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Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – January 16, 2024

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A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Ronald A. Beeson, Robert A. Fry, Jr., Stephen Gilbreath, Kendric Jones, Carol Abel Lewis, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Allen Owen, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Jon Keeney, and Jean Mann. 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, obviously we're all on screen because of the weather today. I don't know what you all heard, but when I first woke up this morning, 610 leading from wherever to 290 was closed due to the ice. So, at that point I thought, okay, great idea that we decided to 100% be on camera today. But thanks, everyone, for being here.

We'll go ahead and get started. I'm going to call the meeting to order. It is 2:05 p.m., and I'm going to read our opening information. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, the presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I'm going to call our meeting to order. It is January 16, 2024. Thanks to all of you for allowing us to delay this week because last week was TRB week for us. Today's meeting is being conducted with options to participate by video conference due to the inclement weather. The video conference is conducted through Microsoft Teams, and the link can be found in the meeting invitation, the agenda, and all the public postings. The meeting is open to the public. The public will have the opportunity to address the board during the public comments. You have a limit of three minutes per speaker. If you wish to address the board, just please raise your hand online during the public comments period, and we'll call on you. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with the provisions of section 551.127 of the Texas Government Code applicable to a governmental body that extends into three or more counties. Based on Open Meetings Act requirements, the Gulf Coast Rail District participating in the Microsoft Teams will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and to record our votes. Therefore, if anyone has called in by phone without a camera, I'm going to ask you to log off and try to get back on the other way. So, at this point I'll ask Secretary to call the roll, and everybody try to be audible when that's called. So, if Director Keeney... He's not on? So, I will do that. Give me a minute to get that up.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. So, calling the roll. Director Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: I am on virtually.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Oh, wonderful. Director Maldonado?

Director Robert Maldonado: Here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Chapa... Yes, he is here. Let me slow down because it might take people a moment to get their mics on.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Chapa Gorczynski? Director Gilbreath?  
Director Stephen Gilbreath: Here

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Ross?  
Director Jeff Ross: Here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I am present. Director Keeney? Director Bruce Mann?  
Director Bruce Mann: I am here, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Angelique Bartholomew?  
Director Angelique Bartholomew: I am here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Allen Owen?  
Director Allen Owen: I'm here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Kendric Jones?  
Director Kendric Jones: Here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Jane Mann? And then ex officio Director Robert Fry?  
Director Robert Fry: I'm here. I'm on the phone. I'm having trouble getting on virtually, so I'm still working on it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright, thank you. Alright, so we do certify that we have a quorum. And the next item, number three, I will confirm that we were posted according with the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Patke posted us on Thursday afternoon, and just taking into account we had the Martin Luther King Day holiday yesterday. I'm going to go to item number four. Director Beeson, now that I'm aware you're there, would you mind conducting that on behalf of Director Keeney, item number four, discussion of possible action on the minutes for December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023?

Director Ronald Beeson: Sorry. I'm on mute. Are there any questions or comments regarding the minutes of the December meeting? Hearing none, I will call for a motion to approve of the minutes from the December meeting.

Director Bruce Mann: So moved. Bruce Mann.

Director Kendric Jones: Second, Jones.

Director Ronald Beeson: Thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Ronald Beeson: Any opposed? Good, minutes are approved.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Report from the treasurer, items five and six. Director Owen, discussion of Resolution 24-01, if you would take that for us, please.

Director Allen Owen: Thank you. Madam Chairman, I'll ask David Banos, I think he's on, to give us our bookkeeping report.

Mr. David Banos: I am on. Good afternoon, everyone. If you go to the bookkeeping report, and that's on page 15 of your packet. That's the cover page. Past the cover page, you have your cashflow for your checking accounts—beginning balance of \$107,227. And you have two checks, 2685 and 2686, were signed and approved at your last meeting. For your approval today, we have checks 2687 through 2690. Total disbursement is \$9,946.04. And ending balance of this account is \$97,281.70. Following that page we have account balances for the District. Again, total is \$1,508,618.99. Next page is the actual budget comparison. This is for December 2023, and this is the last month of your fiscal year. On this page, we have the contributions and the expenses. And on the following page, we have grants and professional contract services and in-kind pro bono items. The excess revenues over expenditures is \$90,533, and that's for the year. And the balance of my report is the grant status report, and it has not changed since we presented last month. Let me know if you have any questions or any comments.

