



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – February 13, 2024

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 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, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, Allen Owen, and Jeff E. 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: So, good afternoon everyone (2:00 p.m.). I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I'm going to call our meeting to order. It is February 13, 2024. Today's meeting is being conducted with options to participate in person or via video conference. The public meeting is located at Houston TranStar. We are at 6922 Katy Road in Houston, Texas. We are in conference room 120A. The video conference is conducted through Microsoft Teams, and that link can be found in the meeting invitation, the agenda, and the public postings. The meeting is open to the public. The public will have the opportunity to address the board during the public comment section with a limit of three minutes per speaker. If you wish to address the board, please approach the podium, which we don't actually have today, but we'll provide you a microphone and you'll be able to do that. If you're online, please raise your hand and I will acknowledge you from here. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with provision of Section 551.127 of the Texas Government Code applicable to governmental bodies that extend into three or more counties. Based on Open Meeting Act requirements, Gulf Coast Rail District Board members participating in the Microsoft Teams need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and to record our voting. Therefore, if anyone has called in by phone, we're not going to be able to count you for quorum or for voting. As required, I am physically present for the board meeting and ask that the secretary conduct the roll call. So, if you would do that for us please, Director Keeney?

Director Jon Keeney: I certainly will. Commissioner Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: I am present.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you, sir. Robert Maldonado?

Director Robert Maldonado, Jr.: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Veronica Chapa Gorczynski?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Present. Good afternoon.

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

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Jeff E. Ross?
Director Jeff Ross: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Dr. Carol is here.
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Director Jon Keeney: I'm here. Bruce Mann? He was here.
Chairperson Carol Lewis: He may rejoin in a second.

Director Jon Keeney: Okay. Angelique Bartholomew?
Director Angelique Bartholomew: I'm present.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Allen Owen?
Director Allen Owen: Here.

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

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Jean Mann?
Director Jean Mann: Here.

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

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

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful. And thank all of you for being here today. I think this is a day when we actually have almost 100 percent participation. And I think Bruce Mann will be on. He was on with us when we had a pre-meeting and I expect him to join us. So, it's an exciting, exciting day for us, and thank you all for making time to make sure that you're here today. I want to confirm that the meeting did comply with our Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes, it did.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, indeed it did. And so we're going to go to discussion and possible action on our minutes from our last meeting on January 16th please, Director Keeney.

Director Jon Keeney: Do we have any comments on the attached minutes? Hearing none, all those in favor of approval, say aye.

Board: Aye.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Any opposed? Hearing none, it is unanimous.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: On to our next agenda item, a report from the treasurer. Director Owen, please.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair, we have a team this time to give us our report. Natalie and Darrell are both on here. I understand they're new to the deal, so I'm going to let them give the report. There's Natalie. Got to turn your speaker on, Natalie. You're muted. Try it now. Nope.

Director Jeff Ross: I can read your lips.

Director Allen Owen: I can read your lips.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, Lisa, if you can do anything to address this on her end?

Ms. Katherine Parker: She said hold a minute. Okay.

Mr. Darrell Hawthorne: Okay. Can you all hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, go ahead.

Director Allen Owen: I think Darrell's on too.

Mr. Darrell Hawthorne: Okay. Well, this is Darrell. I can actually give the report while Natalie's working through her technical issues.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Mr. Darrell Hawthorne: The bookkeeping report, if you are looking at it in the packet, starts on page number 24, if I'm correct. That's where the meat of it starts. Since your last meeting, you have receipts for a total of \$97,641. Your disbursements totaled \$8,500, leaving an ending balance in your checking account of \$186,422. The next page is your account balances, which shows your CDs, money market, and your checking. The next page is your actual versus budget comparison through January. Following that on page number 28 is your grant status report. The next few pages is your West Belt project. And then the page following that starting on page number 32 is your quarterly investment report. This is through December 31st. And that is everything on the report, unless anyone has questions.

Director Allen Owen: Anyone have any questions for Darrell?

Director Jeff Ross: Director Ross.

Director Allen Owen: Natalie, your mic is still turned off.

Director Jeff Ross: Director Ross has a question.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Are you able to hear me now?

Director Allen Owen: Now yes.

Director Jeff Ross: But I have a question.

Director Allen Owen: Okay.

Director Jeff Ross: Did the Waller check and the Port of Houston check come in February, and that's why they're not reflected on the actual versus budget?

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Correct, yes. So, you'll see that on your cash flow there. We got the Harris County, Waller County, and Port of Houston checks all on the cash flow report. But they did come in February, so those will be on your actual versus budget next month.

Director Jeff Ross: Thank you, Natalie.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Absolutely.

Director Allen Owen: Are there any other questions? If not, I'll entertain a motion to approve Resolution 24-02 ratifying our payment. Is there a motion?

Director Jeff Ross: Motion, Ross.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Second, Chapa Gorczynski?

Director Allen Owen: There's been a motion and a second. All those in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair, that concludes the report.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you very much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That takes us on to item number seven, discussion and possible action on 24-03 authorizing revisions to the bookkeeping services contract. I'm going to pass that to Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright. And I may ask Natalie to drop in here as well. I see Bruce is on, okay.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Yes. So, when we took over the project from Chris last month, we realized he had been working on this and kind of gotten it finalized to you guys. Our last contract update with you guys is from January 2020. So, we have been working with all of our clients across the board updating our contract in some standard language over the last six months or so. So, we did want to present to you guys our new standard contract. It's still hourly. It still depends on the position of the person in the office performing the work. It is just updating the hourly rate, like I said, with inflation since 2020 with those effects on the company.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright, thank you. Yes, as you all know, Chris Palis was with us for a while. He will still be a part of the audit group. And Natalie is in Arizona, and Darrell, I believe, is here in Houston, so they will take care of the bookkeeping piece of that. And as she said, we're updating the bookkeeping contract or agreement with the Rail District. If there are any questions, they should be able to answer those. We definitely need that in place.

