



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – March 9, 2021

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 via the BlueJeans web-based platform due to the disruption of normal business during the COVID-19 pandemic. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Trey Duhon, Michael Dyll, Pablo Escamilla, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, Richard L. Muller, Jr., Allen Owen, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Abigail M. Gonzalez, Jim Robinson, and Dennis Winkler. 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.

Chairperson Lewis: I think he'll be on shortly, so I'll go ahead and get us started because I don't want us to not make the best use of everyone's time. So, I'm going to go ahead and start the recording (2:03 p.m.).

Automated voice: Recording has started.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great. So, I want to call the meeting to order today. It's March 9th, 2021, Gulf Coast Rail District. Judge Duhon, would you help us by certifying quorum, and Katherine may be able to assist. The names are there now so I see those.

Director Duhon: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: You want me to call roll?

Director Duhon: Yes. If you would, go ahead, Katherine, and call the roll.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Beeson?

Director Beeson: I'm on.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Dyll? Director Gonzalez, she won't be here. Director Ross? Director Escamilla?

Director Escamilla: Present.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Lewis?

Chairperson Lewis: Correct, here.

Ms. Katherine Parker: We know that Director Winkler will be out. Director Mann?

Director Mann: Present, thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright. Director Muller?

Director Muller: I'm here.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Owen?

Director Owen: I'm here.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Duhon?

Director Duhon: Present.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And Director Robinson?

Director Robinson: Present.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you.

Director Duhon: Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Director Duhon: Thank you, Katherine. Madam Chairman, I certify a quorum.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great, thank you. Next thing we have is to confirm that our meeting was posted appropriately given the Open Meeting Act. Katherine, would you confirm that for us, please?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes, everything was posted timely.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect, thank you. The next item we have is to recognize the time of Director Escamilla on our Gulf Coast Rail District and thank him as much as we possibly might do so for your time here with us. So, we've got a resolution recognizing and appreciating your distinguished service on Gulf Coast Rail District. And notice that you have served with us since July 13th, 2010. That was from a resolution with a 10 at the beginning, so it's been quite a long time that we've been blessed with your presence.

Whereas, in furtherance of this organization, Mr. Escamilla graciously contributed his time and expertise and provided invaluable insight, perspective, and guidance to the Board of Directors to assist the District in fulfilling its mission. Whereas, throughout his Gulf Coast Rail District Board tenure, he served in several positions including vice-secretary, 2013 and 2014; secretary, 2015 to 2017; treasurer, 2017 to 2021; has chaired our Bylaws Committee in 2021; and served as co-chair of Legislative and Funding, 2020 to 2021. So, therefore, be it resolved that Gulf Coast Rail District acknowledges and extends our gratitude to Mr. Pablo Escamilla for your distinguished service to Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors and express our deep

appreciation for the outstanding contributions that you've made during your tenure. It's signed on this 9th day of March by myself and Director Winkler.

So, Pablo, thank you so much. I want to give you just the hugest applause because you have helped so much over the last year as I've been chair. Every time I had sort of a bylaws question and just making sure that we, number one, understood our quorum, what that number was given vacant positions, and so your contributions to helping us clarify all that is just hugely appreciated. So, we want to just give you a baton and some flowers and... accept this in acknowledgement of how much we appreciate you.

Director Escamilla: Well, Dr. Lewis, thank you very much for those kind words and I appreciate the resolution and the letter of appreciation. I didn't realize till now that I had been serving since 2010, but it has been a while. I'm going to keep it very short. I'm just going to tell you that I've had a wonderful time serving on this board. It's been very fulfilling, but most importantly and above all is the individuals with whom I served as my colleagues, which is the present and the past members of the directors. Thank you all very much. It's been an honor and a pleasure to serve with you and I wish you all the best. I also congratulate Ms. Peterman who is going to succeed me and wish her all the best and hope she has as fulfilling a time as I have had in the honor of serving with all of you. Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

Chairperson Lewis: Most appreciated. Thank you and thank you for those kind words about us as well.

Director Escamilla: I guess I should stick around for the next resolution. Is Ms. Peterman on?

Chairperson Lewis: She is not on, so we're going to have to pass that without her today.

Director Escamilla: Okay. She's already been confirmed. Here we go again with bylaws stuff. So, I can get off, I guess, or will you need me for a quorum? I don't think you will.

Chairperson Lewis: Let me look because I think we had counted you. I think Jeff is on the phone now. Jeff, will you confirm that? I think you have to *6 or *9 to verbalize.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Dyll is present as well.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, good.

Director Dyll: Hello, guys. So sorry for being late. I apologize.

Chairperson Lewis: No problem. So, that answers that.