Director Allen Owen: Very good. Are there any questions of David? If not, I'll entertain a motion to approve Resolution 24-01 ratifying our payments. Is there a motion?

Director Bruce Mann: So moved, Bruce Mann.

Director Jeff Ross: Second, Ross.

Director Allen Owen: All those in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Allen Owen: Thank you. And, Chairman, that's the report.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you so much. Alright, we will...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Excuse me.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes?

Ms. Katherine Parker: David, I'll be by there later this week to sign checks.

Mr. David Banos: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. Alright, that takes us on to item seven, public comments. Is there anyone in the public who would like to have a comment at this time? We would remind you of our three minutes. Lisa, you will be the timekeeper for us. And I see the hand of Ms. Williams. Go ahead, please, Lindsey.

Ms. Lindsey Williams: Hi. My name is Lindsey Williams, and I am the president of the Eastwood Civic Association in the East End of Houston. Thank you, again, for allowing me to come and say hello like I always do. I feel like I'm a regular attendee at this point. I'm here just to listen in an continue my advocacy on the East End, elevating resident concerns about the frequent blockages in and around the area. While we did some decreases in blockages in December, we do see them in and around. And in the Rail Safety Taskforce meeting, the West Belt at Polk Street did see a block of nine hours, and York Street saw a block of five hours. So, in addition, we do see blocks on the Galveston Subdivision at Eastwood during commute hours, which is a vital walk route for children walking to Lantrip Elementary. So, we want to continue our collaboration working with every organization we can to seek quality of life improvements in the area, especially knowing the increase in freight rail and the development coming at the same time. So, thank you again for letting me speak.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you very much. I don't see any other hands. Alright, so, if there is no one else who wishes to make comment at this point, I would close the public comments sections. And thank you very much. On to item eight, media strategy presentation from Culture Measures. Director Bartholomew, please.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Okay, great. I just want to say thank you so much to the board for allowing us to move forward with the agenda on a marketing strategy with the marketing committee. I want to acknowledge the committee members. I see Jeff Ross on here. I don't see... In our initial meeting, we discussed the value of bringing on social media, and today I'm really excited to welcome Ms. Ericka Johnson to meet the board but also to share with us some of the analysis points that have already been in progress that we hope will allow us to really build upon our brand, really develop a presence in the community, and establish who and what GCRD really exists for. Ericka, do you want to just say hello? And then I will pull up the brief PowerPoint to just hit a few points for you. Board members, I'd like to introduce Ericka Johnson.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Hello, Ericka.

Ms. Ericka Johnson: Hello, and good afternoon. Thank you, Angelique, for your introduction. And I also want to thank the board for the opportunity to present today. My organization and I are very excited to be a part of this project, and we're also honored to be one of the first social media consultants for this organization. It's not a task that we take lightly, and we are committed to setting the bar. I think we lost volume.

Director Jeff Ross: Nope, got you.

Ms. Ericka Johnson: Okay, awesome. Okay. Angelique, can you hear me? Okay, awesome.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We can. We can hear you. Angelique, your mic is off. Your mic has been turned off, but we can hear Ms. Johnson.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Okay, great. Great. I'm going to share my screen briefly. Let me know if you're able to see it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We can see it.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Okay, great. Great. So, Erika, you can jump in if there is any particular note or point that you'd like to make. I did want the board to just really understand who Culture Measures is and the work that they've performed. Erika provided Executive Director Katherine Parker with insights on Friday, and they were also able to incorporate very valuable information around HART. So, I just want to thank Erika for being inclusive on some of those things that we did not really forecast along the social media direction and journey. I know that Erika performed an analysis of the information that was shared by Executive Director Parker and myself, and she was able to put together a comprehensive just kind of analysis and report to let us know exactly where we are now. Erika, do you want to go through this current projected timeline?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely. We can jump there.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Great. Do you want to share here exactly what we've done and where we're headed, or would you like for me to?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes. We can start from slide three, and then progress throughout the presentation.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Okay. Go ahead, Erika.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Okay. Alright. Well, Culture Measures is... I'm sorry, Culture Measures is a technology firm based in Houston, Texas. We basically have expertise in three things, which is people, process, and technology. Moving forward to the next slide. I'm sorry, I can't see it on my end. I just see it...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, yes, it's not moving. I don't know if you were trying to be at slide three, but we're still on slide one. So, I don't know... Director Bartholomew, can you go to the slide show tab?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: It is progressing on my end. I apologize, you guys, for the technical difficulties. One second.