Director Jeff Ross: Is the monthly flat rate the same, maintained the same?

Ms. Natalie Galgano: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

Director Jeff Ross: The monthly flat rate that's in the first paragraph, \$550 a month, is that the same as it was before? It's in our resolution.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: I don't believe you guys have been on a flat fee for quite some time. Let me look and see. I thought you guys were already on our full hourly. Let me pull that last...

Director Jeff Ross: It could be the way the resolution is written.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Okay, Yes. So, you are correct. You are on the flat fee and then anything additional at the hourly rate. All of our contracts now are purely hourly. So, depending on how much time you guys need us each month, our invoice will reflect that. So, if we have less work one month and more work the next month, you'll see that reflected on the invoice. But Yes, we are full hourly now. No longer offering the flat fee structure.

Director Jeff Ross: Okay, so that's eliminated.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, when the motion comes in, put that change, please. Are there any other questions? Thank you for that, Jeff.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, if there are no other questions, I would entertain a motion with the revision.

Director Jeff Ross: So moved, Ross.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: Allen Owen will second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. So, we've got a motion and a second. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

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

Looking forward to seeing you, Natalie and Darrell, with regularity.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Absolutely, yes. I worked with you years ago before Chris Palis took over, so I'm excited to be back on the project.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, great, thank you. Alright, our next item is eight, discussion and possible action authorizing executive director to enter a letter of agreement with Burton Accounting, LLC. And I'm going to again pass to Ms. Parker for more information.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright, this begins our auditing process, and we are really trying to work to kind of streamline and have a standardized time of the year that this happens. Lisa and I have been trying to make sure and look back through past years where we started each time and joining the two, the budget preparation and the audit as well. So, this is the authorization for them, or letter of agreement that happens at the beginning of each year for that work.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, any questions?

Director Jon Keeney: I move to approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Director Keeney. Is there a second?

Director Bruce Mann: Sure, Bruce Mann.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Mann, thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, any opposed? Alright, awesome. Thank you. Motion carries. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, so we are now on to our public comment section. Is there anyone who would like to speak from the public? I'll be looking for hands online, and Mr. Mazoch is in the room. Please come forward, Mr. Mazoch.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay. Where should I stand?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well, just come right so that they can see you on camera. So, maybe come...

Director Jeff Ross: Here's a mic.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: I got one too.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He's got a mic. Okay, great, alright. So there you are.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: I'll go back here.

Director Jeff Ross: Oh, he won't be on camera here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well, Yes.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Am I on camera?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: You are on camera.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: And can you hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Director Jeff Ross: Of course.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, I'm Dominic Mazoch, I am at TranStar. The thing I would like to suggest is there's a thing here about media. I just looked at your website. I think maybe might be some ideas to put more information on the website like, for instance, meeting minutes, so that when people would be coming to this or are halfway interested in this, they could study things on the website. It might be a little bit easier to do. I think another thing on the website that a lot of people in Houston might be interested in is reports from the Surface Transportation Board about monitoring of traffic, rail traffic in the Houston area, secondary to the merger between Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern. I think there's a period of time that they are studying the effects on the Houston Terminal. As we all know, Houston Terminal has been for as long as I've known it very fragile for the time I've been living here in Houston. And with the public media thing, I think one thing that this board could do is come up with maybe a short video about what this organization is about in a way that a common citizen can come in and look at what is this about, a place where somebody in a civic or government class can show their students what this is about. I think we have to be more proactive in saying what these government agencies are and what they do. And I think that might be something to do, is to work with Houston Independent School District. Maybe if a government class, once this thing has set up a video, contact the school district and say, "Hey, we've got this video here. Use it for your government class." So, with that, I have no other comments. I'm sending it back to the chair.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you, Mr. Mazoch. Appreciate your attendance. Is there anyone else? Anyone else on screen? Okay, Ms. Williams, I see your hand.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: Hi, thank you again for letting me speak. My name is Lindsay Williams and I'm the president of the Eastwood Civic Association and the newly elected president of Super Neighborhood 64 and 88 in the East End of Houston. As I normally do when I come before you, I'm coming to share information on behalf of the community about train blockages in the area. According to the data on the FRA's website, we in the East End continue to be the worst in the United States freight rail congestion, and our Trains Committee of the Eastwood Civic Association monitors those crossings to track data ourselves. For January, there were roughly 204 trains on the Galveston Subdivision with 29% of them stopping for more than 10 minutes. The total hours blocked in the Galveston Subdivision for 2024 so far is 30 hours, which is nearly an entire work week. The single longest block is just under 2.5 hours and the average length of the time blocked is just under 31 minutes, which is for one single line out of four in the East End. The impact of the blockages cannot be overstated. On February 2, 2024, the East Early High School went on lockdown because of the reports of a student with a gun on campus. And on the scanner, Houston Police sergeant was heard saying he had trouble getting to the school because of stopped trains. And on February 3rd, the West Belt between Leeland and Sampson was stopped for 5 hours during the evening hours and the ambulance was scrambling to cut through on Milby Street to Polk on numerous occasions. And on February 7th, the... Senator Carol Alvarado was behind the train for so long and was told the train stop was only for a couple of hours, but our committee went back to Live Trains to show her that the stop had been for several hours longer. She documented all of this and asked for everyone to see, and our Houston Fire Department Chief Peña came out to say how first responders are having to reroute hundreds of times per year to get around stopped trains. The 2021 Houston-Beaumont Region Freight Rail Study posted online a list of proposed grade separations and the East End doesn't even make it until 55 of roughly 75 at York Street, with many other areas of Houston and Harris County seeing proposed grade separations being prioritized. And it would be great for this list to be re-prioritized based on the real need. Thank you, as always, for allowing me to speak up on behalf of the community and the East End.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you, Ms. Williams. I appreciate your presence. Alright, is there anyone else? I don't see any other hands. Alright, so that will conclude our public comments section. We'll go on to item 10, Media Strategy Presentation by Culture Measures and Director Bartholomew.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Awesome. This is Director Bartholomew. I just want to speak on behalf of the Marketing group. We have Culture Measures to present today. I joined Director Parker for THE HART meeting. I want to thank her for allowing me to sit in and really understand the meaning behind THE HART and some of the initiatives that they're taking on. We were able to take really good information and notes in terms of communications that we want to put forward with Culture Measures because she will, of course, be combining some of the features of HART to our brand. I want to thank the gentleman that recently spoke. We are looking to align videos that synchronize and explain or provide more of an explanation about our agency and the work that is being done. So, that is forthcoming, and we're excited about that, which is why we have the media strategy in place. So, I want to invite Erika if she is online to begin to provide the update. We agreed to do that throughout this process for marketing. Erika, are you there?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, I am. And thank you, Angelique. I prepared a short presentation for you all so you can gain some visibility where we're at. Today we'll be covering the brand identity and social media strategy. Lisa, you can progress to the next slide. Next slide. Just to give you a brief background, we're here to elevate the social media and the brand profile of this organization. That's the overall arching goal.