Director Escamilla: I will jump on my saddle on my horse and go off and drift off into the sunset.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Escamilla: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Director Duhon: Pablo, appreciate everything.

Director Beeson: Take care. Thanks for your help.

Director Owen: Thank you.

Director Escamilla: All the best to all of you. Thank you very much.

Director Muller: Thank you, Pablo.

Director Escamilla: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Absolutely.

Director Mann: Madam Chair, I'd like to make a motion to approve.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you. That was made by Director Mann. Is there a second?

Director Duhon: Second, Judge Duhon.

Chairperson Lewis: Duhon, okay. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, giving a resolution letter to Director Escamilla, which we just did, so thank you for confirming that for us.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, what we actually have to have action on is number five, which is discussion and possible action on resolution 21-05, recognizing City of Houston appointment of Ms. Tina Arias Peterman to position six on Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors. There's information about Ms. Peterman in your packet. You will note that she is a person who's got much experience in public finance and banking. I think we'll be able to be well-apprised of her knowledge and assistance in that arena as we look to focus on what is, for us, a very major, quite frankly, void in getting us a dedicated source of funding to advance our mission. So, her resume is there. I'm sure that you will look at it, if you haven't already, at your leisure. I know we will all look forward to getting to meet her. The resolution itself today that we're wanting to pass does acknowledge that she has been appointed to this position by the City of Houston, position number six.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I will ask what is your pleasure about that, that the Board of Directors will confirm her appointment to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Gulf Coast Rail District. Her term would end January 2023.

Director Duhon: Madam Chairman, I make a motion.

Director Muller: This is Director Muller, I second.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Motion made by Director Duhon, seconded by Director Muller. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

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

Chairperson Lewis: Next item we have on the agenda is discussion and possible action on our minutes. Director Duhon, will you take lead on that for us? We've got two sets of minutes—February 2nd, which was our special meeting, and then February 9th, which was our regular meeting.

Director Duhon: Yes, so number six is discussion and possible action on minutes for the February 2nd, 2021, special meeting. I was not present at that meeting unfortunately. I think we had communication issues, so with that, everybody should have received the proposed minutes.

Director Duhon: If there's not any changes, I would entertain a motion.

Director Owen: Director Owen, so moved.

Director Mann: Second, Mann.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Owen and Mann. Any discussion? All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposition? Alright, great, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Number seven, Judge Duhon, that's the meeting of February 9th.

Director Duhon: Yes, Madam Chairman. So, everybody should have a copy of those meeting minutes as well. I was at this meeting so I will go ahead and make the motion to approve the minutes for February 9th, 2021.

Director Beeson: Director Beeson will second that.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, Duhon and Beeson. Discussion? All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposition? Okay, thank you. I do have a question. When I was looking through the notes, Director Muller, you had mentioned a person whose last name showed in the minutes on February 2nd as Meal, M-E-A-L. I wanted to ask was that the correct spelling of that name?

Director Muller: I'm sorry, say it again?

Chairperson Lewis: It was Meal, it was someone that you knew. And I didn't write down the first name, but I had noticed the last name was Meal, M-E-A-L.

Director Muller: It's M-E-A-L-S.

Chairperson Lewis: M-E-A-L-S, so there's an "S" on the end of it, Meals. Okay, perfect, Alright. Alright, so we'll check and make sure that that's correct. Thank you. Okay. Now, a report from the treasurer. Director Owen, please?

Director Owen: The new treasurer, huh?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Owen: Just [Inaudible 00:11:11]. First of all, I ask Cory Burton to give us a report on our investments. Cory?

Mr. Cory Burton: Thank you. This is Cory Burton with Municipal Accounts. You each have a copy of our report in front of you there. And if you flip past the cover page, you see your operating fund checking account had expenses totaling \$7,290. The only item of note there is that first check listed there to McGriff Seibels & Williams. That's your annual insurance premium and that's the same fee that you paid last year. Other than that, the other two checks are pretty typical in your check stack this month. Next page is your investments. There is one new CD listed there, since you last met, with SouthStar Bank. Other than that, everything is else

pretty standard and quiet. Next page there is your pledged securities. Everything is all set with BBVA, with the letter of credit. Following that is a couple pages showing your budget and showing the detail for February as well as your fiscal year-to-date. Your expenses have come in a little bit lighter than what we'd expected so that's good to see. After that, you have your grant status report on page seven and no change there from last month's report. It's been pretty quiet on that front. And then the last couple pages of our report is the quarterly investment report for the quarter ending December 31st. That's all I have for you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Director Owen: Alright. Item nine, Madam Chairman, item nine is the approval of resolution 21-06 ratifying our payments that were just discussed and I motion that they be approved.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. A second?