Ms. Katherine Parker: If not, Lisa has it as well if we need to...

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Lisa can definitely take over here. Maybe that would help stop it from delaying on my end.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Great. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Ms. Johnson, do you want to go to slide three?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, we can go to slide three.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Erika Johnson: We offer a wide range of services from digital marketing to change management as well. We can progress, Lisa. You can keep going. Our ultimate goal is to create a strong social media presence for GCRD, and we'll do that by executing the following deliverables, which is enhance the visibility, engage the community, increase your follower base, and build a positive brand perception. As you all are aware, this is a six-month project. Right now we're in the planning phase. As mentioned before, we just concluded our initial assessment, and now we have moved on to strategy development. After that phase is concluded, we'll then move into the execution phase. This is where we will create the platforms and the content for the social media platforms. After that phase is concluded, we'll then move on to the control phase. This is where we engage the audience and grow it and also incorporate social media advertising. After that phase is concluded, we will produce a final analysis report that will capture all the activities during the social media project. As mentioned before, we just concluded our initial assessment. In that assessment, it's a 12-page report, and it's offered to you all for your review. There was a comprehensive analysis produced in that report, a target analysis, a competitor analysis, and a SWOT analysis as well.

We are now at the fun stage of the project, which is the content creation. In this phase, we'll create a strategy for the overall social media. We'll select platforms, and we'll also define the brand voice. The brand voice will be defined based on GCRD's values, which is people, accountability, transparency, trust, and safety. What we're going to highlight in our social media approach is THE HART Rail and Safety Security Initiatives and Mobility and Quality of Life Initiatives. And here are some examples of the content type. We're going to produce 30- to 60-second videos, and this will include a wide range and variety of topics. We'll also include educational posts to educate the audience about the GCRD's initiatives and programs. We'll provide project updates as well, and then we'll also show the impact to the community. Some of the proposed social media platforms are YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and X.

What will happen after the project closure? Well, GCRD will assume ownership over all the assets and collateral created during the project. Our team will conduct a training to make sure there is a seamless transfer of the project. We are also available month to month to make sure that there is no gap in maintenance and production of marketing operations. Our primary goal is to make sure there is a seamless transfer at the end of the project. Any questions?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Definitely want to say thank you so much, Erika, because you've been very timely in communicating with both Director Parker and myself regarding this venture, and this was no easy task. I think that most of us are aware that when you don't really have a social footprint or a social media presence, you have to build it. So, thank you so much for taking on the additional assets of GCRD including HART to incorporate in this process. And we agreed, Katherine and I... Executive Director Katherine and I agreed that the marketing strategy would be a part of the board meetings throughout the contract agreement. So, you will have an update. Either myself or Ms. Johnson will be joining to provide us with updates as we go along, so be ready to be reached out to. Be ready to answer some questions and participate. Thank you all so much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you for our videos. So, thank you very much, Ms. Johnson. I really appreciate how you've got this structured. So, you mentioned there is a 12-page sort of what I call an overview or scan of kind of where you're starting that's available.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. So, might we be able to get that, Director Bartholomew?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Yes. It's an analysis from the information that Erika was able to collect that Director Parker sent to her, so she did an analysis on it. So, we'll share that with the board.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Okay. But as you said, we were starting with zero in terms of social media, so we recognize that it was uphill, sort of taking off like a plane, right?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely, but there is so much great work to showcase to the public.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Great, thank you. Any other directors have any questions? I'm not seeing any hands, Lisa, but help me if there are any. Okay. Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I'll send that information out to the board, you know, as soon as we are finished with our meeting.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, wonderful. Thank you. Thank you.

Director Jeff Ross: This is Director Ross. Are there any guidelines about what you want any of us to talk about? What you don't want us to talk about? I mean, I spent my whole career doing things mostly on the quiet, and this is a radical change from the way I got things done in my career—to be out in the public working on things that are often political.