Next slide. So, I'm happy to report that we have successfully concluded the second phase of this project and we compiled a brand identity report. Now I'm going to be covering some of the elements found in that report, but you all have access to this report if you want to gain more information about where we are as far as the strategy. But this report includes a tailored social media strategy, platform selection, and the brand voice definition.

Next slide. Okay, so to start off, we want to make sure that the brand values are conveyed, right? And so the brand values are essentially GCRD's organizational values, which is people, connecting communities, and prioritizing safety. Accountability and transparency, we want to make sure that we make open communication and responsible operations. And trust and safety, building that reliable transportation network.

Next slide. This is how we will develop your brand identity. Distinction, we want to make sure that you stand out in the market. Trust, we want to build that trust with your audience, so in positioning you as subject matter experts in your field. Recognition, we want to make sure that your brand is easily recognizable by the audience as well. Community engagement, again, building the bridges within the community and connecting with your audience. And consistency, it's important that we have uniform content across all platforms.

Next slide. These are some of the branding components. As you know, you have a logo, but we're currently revising that logo. Now, the logo will look the same. I'm going to make sure I note that. The logo will look exactly the same, but we're developing a high-resolution component for that logo, so it can be crisp and clear across all platforms. Color palette is important. I know this may seem meticulous that we maintain consistent colors of the logo. For example, we're all familiar with Target. Target has a particular red. It's not maroon, it's not burgundy, it's a certain red where we can look at it and recognize that it's Target. And so we're going to be developing that as well. Typography, so we're going to be developing fonts across the organization as well. Imagery and sound, voice and tone, and brand messaging.

Next slide. Social media platforms, it's important to note that while we're utilizing all of these different platforms, that they're going to convey the content in different ways. For example, Instagram is great for visual storytelling, right? It's showing those... moments and community engagement. Facebook is great for community building, right? It's more of a community-centric platform. So, think project updates, live question and answer, and event promotion. Twitter, well, now X, is great for real-time updates, so think more tech-centric components. I also want to add too with Twitter, Twitter is going through a transition, if you all are not aware, where they're positioning companies to be more subscription-based. The subscription starts off at \$200 a month, and that's not even including ads as well. So, I'll offline with the committee to see where you want to go as far as with that. And it's required to have a subscription if you want to also have analytics. YouTube, I think this is where we're going to get the most bang for our buck. The gentleman earlier notated that it would be great to have videos that convey what the organization does, and this is where we can house those videos for the organization. And

LinkedIn, LinkedIn is great for company updates, thought leadership, and network building.
Next slide.

Director Jeff Ross: A question.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Go ahead.

Director Jeff Ross: This is Director Ross. There are alternatives to X out there now that are gaining more and more user uses because X is becoming pretty narrow in their audience, so I would suggest we look at some that aren't as out there in a bad way, in my mind, as X is.

Ms. Erika Johnson: I agree. And then we could look at some alternatives. With the transition, I would not prioritize X, given that even when we look at analytics, they're still developing how they're going to do that across the board. But we will look at alternatives and provide some at the next meeting.

Director Jeff Ross: Well, and it has a subscription cost, and I don't think we need to give Elon Musk any money.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I wouldn't have put it that way but I'll...

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, I don't know if it'll be the best bang for your buck. Again, we can offline about that and determine where the organization wants to move forward. I think I see Jean's hand up.

Director Jean Mann: Yes. Did you say \$200 a month to be on X?

Ms. Erika Johnson: So, it's a subscription. The blue check for you to be recognized as an official organization, just for that is \$200 a month.

Director Jean Mann: Okay. So, it's the same pricing structure for people like me who are on Twitter that have a blue check? Because I don't pay \$200 a month.

Ms. Erika Johnson: You're probably listed as an individual and not an organization.

Director Jean Mann: Okay. Alright.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: We haven't finalized these platforms. We are going to go through them and ensure that they are the best outlet, and you will certainly have updates prior to our final decisions on all of them, you guys, so just a note.

Director Jean Mann: I think LinkedIn is excellent for this type of thing. Anyway, but yes, Twitter's kind of more to get in fights with.

Director Jeff Ross: They've lost their way.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely. Okay. I know we talked about this briefly last meeting, but this is just more detail on how we're going to track the metrics. I'm aging myself a bit, but when social media first started, we were real centered on likes, likes, likes. That's no longer the case.