Director Duhon: Second, Judge Duhon.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Thank you, Owen and Duhon. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposed? Great, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: So, we are now at public comments. I don't know if we have anyone who would like to say anything representing the public sector. Anyone who's on that would wish to have comment? Okay.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Tyson Moeller of Union Pacific's on, but no. No official comments.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great, thank you.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, on to number 11, status report on our legislative priorities. Director Ross was slated to give that report. I don't know if he's able to unmute himself. I see him on. He's the 504 number, 504-4091. I hope you're able to unmute, Director Ross, and provide that report for us. Let me see if I can unmute you, hold on a minute. Yay! I think I just did. You know, sometimes...

Director Ross: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Sometimes my personality comes out, right, and I forget that these are verbatim recordings, so that, "Yay!" is going to be in your minutes next time. I apologize for that. Jeff, can you speak so that we can hear you, I wonder?

Director Ross: I can... I can hear you very well.

Chairperson Lewis: And now we can hear you, awesome.

Director Ross: Okay. So, item 11 is the legislative priorities, and we traded some email with Rick Miller earlier this week. I think tomorrow is actually a big day for him, because he's meeting with Senators Miles and Alvarado and State Reps Thompson and Reynolds about our two resolutions. And then I think he's also meeting with CenterPoint tomorrow with Jeff Bonham, who's their statewide legislative person, to talk to him about CenterPoint's position. I did forward to him the email that Evan Mills had sent, which was directed at commuter rail. And

as Director Owen has talked several times, we're not doing commuter rail. We want the ability to do something else that won't interfere like commuter rail would have. So, we need to test that out as well, to know how far we think we might make it in the session. That would conclude my view of it, but I open it up to Director Owen or anybody else who's been involved in these conversations.

Director Owen: Yes, Chairman Lewis. I did, I think, probably meet with the mayor of Sugar Land, Meadows Place, and Stafford as I told you I would last time, and kind of went over the resolution with them and asked their support on it. They're supportive of us doing this. Obviously, some of their concerns that were expressed, we're going to have to deal with at a later date, which I emphasized to them has nothing to do with what we're doing right now, that we need to get the bill passed first. But I know some of their concerns, and I've already discussed some of it with Tom Jasien with METRO. I think Sugar Land was more concerned about what this RBT was going to look like, and they said if it looks like a bus, it's going to be hard to get their citizens onboard with it. So, I assured him that they can make these look like anything you want to, that they're using them in the Galleria right now, and that they're not going to look like a normal bus, they're going to be a little bit different. Obviously, wondering about the right-of-way, where is that right-of-way going, what part of it we're going to use, what their cost will be if this ends up being done and we form a transit district.

So, all of those kinds of things were talked about, but as I assured them, right now all we need them to do—and they promised to do that—was get the resolution before their council supporting the two referendums. One, to at least to get CenterPoint's right-of-way to use if they agree. And I told them, obviously, this is going to be up to CenterPoint. It's not up to the legislature, it's going to be up to CenterPoint to say yea or nay, that we can't wait another two years to do that. And the second part of it was changing the transportation code to allow something other than rail for us. So, they're agreeable to that. They're having a meeting next week, the mayors are. And it's really funny because they're meeting at the Pond. Judge Duhon, you know about the Pond? You're on mute, Judge. Well, the Pond is owned by CenterPoint.

Director Duhon: Yes, yes, I am familiar with the Pond.

Director Owen: The Pond is a little facility down right off of I-10 that CenterPoint owns, and it's basically where the water from the nuclear power plant goes into a cooling pond. And there's great fishing but CenterPoint uses this facility for meetings with their legislative people and everything. So, the mayors of Fort Bend County are going to have their retreat there next week and they have promised me that this will be discussed with all of the mayors, because we want to get the Mayor and Council Association, which is the 14 mayors in Fort Bend County. We would like that resolution approved and passed by that organization as well as the mayors of Missouri City, Stafford, Meadows Place, and Sugar Land. And they've agreed that that will take place.

So, I will continue to follow up with them, but they're supportive of the resolution. It's a lot of questions that all of us don't have an answer to yet and will at some later date. I did emphasize to them that the long-term plans were to take this all the way to Richmond and Rosenberg, even if we have to use TxDOT's right-of-way. And that even if CenterPoint decides that they're not going to allow us to use their right-of-way, then we would go back and see if TxDOT is willing to work with us in some form to use TxDOT's rights-of-way. But again, they're supportive of the resolution and we'll see what happens as they take it before their councils.

Chairperson Lewis: Awesome. So, when you mentioned the 14 cities, are all of those in Fort Bend or is it 14?