Ms. Erika Johnson: I don't think there's anything that we want to necessarily avoid. Of course, the primary goal for the social media platform is to showcase the work that you all are doing and the collaborative efforts. So, think about it in the sense from it being an online portfolio and showcasing those initiatives and programs. I would stay away from making it controversial and just basically keeping it positive. That would be my main approach. But to sum it all up, it's a portfolio of work of which you all are doing as an organization.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And so probably what happened, Director Ross, is anything that's still in the formulative stages probably won't get that far. So, it will really just be those things that we're certain about and that we're ready to propel forward. The other thing, of course, is that the public is always welcome to our meetings, so we can see what's going on. We're a transparent organization. It's one of the words in our value series.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I would add...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...like a private firm.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I would add, Director Ross, it's probably more past performance and, as you indicated in our committee meeting, to develop the presence and the following more so than anything to really establish our presence. So, it's more that than it is tell-tale of what we are committed to or what we're doing or past performance.

Director Jeff Ross: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, now I do see Director Mann.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And there's one question from Director Maldonado as well about social media outlets.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. So, Director Maldonado... Is that in the chat? Is that where the question is?

Director Bruce Mann: Yes. I was going to ask the same thing. Are we going to link that off of the GCRD site?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes. To mobilize the audience, we will publicize and put the links for the social media sites on the web page.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Was that the same thing you were asking, Director Maldonado because I'm not seeing it in the chat? Okay. Feel free to unmute and verbalize, if you'd like.

Director Robert Maldonado: There we go. Yes, that's... any links to these social media outlets just where we can go in and look at some of this stuff.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Yes, I'm sure we will all be asked to share and to like and comment on those pages, on the board that we serve. So, that would be great.

Director Jeff Ross: Somebody is going to send this report around to all of us, right?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Parker is going to send the report. The 12-page... Yes, the 12-page sort of launch. I'm going to call it the launch paper.

Director Bruce Mann: What platforms were we going to use again because I forget?

Ms. Erika Johnson: So, we're going to use YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, formerly... Well, now it's X.

Director Bruce Mann: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. Alright, anything else for Ms. Johnson and Director Bartholomew?

Director Bruce Mann: We just might want to... Whatever content we push on those places we might want to also put on LinkedIn.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Okay.

Director Bruce Mann: Because I have 5,000 followers on LinkedIn, so whatever we put on social media, I can easily get to at least 5,000 people.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely. I can add that into the strategy.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's a wonderful suggestion, Director Mann. Alright, anything else? Alright, thank you very much, Ms. Johnson, Director Bartholomew. We're all quite excited about this. It's taking us to another level at GCRD, so we're happy to be in 2024.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Thank you.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright, Director Parker, your report please, ma'am.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Happy new year to everyone. And thank you, again, to Director Bartholomew and the Marketing and Outreach Committee for moving forward. And to Ms. Johnson for working with us. We have called, emailed, and talked quite a bit. So, I'm really



comfortable and glad that she's come on board to help us with this project. I have two short things on my agenda. Our project manager introduction. Barbara Koslov is on with us. I'm hoping she can come off mute and show her face. We did an intro of you at last meeting, but you weren't here. I gave your credentials, but I wanted you to introduce yourself and tell us a few things about you to the board. And we're just glad and happy that you are on with us. So, Barbara?

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Well, thank you. Happy new year and thank you for including me. I'm really excited to get an opportunity to work with all of you and with the GCRD. Dating way back when we were teenagers, I worked with Carol Lewis at METRO. She was my supervisor. I worked with Carol for many, many years. My focus in my career has always been transportation, from transit... And then I did some... I do highway work. Several years ago, I worked as the transportation director in Harris County Judge Emmett's office, and that was probably my first introduction to moving freight—freight mobility both on trucks and rail. And I attended a lot of conferences related to that. I worked with both Union Pacific—UP and BNSF on some of the issues related to rail. I've done some studies and reports dealing with grade separations both early on at the early stages of the NHHIP, and then I was part of the team looking at some grade separations on the east side of town. So, I've done some analysis. My background is planning. I'm not an engineer, but I have an extensive knowledge of transportation. And I'm very excited to work with all of you all.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And I will say that Barbara and I both had to learn to speak engineering in our early planning days. So, while we are not engineers, we can speak very fluently with engineers.

Director Jeff Ross: I think you should let us decide that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: The engineers?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I was waiting on the comment.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Oh, goodness.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you. Barbara, we thank you so much. I'm excited to be able to work with you. We've talked about THE HART, freight, passenger, all these pieces that you'll be able to help me and also help the board as well to move these initiatives forward. So, we're just grateful that you're on board with us.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Well, I'm very excited to be working with you all. I already did my research, read a little bit about... what is it, CREATE in Chicago, and some of the other things that we're going to get involved in. Many years ago when I consulted the METRO, I worked on the 90A commuter project, so I'm familiar with the corridor and a lot of the issues that are related to moving people from the Fort Bend County area to the...