So, you're looking more so at engagement rate, right? The eyeballs on your content is what we're going to be looking at as well. Follower growth, within the context of looking at competitors and making sure that we're following that benchmark and that our followers are growing consistently. Click-through rate, is the audience engaging with the content? Are they going to the website? Are they clicking on the links and going to the YouTube page? Are they engaging with the content? That's important to track as well. Impressions and reach, again, how many eyeballs are looking at the content? Are we expanding our reach as we continue to expand our social media campaigns? Sentiment analysis, this is more of a qualitative approach, but within those comments, what is the feedback from the public? Are they connecting to the content? And content performance, if you would think about this as an agile process, as we push out content, we'll be able to identify what the audience is connecting with and adjust accordingly. Any questions on that? Okay.

Next slide. Key messages. Next slide. Now we just talked about as far as how we're going to measure the metrics and the overall messaging, but these are some of the core messages that we'll be focused on, which is safety first and foremost, right, emphasizing that commitment to safety. Community-centered initiatives, highlighting the community's impact and partnerships. Transparency and accountability, communicating openly and addressing concerns. Sustainable future and regional growth, showcasing sustainable practices and economic benefits. And innovation and industry leadership, positioning your organization as an industry innovator. I think you'll really see that on the LinkedIn platform.

Next slide. So, these are the next steps. We just talked about key messaging, but what you'll see at the next meeting are the actual campaign themes. Think about the actual graphics, the videos, the content, shaping out those themes so you can see them and review and improve, of course. As far as underneath those umbrella campaigns, what the campaigns will actually look like. Content strategy, we just talked about the different types of platforms. Different platforms require different content. For example, X is more text-based, so you'll see more captions and text. With Instagram, it's more short-form content, videos, and photos as well. So you'll see that, so we'll be developing that. Hashtag keywords, we want to make sure that the audience is able to track what you all are doing in the social media arena, so we'll have a designated hashtag for the organization. Engagement plan, we want to outline how the organization interacts with the audience, including response protocols. Even though social media is the wild, wild west, we want to make sure that we're operating in a manner and responding to the audience in a very controlled manner and having some escalation in place in the event that we need it, I doubt that we need it, but there's rules of engagement as it relates to engaging with the public. And measurement and analytics, we'll have systems set up in place so we can actually measure the performance of all the campaigns.

Next slide. Any questions?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, thank you, Erika, Ms. Johnson. I think that looks really good. I guess I'm wondering, part of this I know is on us, is how do we get the initial list of entities and people that we pulse out to, right? Because we got to start somewhere, so I don't know the answer.

Ms. Erika Johnson: The sound...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, I'm just saying I don't know the answer to that question. That's why I ask it.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Carol, I'm sorry, could you please, Director, could you please repeat that? I didn't hear it. I'm sorry.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, I'm asking... I said I like the way everything looks that you started with. It makes wonderful sense to me, but I'm asking, what is our ground zero? So, who do we start out pulsing to? So, as you do your metrics, you're going to have a baseline. So, I guess that's what I'm sort of asking, number one, who are we pulsing out to, to start, and then how do we establish the baseline, the ground zero that we can measure from?

Ms. Erika Johnson: So, in the competitive analysis, we looked at organizations that were similar in function and that's what our benchmark is based on. This is a very niche organization, right? There's certain people are going to be interested in looking at this content. So, what I saw on average was a follower base between 100 to 1,000 people on average, and that's the benchmark thus far. Also, if you look at the, not if you look, but I have the report available for you all. The target audiences are also available within that report. That's our ground zero as well.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, good, thank you.

Ms. Erika Johnson: But since this is a new initiative, we're developing our own benchmarks, so it's important to convey that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful, thank you.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I have to say that Ms. Johnson did appreciate the value of having the opportunity to start at this level with the organization because a lot of times, agencies tend to want to jump into marketing and promoting and presence in social media and media platforms, and they don't provide the opportunity to really grassroots the organization that is below those benchmark lines. And quite frankly, we were below those benchmark lines where you would really have an established presence, so we're building that from what the agency has accomplished thus far. So, I want to thank the board for allowing her to start at that level.

Director Jon Keeney: Just one quick question, have you thought about, for instance, whatever mechanism or media outlet we choose, who is going to monitor and who is going to respond? Have you thought about the logistics of how this agency will have to handle whatever platform we choose?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely, and that's the protocols that I mentioned during the presentation. We'll have it outlined in how we will engage with the public. I don't anticipate a massive outpouring. There's not a scandal that's brewing where people are going to be flooding our social medias, but we will have mechanisms in place and escalation protocols to manage the public's response.

Director Jon Keeney: Alright, thank you.

Ms. Erika Johnson: I believe there's a hand up.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Go ahead, Director Mann.

Director Jean Mann: When do you plan to go live?

Ms. Erika Johnson: So, we'll go live the first week of March.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, and with that said, do we need to decide today which platforms are we going to use or are you going to build everything that you talked about here?

Ms. Erika Johnson: I'll build everything that I discussed during this call and then you all can decide which platforms you want to move forward with.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, I mean, so is there a point to building a Twitter account if we decide we don't want to use Twitter?

Ms. Erika Johnson: No, and that's the one platform that I said that I'm going to offline about because of the subscription component. So if we don't want to move forward with Twitter within the interim of the next meeting, if you decide on that, then I won't move forward with building it.

Director Jean Mann: Yes, I mean, I can see Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram. What would be your ideas of photos? Because we aren't building any, you know, we're not actively working out there. Are you planning to use stock photos or...?

Ms. Erika Johnson: No, we have our own team, so we're going to be gathering video and photos on our own, but we will have some stock images that we will use. I want to generate original content.