Director Owen: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright.

Director Owen: There are 14 cities in Fort Bend County. Most people don't realize that because some of them like Pleak and Beasley and some of those... and Kendelton, they're very small, but they go all the way from Katy, all the way to Kendleton, all the way to Arcola to Thompsons. So, yes, there are 14 of them and I chaired that organization for 24 years.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Is Brookshire in it? Brookshire and Fulshear, are both of those in? I don't know, I'm just asking.

Director Owen: Are what?

Chairperson Lewis: Fulshear and Brook... Isn't it Brookshire?

Director Duhon: Brookshire... Brookshire is not.

Chairperson Lewis: Brookshire's in Waller.

Director Owen: Yes, but Fulshear is.

Chairperson Lewis: But Fulshear is. Okay.

Director Owen: I know Katy is and Katy's in three counties.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Yes.

Director Owen: But they are, in fact, in the organization because they are partly in Fort Bend County. And oddly enough, there is a part of the City of Houston that is in Fort Bend County right out of Missouri City. The City of Houston is not... they're not a member of that organization but they are part of it because of that piece that they have in Fort Bend County. Matter of fact, Commissioner Prestage used to live in that portion of the county. But anyway, yes, there are 14 cities and I want to get that association. It's a powerful association, it represents a lot of people. Whether this goes to them or not is immaterial. It's going to serve Fort Bend County and their interest is in Fort Bend County.

Chairperson Lewis: Well, and the thing is we're still looking at West Park for BRT, and it goes to Fulshear.

Director Owen: Yes, it does. Yes, it does.

Chairperson Lewis: So, they are indeed very influential and a part of what we're talking about here.

Director Owen: Yes because Weston Lakes is in it as well.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, Alright. It sounds great. If you need anything from us, let us know, either Katherine or myself.

Director Owen: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Or anybody else who's on the board who would be able to lend a hand.

Director Owen: They have the resolutions. Yes, they have the resolutions.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great, fabulous. So, Directors Ross and Owen, does that conclude your report on item 11? And let me ask if anybody has any questions on anything we've heard?

Director Ross: Well, this is Director Ross. I'd like to add one thing. I don't know if many of you saw it, but TxDOT is now proposing to increase the capacity of I-10 inside the 610 Loop. So, they've already talked about doing a planning study on the Hempstead to build more lanes there after they just finished the 290 project. They want to add more to I-10 inside the 610 Loop. And if we don't get this idea out on the table as viable, the City's going to be concreted over by TxDOT before we're able to do anything. So, that's why I think it's critical that we're doing it this year.

Director Owen: I agree.

Chairperson Lewis: Anyone else have any other comments or thoughts on item 11? Alright, thank you two. Most appreciated. Item 12, report from Ms. Parker, her recent activities.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon, everyone. Alright. I wanted to go over the board appointments as we're having changes to our board. They are two-year terms. Directors serve until either their appointing entity reappoints or replaces. And for example, our board members that came on to fulfill the remainder of a term, I think Muller and the last two of them, I'm sorry...

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, Owen. Owen was the other one.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes. So, they basically fill the remainder of the past term and then we sent out our letters in December. Everyone started with the 2021 to 2023. So, every two years, the district sends out notices to the appointing entities to either update or request appointments, and at that time is when they can decide whether they will continue or make changes. Interim letters go out if an appointee resigns or passes away, like in the case of Mayor Scarcella. So, that's just kind of an update for maybe our newer group, and I'll provide this information as well to Ms. Peterman.

Next, just a few notes on tomorrow. Director Lewis and I will meet with Deputy Director Davis, who is the new transportation and drainage deputy director, to discuss just an introduction, of course, and also our work with the West Belt Project. I've attended a few of the TAG Under the Dome sessions and had an opportunity to hear from different legislators about just how unique this session will be. And so hopefully, our work will move forward even with all of what they are

having to deal with just for this year. I also was a part of the first working group meeting for the Rail TxDOT Project.

And our TranStar future meetings, I've had questions from a few directors about whether we'll be back in person. Dinah Massey, I spoke with her yesterday, and they will be discussing that in late spring is what she told me. Their concern is how to social distance in the conference room for the meetings that they have. Our case, we don't usually have a lot of members, but if we were ever to have a public meeting, that would be one of the issues that we'd have to try to deal with. So, for now, we'll be virtual, but she will keep me up-to-date as to what they decide for the facility as a whole.

Next, Harris County, we are working with them to get their contribution to the board. It will be on March 30th Commissioners Court docket. So, hopefully, not too long after that, we will have a deposit in our account. On the Tuesday of the freeze, I was working on my phone trying to get all of our documents together. So hopefully, that will go through smoothly and will continue on. I think it's been a couple years since they've been able to give their contribution, but we're on track.