Director Allen Owen: It's only been 25 years, Barbara.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Yes. I mean, I worked way back when I was... did work with METRO. So, yes, we've been working on that a long time.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, it'll get nice to get that to fruition. Director Mann?

Director Bruce Mann: No, I was just going to say I haven't worked with Barbara as long as you, Carol, but I have known Barbara since she worked in the judge's office. I'd just like to say I'm glad to have you as part of the team, Barbara. And I know that you'll do a great job for us, so welcome to the team.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. Alright, I don't see any other hands, Katherine, so...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay. Director Ross put his hand up.

Director Jeff Ross: Yes. I can't tell you how far back I go back with Barbara because I just don't remember anymore, but I'm glad you've joined us. I'm looking forward to you helping us push some of these projects that in my mind have been languishing over at H-GAC, and so that we have things to report on our social media effort. Welcome aboard, Barbara.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And lastly, a short piece on THE HART, as Dr. Lewis will go into more detail about our TRB visit. It was my first opportunity to be able to attend the Transportation Research Board. And we had an opportunity to meet with FRA Administrator Bose. We did present to him when he first came to Houston during the H-GAC meeting, but we had a meeting with him to talk about THE HART and the various applications for CRISI and those that are proposed for our outlying areas or members of GCRD and HART. So, it was a great meeting. Dr. Lewis and I were in attendance. There were three people from the city, three people from FRA. Like I said, Director Bose, Debra Chappell who I have worked with for a number of years on quiet zones, and one other person, I want to say Marla... Maya is her name. I think Maya Smith. So, it was a great conversation. He, as always, was very interested in THE HART, and how we're progressing, so we hope to keep those lines of communications open not only for the projects but for our piece in this as well with GCRD. So, that's all I have on my piece for January's meeting. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright, any questions for Director Parker? Okay. Alright. Thank you. Alright, so item number ten, announcements by me. Item A is Transportation Research Board. So, as Director Parker mentioned... And at the very beginning of the meeting, someone said, how was TRB? It was awesome. So, I always think that TRB is very insightful. It offers the opportunity, number one, for us to talk to people around the country about what's occurring and things going on. It opens our eyes to sort of new opportunities, new events, new strategies, and the like. And it's a great place to learn things. If you're folks who have, you know, like a person from your agency housed in Washington, DC, then you're able to get first line information about things coming out. If you're not, then these kind of opportunities where you're kind of rubbing elbows with all these folks is quite advantageous. So, I will say because if I don't then it looks like... You know, you don't want anybody to not know, but I was named chair of TRB this year, which is honestly quite an honor. It is a massive organization.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Congratulations.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. And the responsibilities are to... for the executive committee. There's an executive committee of about 28 people, maybe more. I need to count how many it is. But anyways, it's formed of federal administrators, several state DOTs, a number of local transit agencies, and then private sector individuals that make up this committee. And our role is to sort of drive and advance the research agenda for the nation. And to a degree, there are some international partners as well. We have a number of workshops and conferences throughout the years all in setting forth the agenda for transportation going forward. We just published this year, the third iteration of what we call critical issues and that document... I encourage everybody just go to pull it from the website... lists the items that we think are critical moving forward for the transportation arena.

The other thing that we've done there, which is this is sort of just like a seed for thought, is that TRB is on the verge of morphing our language from quality of life to thriving communities. So, you know, we've all talked about quality of life for a long time. But if you ask five people, what is quality of life, you might get five different answers. So, again, we're shifting to working to achieve thriving communities. We don't yet have metrics related to the term thriving communities. But when you look at the critical issues, we're working on metrics for all the critical issues. And I think over time, we can get to the point where we see metrics around what actually makes a community thriving.