Director Jon Keeney: Do we need to delegate this to our chair and Katherine to make the decisions, or how do we do that?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, so I think given your presentation today, there's no action on the agenda. So, I think just from what you presented, I think it makes sense for you to go forward without the Twitter. And so what we can do is over the month, determine what other options, as Director Ross mentioned, if there are other options and we want to consider that, then you can bring that back to us. I don't think we're in a position where we need a board action on anything. It's just what seems to make sense in going forward, so I think we do all agree that we don't want to pay for Twitter though.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And Marketing and Outreach can come together before, of course, the next meeting, but in advance of March 1st, if possible. So I'll get a Teams meeting or whatever the case may be for Marketing and Outreach to come together and look at all of these options. Since it's small...

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: ...and very targeted, we should be able to come up with something that works, and we can get out information in advance.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Great, thank you very much, Director.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Thank you all.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Great, thank you. Any other questions from anybody else? Any other directors have any other questions? Alright, thank you so much, Ms. Johnson. I'm excited. This looks great. Thank you. Alright, so the next item on our agenda is a progress update report from Thomas Gray of H-GAC telling us where we are on US 90A.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Good afternoon. I'm Thomas Gray, principal transportation planner at the Houston-Galveston Area Council, to provide everybody with an update on the US 90A Transit Corridor Study, which finally, at long last, is hopefully about to get underway. So, if you can pull up the presentation, I'll run through it very quickly.

Okay, moving on to the next slide. Just to give everybody, I think some of you at the Board are familiar with the study and its purpose, but just to give everybody a refresher, that H-GAC is conducting this study in partnership with the Rail District. It's looking at the US 90A corridor which extends from Fort Bend County to basically Texas Medical Center. This corridor has been studied extensively in the past. Much of the focus of those studies has been on commuter rail using the Glidden Subdivision parallel to US 90A. However, Union Pacific has kind of made it clear over the years that they are not going to allow commuter rail on the right-of-way. So, recent legislation allows the Gulf Coast Rail District to consider technologies other than commuter rail, which is what this study is going to look at.

Next slide. So, the purpose of the study is to develop, evaluate, and screen potential alignments for transit service in the corridor, assuming either light rail or bus rapid transit in its own guideway. And the goal of the study is to provide an alternative that can be taken forward for more detailed study and analysis by the district.

Next slide. This is the general study area in the oval there. We are aware of some suggestions to look at alignments outside the study area. For example, along the Fort Bend Parkway going down into the south of Missouri City there. So, this study area is just a guide. It's just a general area that the consultant will be looking at as they start looking at alternative alignments.

Next slide. So, just to give everybody a timeline, we spent much of 2022 working on the scope and the budget internally. In early 2023, we were finally ready to send the RFP, the Request for Proposal language to Procurement. It was released to the public in May. We received responses from interested consultants and evaluated them in July. We received approval from the H-GAC Board of Directors to enter negotiations in September. We started negotiating with the prospective consultant and completed those negotiations in December. We did an internal pre-award audit, which is required of all projects, all contracts with H-GAC. In January, it was completed. And right now, we are in the contract execution phase. The contract is currently working its way through the agency, collecting signatures, it will be sent on to the consultant for their signature. And then, after that, hopefully, here the next couple of weeks, we can have the project kick-off and officially get underway on the study.

Next slide. And just some quick facts. The consultant we've selected is HDR. The budget we have agreed on right now is \$361,655. We expect the study to last 12 months. We have already put together a steering committee, and the steering committee did already meet once while we

were in procurement. The steering committee consists of, obviously, H-GAC and the Gulf Coast Rail District, but also representatives from METRO, Fort Bend County Transit, and the Texas Department of Transportation.

Next slide. So, just real quick, going over what the study, the scope of work, is going to look like. We have a project management task. We have a public involvement task. We will, in addition to the steering committee meetings being set, we will set up a stakeholder committee meeting as well, or a stakeholder committee which will have at least two meetings. We expect to have at least one public meeting to get public input on the proposed alignments. There will be a task to get a collection of existing conditions, and then the consultant will develop and evaluate alternatives. The consultant can recommend up to three alternatives, but preferably if they can come up with just one that everybody's happy with, that the District can move forward with, that would be great. And then final deliverables, they will be submitted to H-GAC for review, but we will obviously send them on to the Gulf Coast Rail District as well.

Next slide. So, that's where we are right now. If anybody has any questions, I'll be happy to try to answer them. But just it looks like at long last, we're finally going to get this study off the ground. And I see Jean has her hand up. I'll start with her.

Director Jean Mann: Thank you. Did you give this presentation to the H-GAC Board?

Mr. Thomas Gray: There was a different presentation. I think when the H-GAC Board approved this, I think it may have been a consent agenda item as a lot of our contracts are.

Director Jean Mann: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And so Tom... Jean, hold on just a little bit to clarify. So, that also, Thomas, would have been back in September, not recently, right?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Right.

Director Jean Mann: Oh, okay. Does H-GAC pay for the study? Is the Rail District paying for the study?

Mr. Thomas Gray: H-GAC is paying for the study out of our planning funds.

Director Jean Mann: Okay.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes. And then I think transportation development credits are being used in lieu of the local match.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, great. Thank you.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Mayor Owen?

Director Allen Owen: Yes, sir. Who are the stakeholders? I keep asking for that list of people who have been appointed to the stakeholders list. Who is it?

Mr. Thomas Gray: We're still working on it.

Director Allen Owen: We have anybody yet?

Mr. Thomas Gray: We have a few. We have a few people that the steering committee has suggested, but we definitely need to finish populating that list. Maybe that's something the consultant can help us with once he gets on board.

Director Allen Owen: But I think we made suggestions to who could be on there...

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes, you did.