The brochure will be mailed out to agencies and groups that we work with. It's also available as a PDF on our website in two locations—the News and Announcements and also the Contact Us. If there's anyone in particular that you would like me to send it to, just shoot me an email and I can drop that email for directors as well.

And lastly, our April meeting, I want to thank Director Mann for talking to and reaching out to Megan Shea, who's the assistant director of public projects with BNSF. She will be our guest on next month's meeting to talk about Cleveland Logistics Park and updates from BNSF. And also, if there are any other speakers that you would like to have, just let me know.

Oh, and my last slide.. although Mr. Escamilla's gone, I will definitely send this to him. It was kind of then and now pictures that I was able to pull out. Just a thank you to him and from when he started back with us in 2010, looks like, to now. And I'm sure he'll laugh about that but it's a good thing to have him with us this many years and I've expressed that to him personally as well. That's all I have. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Any questions for Katherine? First of all, let's tell her that we're not sure we want her to do then and now photos for everybody.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Actually, everybody's looking well.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, goodness. Okay.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Katherine, this is Tyson. What I was going to recommend... Hopefully in the next two to three months, we'll have that freight mobility study that will be coming out. I know that U has gone through and reviewed it, BNSF is going through the review process with HNTB. So, we'd hope that we'd have kind of a more of a stakeholder sit-down discussion about some of the findings and then potential guidance for them before they publish that report for the general public... but that would be a future topic for this group that we've had some overviews for.

[Crosstalk 00:29:06]

Chairperson Lewis: Is that the one that's being coordinated by... I'm sorry, Ms. Parker, I was just clarifying. Is that the one that's being coordinated by H-GAC?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: This one... it's paid for by TxDOT and then it's coordinated by the various stakeholders on this, Dr. Lewis. And so, it is in collaboration with H-GAC, absolutely. In this particular model, this is where UP and BNSF, we handed over some of our train modeling information over to HNTB under some strict NDAs there to protect some of our confidential information. But to give us a little bit more in-depth look at the Houston Complex for some of these future projects. It'll come along with some benefit-cost analysis on some specific projects there as well.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: More to come. That's moved a little bit slower than we would hope but I think it'll be some good results there.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you, Tyson. Ms. Parker, you were saying? I was just trying to clarify which report it was before he clicked off.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: There's a lot of studies.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Ms. Katherine Parker: But yes, definitely, we'll want an update when they're available, either you or I guess whoever... with someone from HNTB or would it be you?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Might have both. I mean, it might be good to have HNTB do the presentation, if they're willing to do that, but we'll talk to them. We'll have a stakeholder discussion before that, but that might be appropriate then to present to the team. And then, Katherine, we'd be interested in some of your conversations with the City there. Like, with the HBT West Belt, kind of help us understand what some of their feedback is. Especially after COVID, from a financial standpoint, where they think they are. Because I think UP's looking to have a discussion with the City on various projects, just because of COVID, some things that have been delayed over the last year or so. But there are some mutual projects, probably HBT being one of those, as well as maybe some other projects that Rail District might be able to assist with.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay. Thank you.

Director Muller: This is Director Muller. Can I ask a question on that study?

Chairperson Lewis: Absolutely.

Director Muller: So, Tyson, who were the stakeholders that participated in that one? Do you know?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Oh. It was the railroads that primarily gave the information in there. The stakeholders that we had identified, the Rail District was part of that. We had the various ports that were included there. You had Port of Freeport, Houston, and Beaumont because it reached that far east. Katherine, do you remember... did we have other stakeholders at some of those initial discussions there?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I know H-GAC.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. H-GAC.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Class I.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: And I think we had the City there. Maureen may have been there.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes. Maureen was there. I'll have to look back at my notes. I think that's it.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. I think that was it—a smaller group. If there's others, the ultimate intent will be, we thought of them as kind of primary stakeholders, and then ultimately then be able to publish that document for everybody's visibility there.

Chairperson Lewis: So, was it just freight rail? Did it include any trucking?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: This one did not include trucking. It was a focus on the rail and the roadways. And so there will be a list of at-grade crossings that are out there today, and they'll have recommended improvements for overall mobility. There're also rail projects, capacity-type projects, that would actually improve then the public's mobility. So, if you double-tracked a single mainline bridge, like over on our East Belt, that that would create better mobility. One, trains can move freer, but then it's less blocked crossings, if that makes sense, because you don't have trains waiting for each other at a bottleneck there. So, there should be some good examples of projects like that that have mutual benefits there.

