So, anyone who wants to try to get that on their calendar and agenda. Where we go and talk to the legislators about things we're asking. We'd be happy to have you join. Okay. I don't see any hands. Next meeting, January 14th. By the time we have our next meeting we will have had Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, New Year. Everything will be behind us, and we'll be in 2025. So, everyone have a great holiday season. Stay safe. Eat a lot. Get back on your diets in January.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Already on it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. So, can we have a motion to adjourn?

Director Bruce Mann: Moved.

Director Jean Mann: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thanks, everyone. See you all. Thank you for being on.
(Adjourned at 2:53 p.m.)

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:
Jon Keeney
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Jon Keeney, Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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