Director Allen Owen: ...and haven't seen anything from you.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes, you did. I need to send out an update to the steering committee. But yes, we still have spots on the stakeholder committee, so if you know council members, mayors, management districts, citizen interest groups, I would be happy to add them to the list.

Director Allen Owen: Yes. Did you all involve the Fort Bend EDC?

Mr. Thomas Gray: That is a good... Fort Bend EDC?

Director Allen Owen: There's no need to go there, they're non-existent. That's why I was asking. They are dissolved and it's now dissolved into the county.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Okay, I have added Rick Staigle from the Fort Bend County Engineering Department.

Director Allen Owen: He's also on the City Council in Meadows Place.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Okay, well, that's double dipping. But he, when I was at a meeting down in Rosenberg at Fort Bend County Transit, he expressed interest, so I added him. He's one of the few people I do have on the stakeholder committee right now, but we will continue to add names.

Director Allen Owen: Good, because I'm looking forward to the study because I've only been involved in it 25 years. I want the group to continue to consider the fact that METRO and the developer are building a 2,500-car garage along the toll road.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: And we aren't going to go down 90A, I can tell you that right now. I've been there, done that, and I wish we weren't spending money even looking at it.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Well, that's...

Director Allen Owen: ...90A to the toll road.

Mr. Thomas Gray: ...to look at alternatives.

Director Allen Owen: I beat it to death for years. Anyway, I'm looking forward to the meetings.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Okay, we will keep you informed.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Hold on, Jeff.

Director Jeff Ross: This is Director Ross.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Hold on, let's do Bartholomew, she had her hand up.

Director Jeff Ross: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Bartholomew?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Thank you. My questions are along the same lines as Mayor Owen. I was trying to understand if there was a timeline around the steering committee members meeting and how they were designated or selected, but also the stakeholders and when you will really be able to drill down, hopefully, with HDR on the targets for that. As a constituent of Fort Bend, I'd like to be engaged myself in really understanding what is transpiring. So, the steering committee timeline if you have any.

Mr. Thomas Gray: We don't at this point. The steering committee will have regular meetings throughout the study progress. Those meetings have not been scheduled yet. Obviously, we need to get the consultant under contract before we can officially work out the timeline. The scope, there's at least four steering committees, at least four, perhaps more will be held under the scope, so there will be several opportunities for the steering committee to meet and work on the study. The steering committee composition, basically, we want to keep the steering committee kind of small just because they kind of direct the study, whereas the stakeholder committee can be larger because they will give input. So, we just focused on what we thought were the main actors for the steering committee. But the stakeholder committee can be 20, 25 people. There's no limit to how big the stakeholder committee can be.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Okay, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright, now Director Ross, go ahead.

Director Jeff Ross: This is Director Ross. I think Mayor Owen's got a good read on this community and going down the Fort Bend Parkway to that Park and Ride sounds like a really good idea. But I would encourage you to have those cities that are along 90A involved so we can document their negative response that they have to using bus rapid transit because that's what we're proposing. And as soon as we got that legislation, while we were working on the legislation, they came out negative, some of them came out negative on it, and we just need to be able to document why we're not going all the way out there anymore, why we wouldn't go out there based on this study.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Okay, take a note of that.

Director Allen Owen: And they haven't paid into METRO all these years and Missouri City has. The others along that corridor haven't put a dime in this deal.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes, understood.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, so let me just make sure. Is there anyone else in the room who would like to make a comment who hasn't made one already? Alright. If not, Director Mann.

Director Jean Mann: I have one more question. You said METRO already built a garage. It was for this project, correct?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Not necessarily for this project, but they are in the process of building a new garage down on the south side of Missouri City for their 270, their Park and Ride bus.

Director Jean Mann: Oh, okay. How big did you say it was? How many cars?

Mr. Thomas Gray: Mayor, I'm going to say 2,000.

Director Allen Owen: 2,550.

Mr. Thomas Gray: 2,550.

Director Jean Mann: Okay. Thank you.

Director Allen Owen: It's being built in the Town Center III.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: And it's under construction right now.

Director Jeff Ross: Did they buy the land or was it donated?

Director Allen Owen: It is a partnership with METRO and the landowner, NewQuest.

Mr. Thomas Gray: It's kind of a joint?

Director Allen Owen: Yes. NewQuest owns the property, and they did Town Center I and II and this is in Town Center III. So, they did it with a partnership. And I think METRO, Robert, they're leasing it back for a dollar a year, something like that, aren't they?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He said yes.

Director Allen Owen: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, if that's all, thank you very much, Mr. Gray. I don't know if you noticed but Director Ross applauded when you began. We're just excited to get this going.

Mr. Thomas Gray: It's underway.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes and look forward to the next year and where we end up. As Mayor Owen said, this has been under discussion for a long time. I think probably we're not going to presuppose the study outcomes, but I think the idea of coming out of the 90A corridor is what is going to allow us to get moving as much as we can. So, thank you very much.

Mr. Thomas Gray: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, so that takes us on to item 12, the executive report from Executive Director Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright. Thank you so much and thank you to each of you all for your time on today. I just pulled out two pieces. There are many things we could talk about, but we'll just do these two for this meeting. As we know, the third concurrent ordinance, I have been working on that for a while now. We gained approval from the majority of our counties, so that's METRO being added too as a full board member. There were other, I'd like to say, housekeeping things that were added. For example, having the Port of Houston be able to appoint a position versus it actually being the chair of the Port of Houston. The legislative updates that we had, we're just adding that too. And then lastly the Gulf Coast Transit District. They had a name change, and they are going to be an ex-officio member if they decide to appoint to our board, but they have a slot for that. We were progressing. So, we had Fort Bend, Harris County, City of Houston basically on hold, Galveston and Waller all in agreeance. Montgomery has decided to reject the resolution, so that will kind of leave us right here for now. I'm waiting on information from the City of Houston as to whether we can move forward or not. Does it require complete consensus or does that end this process? So, I'm waiting on that as we speak to see what happens from this point forward and I will keep the board updated as it concerns this ordinance update, this amendment to our charter, if you will. The next thing is THE HART update. I'm sorry, any questions about that?