Director Mann: I think the Greater Houston Freight Committee was one of the stakeholders as well. And just maybe trying to set the perspective on this correctly, I think what our end goal for this should be is when this is done, there's a regional study done for the Houston Region, there's a regional study that was done for the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. I think in the end, what we really ought to be trying to do is take between Dallas and Houston, those are two pretty big Congressional inputs for the state of Texas, is then go and say, "Hey, we've got this rail plan for the state to improve freight movement in the two biggest areas and Houston's the second-largest rail footprint in the country. We need funding to go make some of this happen." I think that's when you get kind of the Dallas/Fort Worth/Houston delegation for the state together and say, "Hey, we need to go create a funding source for some of this stuff to happen."

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Right. And so, Bruce, to your point, what the COG did up in the DFW complex is that they used a phase one of a very similar complex study of what we're completing here in Houston, and they used that very successful in getting a CRISI grant to improve some of their passenger but also some of the freight railroad capacity up there. And so, they got a \$25 million CRISI grant. But you're absolutely spot-on that that would be kind of a next step that we

identify, maybe like a top five or so list of improvements in the complex to see what makes sense for H-GAC to support and/or future grant opportunities there.

Director Muller: This is Director Muller again. Do you know if that study or the one from Dallas tried to quantify the cost-benefit of the grade-separated crossings or even crossing improvements, not just from the railroad's perspective but from the public perspective?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes, absolutely.

Director Muller: And the reason I ask... Yes...

[Crosstalk 00:35:35]

Mr. Tyson Moeller: That's a key component that we added there into that study versus the study that was done back in 2007. Yes, so the whole strategy was that there's something available for the public agencies to kind of have that first step of what that benefit-cost analysis looks like. They couldn't do it for all of them. They tried to put that together for the top 20. And it wasn't just the top 20. It was out of the top 50, they picked 20 of the grade separation capabilities or possibilities, and tried to put an estimated cost to it, and then that benefit-cost analysis that really focused in on the public side. Because if you're going to go after federal grants, most of those really need to have more of a public benefit than a direct benefit to the railroad, right? Because...

[Crosstalk 00:36:30]

Director Muller: Yes, and more importantly... The real issue is for the local jurisdictions who oftentimes have to match whatever federal dollars there are. It's important to be able to say to them, "But yes, this benefits the railroad, but it also benefits your citizens and here's the document that proves that out." So, I'm glad you included that. That will be helpful.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: That was absolutely the lens that we went into this, doing the study. Because that was something that the study from, it was what, 12 years ago or so lacked. So, it was a study, but it didn't really give us good direction for that next step.

Director Muller: And the hope of a large infrastructure bill out of Congress later this year, it's timely, I guess.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. I'll give an example. Over in the San Antonio Complex, we worked with TxDOT. It wasn't as large or encompassing study, but it did identify a couple of key grade separations. Based off that study, we're now working with the city and the county there in San Antonio. TxDOT's helping with an additional phase into two specific grade separations that the city and county are especially interested in. And that would either then qualify them for future MPO funding or a future grant opportunity application for them. I would view that as very similar, Dr. Lewis. We gave an overview for H-GAC recently to get their new director up to speed on things that are going on. So, we indicated that that study was coming down as well, which will be beneficial for him being new to the complex.

Director Muller: And you expect that to be final when?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: I would say probably at least three months here before we get to a final, three to four months. We've gone through and kind of vetted it, BNSF is doing the same vetting. And then I think what we need to do is bring the stakeholders all back together, to make sure that we have the findings that are needed to get final approval then for publishing for the general public. Katherine would be part of that discussion. Dr. Lewis and Bruce, as part of the port, will be there. So, you've got various touchpoints within this board here that will have that report there.

Chairperson Lewis: So, we'll make sure that once it's available, we'll let all of our directors know, for sure. And probably even have a link to it on our website because it'd be very important for us as we think about going forward.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Absolutely. I think we can try to put kind of an executive summary together as far as some things that would be pertinent to this group here.

Chairperson Lewis: And as I think, I guess, Ms. Parker mentioned too, between the two of you, we can actually get a presentation to our board. Katherine was asking if HNTB would do that or it might be, I think your response was maybe it's joint. But that would give us an opportunity to kind of look over it both and hear about it sort of at the same time as we...

[Crosstalk 00:39:54]

Mr. Tyson Moeller: I think we might even...

Chairperson Lewis: ...about this going forward.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes, we might have HNTB and maybe even have Chad Coburn from TxDOT Rail Division join in the conversations, so it might be a good collaborative discussion.

Director Muller: My only comment would be you've got a county judge; you've got a former mayor on this board. They probably know better, understand better how the public is going to think about these things. So, you may want to get their input on the calculations you did for the economic impact or social impact or whatever you want to call it of the grade separations. Because most likely, if there's local matches, it'll be all the various small jurisdictions that will have to participate, particularly further out. Anyway, I think it's a great opportunity to reframe the issue for the public as to the impact of these at-grade crossings, and hopefully, we'll get some input from those elected officials on what they would need, for example, to convince their constituency to put money into one of these projects.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Absolutely. I think it just gives a good roadmap of what some of the possibilities are. And to be honest, a lot of the findings with a grade separation is that the numbers aren't always compelling for just a grade separation. It takes quite a bit of volume from a vehicle standpoint, right, to help justify those, to really show the true benefit-cost analysis.

Chairperson Lewis: So, talking about that, it's interesting that you bring up that point, Tyson, because the grade separations that we're working so hard for right now on the East Side with the West Belt. I mean, when I tell you they barely made it, and we've got a lot of traffic over there on Navigation and Commerce that is stalled. I mean, it's a lot. And I guess the fact that the grade separations are so expensive. It may be that when you're in more sort of remote locations, maybe

the grade separations may not be as expensive because the land may be a little less, maybe the drainage may be easier, I don't know.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: That drainage is a key component, right?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, right.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Because you see that here in the Houston Complex.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, you do. So, it may be that it'd cost you less, but I guess my point is that it really was difficult, even in that location. And what really helped us a lot, honestly, was the reconstruction of I-45 was actually closing some streets in that area that was going to affect the circulation. That's actually what helped sort of crank up the numbers and importance of those grade separations on the East Side, not just the inconvenience to passenger cars.

Director Muller: Well, and the other thing is how do you score, so to speak, the inconvenience to the cars, right? I mean, the closest analogy I can think of is in the toll road business. We spend a lot of time trying to figure out what the value of people's time is and that's how you determine whether your toll is going to be set appropriately or not be. Nobody's going to pay a \$10 toll if they only see the value at 5 bucks, but they'll pay a \$5 toll if they see the value at 10 bucks. And so, I would be curious to see how.. Because if the cost is one side of the equation but the benefit to the public... Historically, I think H-GAC and just nationally the way they score those things, probably is not reflective of what the true value is to the traveling public. And so again, that's why I'm so curious in it is because I think that a lot of times, those benefits are undercalculated and so when you do a cost-benefit analysis, it looks upside-down when it may not be.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Sure.

Chairperson Lewis: So, if you were to only know, you are really just preaching to the choir here because that is exactly one of the things that I talk about a lot in our meetings with people like me who are kind of techy [Inaudible 00:44:31]. And so that's why one of the advocacies now is to make sure the decisions are not just made on benefit-cost but also add other variables that are not just the hard numbers in a lot of the environments that we're in. So, your point is well-taken. It could be worth, and I mentioned at our last meeting, the fact that we'd had a workshop two summers ago that we're unable to do this year. But things opening up, maybe we can do another one this summer, and that's something we can have on there, for us to look at things like the benefit-costs, how those calculations are done. We can kind of see things that are missing.

I remember talking to Jeff Weatherford specifically about the Commerce/Navigation, and I said one of the things that you do not calculate is that I had talked to a woman, anecdotal, who said that once she got caught on that train twice, she just quit going that way. Well, that's not in the benefit-cost, that people are making alternate transportation and travel decisions because of the crossing. So, there are things missing. Again, your point is well-taken. And so, we probably should be able to get a workshop together this summer. We kind of want to take some time of poring through some of that background data on how a lot of the numbers and calculations that we make decisions on are actually made and come together.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: I think HNTB, I kind of went through a scenario with them, and their numbers will be conservative, what they're doing. They are experienced in writing these types of

federal grant applications, and so they are utilizing generally standardized calculations that would be acceptable at the federal level. Because what they're trying to do is give us a reality check of, "Hey, how would this score and how would it be put into the actual federal application?" And so, there are some other items that might be of benefit that might require additional local match, but at least we'll have some kind of cost analysis based off the study there. So, I've kind of went down that road as well, as far as the questions that have been asked there. But I think it's fair for the group to ask them. They'll be able to give you good responses. They're utilized resources that write these applications. So, I think you'll be...

Chairperson Lewis: I think we can look forward to a very engaged meeting the day that we talk about this.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: I just wanted to make mention there, so appreciate the time there.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you for that. Ms. Parker, anything else from you on your report?

Ms. Katherine Parker: No, that's it.

Chairperson Lewis: That's it?