Director Jeff Ross: I have a question actually for Jean Mann. Montgomery County is amongst those entities that have not yet paid their annual contribution to the organization. Is that tied up to the same reasons as why they decided not to approve this resolution?

Director Jean Mann: The court rejected the resolution. I put it in front of them, they rejected it, and that's how it rolls. Now if we need to pay, I need to see an invoice.

Ms. Katherine Parker: You should have it. I can resend it, but Mr. Millsaps receives all the correspondence, I think I cc'd him on that, for appointees and the yearly assessment.

Director Jean Mann: Okay.

Director Jeff Ross: And I'm not pressing you for it. I'm just trying to see if there's a connection between the two of them because you can't solve a problem unless you know what the problem is.

Director Kendric Jones: The problem is high-speed rail.

Director Jon Keeney: It's what?

Director Kendric Jones: High speed rail.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Well, and also listening to the audio...

Director Jean Mann: That's exactly the problem.

Director Kendric Jones: That's the problem because us being neighboring counties, which me and the judge have a great relationship, but since I've been a part of the community, we talk about basically what is the vision that this community would like to do, as far as how does it help Waller County, and that's as far as it goes. But I know that I received a phone call a couple months ago in regards to some nervousness as you saw, Judge, at the deal and everything like that to where they had brought something to his attention and I was like, "No, that's not..." How I took it or interpreted wasn't along the same lines as they may have. And I know that the high-speed rail is an issue for our counties and the rural areas as far as knowing or not wanting to be in the middle of a situation or agreeing to something that then backfires on our residents which, I mean, I'm always outspoken about that.

Director Jean Mann: No, that's okay. Our stance is that the high-speed rail... Montgomery County gets no benefit from it. And I think Waller has a different perspective, but it goes from Houston to Dallas with a stop in Bryan-College Station. So, our view is we would have to drive to Bryan-College Station to get on the train to Dallas, and it's easier just to drive to Dallas and not have to worry about renting a car or being picked up, all of the things. So, it really only benefits the people in Houston and Dallas and maybe kids at A&M.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, the thing that that does, it gives me a lot of concern in that this whole thing may have been misunderstood. This concurrent resolution had nothing to do with high-speed rail.

Director Kendric Jones: The resolution didn't have anything to do with it, but it was brought up, and I got called, and I was like, "This resolution..."

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, that's why I'm saying, that may be a huge misunderstanding. So, for the entirety of Gulf Coast Rail District's existence, the Metropolitan Transit Authority has been an unofficial sitting member. They have been consistent in coming to the table and participating in what we do. A lot of what we do affects METRO. These grade separations, we talked about the emergency vehicles being stopped, buses are stopped. At one time, it was counted that a METRO bus crossed a grade separation 11,000 times a day. So, what we do matters a lot to METRO. So, this resolution was for them to come onto this board as a full voting member. It had absolutely zero to do with high-speed rail. So, I don't know how... That's how conversations get misconstrued and misunderstood. So, I don't know if we need to back up and...

Director Jean Mann: But if the Gulf Coast Rail District is going to have a vote on the high-speed rail...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We do not.

Director Jean Mann: ...going through or not, that gives them another vote.

Director Kendric Jones: Yes. That's how they see it, so they view it like... And I told Judge that as far as what I see, if one day I've seen that, hey, we're going to have a conversation about the high-speed rail, that's an argument for that day which we'll stand up and say, "Hey, we don't support," as we've said several times, what benefit it brings to us. And then I'm pretty sure shortly after that, we'll say, "Hey, as far as our membership, is it worth us being a member of the committee and things as such?" when that day gets here. I think the misleading part though that's out there right now is that the whole purpose, as far as why METRO would want to be a part of, is to put that they have a certain agenda that they would like to push upon this committee. When I received the phone call, I'm like, "That's not what's going on."

Ms. Katherine Parker: From the audio because I went back to listen to the meeting audio because I asked for a call back from Mr. Millsaps and I hadn't heard from him as of yet. And they talked about...

Director Jean Mann: Why don't you call him directly then?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay, I will.

Director Jean Mann: I will give you his number. I will text you his number, Katherine.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay. Well, I have his contact information. I'll try again.

Director Jean Mann: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, maybe it would help, Director Mann, if you could serve as a liaison in that conversation because I think Executive Director Parker did try to reach him and has not been successful. So, I think if you could help with that, that would aid us a lot. And I think the other thing is maybe we can continue to talk offline, so if you could actually be a voice just like...

Director Jean Mann: Absolutely.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...Director Jones is. This has nothing to do with high-speed rail and Gulf Coast Rail District has nothing to do with high-speed rail, like zero. So, we can talk about history. We did pass a resolution, 2014 or something, that we supported the project, but I don't expect anything else to come to us. High speed rail can or will go forward or not with or without Gulf Coast Rail District. We have absolutely zero to do with that. And as you know, we are working to try to get us the funding base for our grade separations, so we certainly don't have any money to bring to the table. So, I think that worry is probably not something that needs to be on the worry list. But let's continue to talk about that, and I think for lots of reasons, it matters that METRO will be able to help us with the grade separations and when we are able to go forward with something like a 90A, it would be beneficial for them to be a part of what we are trying to do as a region, kind of following through on our mission, both from a standpoint of just healthy mobility in the region and making sure that we improve safety and mobility regionwide, so that's why we're here.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, thank you.