Ms. Katherine Parker: That's it, yes. I have some numbers from the Rail meeting as we were talking about trucking that I thought was really interesting, but I'll bring those next time. Just listening to our conversation here, in expanding the freight side of the Rail District, I think that's something we need to explore coming up. So, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, that sounds great, thank you. So, the next item is announcements from me, and I just want to again appreciate everyone—Ms. Parker, Director Owen, Director Muller, Director Robinson, Director Ross—everybody who's put their hands in on this front burner item which is these two bills going into the legislative session. So, again, we've got lots that we're doing but those things are kind of close and near that we're needing to spend our attention on right now to try to get that through.

I would mention... I don't know if anyone saw this morning's *Chronicle* on page two. There was an article, and it was titled "Think Houston's Traffic is Better—No." And they mentioned that while our congestion fell 56% during COVID, and so our delay hours were down to 35 delay hours for all of us during rush hour in Houston, down from 81. Our fall, our decrease in that, was less than everybody else's in—not everybody else's—most other people in the country. So, even with that decrease, we went from being 11th nationally in congestion, we moved to being 8th, so that's not a good movement. You don't want to be number one. So, we moved from 11 to 8 in our congestion just last year, even with the coronavirus. And so, I think it points to the importance of what we're doing on our commuter side and trying to look long term at what our region's going to need to really get us to be able to move around, looking at our region as a region. Also wanted to kind of point that out.

The second thing I was going to talk about... I think we just did because I want to talk every time about freight, because I want our freight portion of GCRD to be as robust as our passenger portion. So, we've just got through having that conversation. I'm looking forward to doing so more over the next months. So, over these next months, we want to really put our finger to the

plow, hands to the plow, in getting ourselves some kind of dedicated source of funding. Because as has been mentioned, there is going to be another national federal infrastructure bill, and it's going to be ripe for projects, but we've got to have local matching in order to pursue those. There's some additional studies that we need to do to get to a greater level of detail than our past work has taken us, particularly as we look at our 290 corridor, our I-10 corridor. In other words, West Park and our 90A corridor.

And Jeff just mentioned, the world is going on making decisions and we've got to get ourselves in position where we're queued up to move from talk to action. We're talking to everybody but quite frankly, until you have some money to bring to the table, your talk is that—it's talk. It takes us back to somehow getting us some dedicated sources of funding.

So, rolling from that to some kind of encouraging things happening in the legislature. One, there's an HB 2222 that's looking at TxDOT's future transportation funding needs until 2045. Don't exactly know what that means right now but whatever it means, I think there's room for folks like us in it.

The thing that I heard yesterday that excited me beyond measure was HJR 99, and it's about the transportation reinvestment zones. As you all know, we had been investigating that, and actually several years ago had work done about how much money we could get on... We call them TRZs, transportation reinvestment zones. What we could get on the TRZs on the 290 corridor. And the thing was it was a little money, but it wasn't a lot, because there was a ruling from the Attorney General that said the TRZs could only be done by cities. And so, like for 290, we've got lots of county and so we couldn't use a TRZ there. Well, this HJR 99 is a constitutional amendment that allows counties to finance TRZs and it says to finance development or redevelopment of unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted areas. And it would allow the counties to do the TRZs. So, it's going in, so that's kind of exciting. That's the thing where I see something that if that were to pass, it would help us straightaway. But I asked was there anything we could do to help, and I was told, "Yes, perhaps come up and testify for it," so that will be on my list of things, if I have the opportunity to do so.

So, the other thing that's being talked about that would be good for GCRD but there has not been a bill filed on it yet, but every time we have one of these Under the Domes that Katherine mentioned, sponsored by TAG, there's conversation about... there's talk of someone submitting that would allow transit to be exempted from the 8-1/4% sales tax. And so that, it would have to be by public vote, but a point would be a group of citizens, citizenry, a public body would put before its citizens the opportunity to charge itself for transit, a sales tax for transit, and that amount would not be included in the 8-1/4 cent cap. So, there's, again, lots of underground talking about that. I don't know if it will be filed, but again, it's talked about really at every Under the Dome.

So, those are things that I kind of wanted to bring you all up to date on. I don't know if you all have any questions about any of the bills that I just mentioned or anything else we've talked about today, I'll sort of open for that. Okay. Well, if not, if no other comments, then I would close my announcements and the like. And our next meeting is Tuesday, April 13th. We will still be on the BlueJeans. And so, I wish everyone a great month.

Chairperson Lewis: Would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Director Duhon: Judge Duhon, so moved.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Beeson: Director Beeson will second.

Chairperson Lewis: Great. And all in favor are aye, right? Ayes?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thanks, all. We are adjourned (2:58 p.m.). See you all next month.

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:

Dennis Winkler

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Dennis Winkler, Secretary

Trey Duhon, Vice Secretary

Gulf Coast Rail District

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