Director Jeff Ross: This is Director Ross, if that's the case, that it's all been a misconception, then we need to figure out what the timing is to go back to the court to see if they would actually approve the resolution that they rejected because of a reason that looks misplaced, sounds misplaced to me.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes. And so I think we just need to keep talking to each other because I think what happens is that in the absence of other information, that people fill it in. So, there was no one providing the information. So, I would say maybe a ball dropped on our part, Director Mann, that we weren't communicating clearly enough about what the concurrent order was and what it was for, for that to even get fueled in the conversation in your area. So, we'll take some responsibility for that as well. Alright. Well, thank you. If there's nothing else on that...

Director Jean Mann: Okay, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, you too. Alright, THE HART.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes. For our HART update, as Director Bartholomew talked about, they were part of that meeting to kind of see who the players were, what were some of the conversations we were having, some of the committees that are active, and those that we are trying to institute. We talked about some name changes. We went from a working group to an advisory group, and Bruce is on as well, so if he wants to chime in as the chair he can. We are set to present to TAC about THE HART, kind of as an update for TAC and ultimately TPC, and to also ask for members to be a part of these committees. We want to, if you will, have a kind of an official launch. Right now it's still a hybrid meeting. We would like to have an in-person meeting as TAC and TPC have gone to. Possibly those representatives would be able to come and be at THE HART meeting in person. So, it will probably be March because when I talked with H-GAC, it's not on tomorrow's agenda. So, possibly March we'll have that short update, and we'll see who will be the representative, whether it be Director Mann as the presenter or one of the committee members will have that discussion concerning that. And I think that's the last part unless he has something he wants to add in about THE HART... that we had. Is he still on? Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. As we talk about THE HART, one of the things that I want to make sure everyone is aware of is that we talk so much about grade separations, but THE HART also has in its umbrella the lower cost safety improvements. So, we're going to really start initiating more highly intense conversation about the low-cost improvements we can make to improve safety, so where in fact we might just talk gates or arms or those kinds of initiatives that don't cost multimillion dollars. And so THE HART will be undertaking that as well, so I don't ever want anyone to lose sight of the fact that THE HART has, again, as its foci, yes, the big grade separations which are anywhere from 25 to 100 million dollars, but we also have the lower cost safety improvements that might just be gates and lights and beginning to identify those throughout the region we might be able to do, if we were talking a million to five million dollars. So, that's there as well. And Director Mann sent in a chat that said great update, Katherine, so he was happy with what was said. Alright, any questions from anyone else on THE HART? Alright, thank you.

Alright, so that takes us to item 13, announcements from me. The first item is the TxDOT meeting update. So, we were able to meet with Caroline Mays from TxDOT who has oversight

over planning, initiatives, the rail, just a huge TxDOT area. And we talked to her specifically about how we would from THE HART's perspective get TxDOT approval on projects where we needed support letters. So, that item came back that any support letter that comes from TxDOT for a project must come from Austin, so that was a big takeaway that we wanted. We got to send our letters of support to Austin to get support from TxDOT. So, they'll do that at the statewide level. The second thing we talked to her about that's important is about our initiative to get state money for railroad grade crossings. You all know that we tried last time with other organizations in the state to get money in the Railroad Relocation Fund. We weren't successful in that during the last session, but we will, and a few of us who were at the meeting talked earlier today about how we're going to begin proceeding with an initiative to indeed get some money from the state to help sort of partner with dollars we will have locally to advance our grade separation projects because they are so expensive. So, we learned that TxDOT will not want to do a match, so we're going to have to really strengthen ourselves locally to have our own pot of money, that then TxDOT could also provide input and provide dollars into a fund that we could then use as our local contribution. So, you'll hear more. We're going to try to start an alliance or coalition and we, GCRD, may be the real energy behind trying to move into the next legislative session and get some funds identified for grade separations in Texas. So, that's sort of a summary of what happened from agenda item A. Does anyone have any questions about that or anybody who was there, Director Beeson or Executive Director Parker, Bruce's chat, anybody else want to add anything?

Director Jon Keeney: No, you did good.

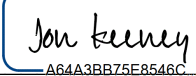
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright, thank you. Director Keeney was there as well. Alright. So, the next item is our GCRD Strategic Plan update on our agenda. And so I want everyone to have a copy of that. If you're in the room, Katherine has a nice bright blue folder, which happens to be my high school graduation colors. I can't see that memorial blue without thinking about cheerleading uniforms, but bright blue folders with our strategic plan in it. So, I want you all to think about the information we have there and your opportunities to share with others what we do and why we do it and what's important. So, those of you who are online, I will make sure you get a copy provided to you by correspondence and then you'll have that as well. So, that will actually conclude our comments for today. Does anyone have anything else that they'd like to...

Director Bruce Mann: Dr. Lewis, I apologize for being late to the meeting. I was late because I was talking to the Texas Short Line Association as a follow-up to our conversation, and they have agreed to join us in our pursuit in what we are trying to do so we have one in our corner.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful. So, what Director Mann was talking about is we were talking about creating an alliance for the entire state of Texas so that when we go into Austin next year, it's not just our sort of regional coalition, but we actually are pulling together a statewide piece. And we're going to start it with a very compelling document justifying and rationalizing why we're asking for the funds to... and in this case it probably is largely grade separations, we're not doing the low income, low impact projects... the grade separations we are. And so again, it's not just for the region, it will be for the entire state. So, Bruce made the first contact that we had talked about having the short line railroads around the table. So, he did that, so thank you. So that's done. One checkmark. Alright, so if there is nothing else, thank all of you for your time today, all of your comments. We are a better organization because of your

contributions, and so most appreciated. We will meet again on Tuesday, March 12th. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone then. (Adjourned at 3:12 p.m.)

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:

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Jon Keeney, Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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