The other thing I would mention from what Katherine just said about the meeting with Administrator Bose. We are in a great position in Houston with THE HART because THE HART is now on sort of the minds of people nationally, as an entity that's going to help us move forward with what we're trying to achieve here. The other thing I was able to mention to him is that we are not only working on the large grade separations but also on sort of the system management improvements that might just be lights or gates, but we, THE HART... We want to do both things. We want to go after the big as well as the smaller, localized impacts that really might make communities safer. So, we really want to move forward on that. I think that was one of the things that we got to talk about as we talked about other things. We also talked about the other big... a couple big grade separations that we're wanting to pursue next. So, just so that everybody has got the same thing on their sort of mindset, it's actually Griggs/Mykawa/Long that is probably rising to the top of the list that we'll pursue before this year is out. Okay, so, Katherine, is there anything else we talked about with him that we would want to mention to everybody?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I think that was it. We just reiterated who was a part of the Rail District and THE HART, that the Class I railroads as well were a part of this conversation. That's one of the concerns that I hear every time we come together, that, have you considered speaking with the railroads? So, they understand that we know that conversation well, and they've been at the table from the beginning. So, I think that's a plus for us, because most entities that talk with them have not always taken that step. So, I think that was it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And he did, too, have that top of his mind when he had come for the ribbon cutting that we had for Commerce/Navigation. So, you know, to be front and center for the USDOT Administration for Federal Railroads is a really great thing, and we're well postured with that, so we need to leverage that, as using all of our strategies and energy to make sure that we get to our next step with that.

The other thing that happened at TRB was I was in a session where they talked a lot about upcoming grants. So, our Passenger Committee, I'm going to ask you all to perhaps get together, along with Director Parker and our project manager, Barbara Koslov, and start thinking about if we are interested in trying to pull together a team for an upcoming grant. They have that they're calling Connected Communities. And so H-GAC is pursuing 90A, but no one is actually looking at anything along 290 for us. And so thinking about connecting, Hempstead, Prairie View, Waller, that entire corridor, if that's something that we want to think about and if we can amass entities locally who also think that's a good idea. So, Director Ross, you remember we also had the reach out from the developer up there, and so that might be a time to see if that's something we're interested in. So, they did not say when it would be coming out, but the sort of inclination was soon. Now, kind of shifting to 90A is it's in the H-GAC path series. We anticipate that our stakeholder committees should be called together soon. I hope within the next 30 days. There is nothing to say except for it is still progressing, albeit from our standpoint slowly. But truthfully when all of the contracts and everything gets signed by the consultant and they're given free reign to start, hopefully it'll go really quickly. And so I'll be prepared to say more about that next time we meet.

The other thing that did happen is that H-GAC did officially pull out of West Park based on the agreement and MOU that was signed between Fort Bend, and Harris County, and METRO. Okay? So, there is no reason now for H-GAC to go forward with that \$600,000 that we talked about with extending the BRT because there would be no right of way for it given this MOU. So, I'm going to pause to see if my... looking at people's faces indicates anybody wants to ask a question about that.

Director Allen Owen: I will, Chair. Is it a dead issue?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well, so here is what... Let me answer it this way. And Director Fry, if you're on, please feel free to come behind me. But from what I understand, they will be looking at that right of way for options, and BRT may be one of the options. But they're also looking at just doing something in HOV sort of way. I don't know that they have gotten far enough to have actually defined what their alternatives are going to be, but we were talking about just using that right of way to extend the current METRO BRT. They're not looking at it that way. They're looking at the right of way as being wide open for an array of not single occupant vehicles but anything from HOVs up to I guess a singular BRT would be in their list of potential alternatives. Let me pause just for a second. Director Fry, are you on? No, he's not. Okay.

Director Bruce Mann: No.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright, go ahead Director Allen. Owen. I mean.

Director Allen Owen: So, the right of way is owned by the city or is it owned by METRO?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: The right of way is owned by Fort Bend County, Fort Bend Toll Road. They own that right of way.

Director Allen Owen: Really?

Director Jeff Ross: In Bend County. In Harris County, METRO owns it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: No.

Director Allen Owen: That's what I thought.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: No. No. Once you get... Harris County METRO sold the portion outside of Harris to Fort Bend.

Director Jeff Ross: Right, but METRO owns to the Harris County line.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: METRO owns to the Harris County line, correct.

Director Allen Owen: Then Fort Bend has it from there out.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Correct.

Director Allen Owen: Fort Bend does. So, it's in their hands.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Correct.

Director Allen Owen: Alright. Angelique, you and I need to work on that.

Director Allen Owen: ...before we get off... Can I get a list of the stakeholders for 90A? I've never seen that list. I have no earthly idea who they've got.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. I think we should be able to get that list to him, Katherine, right? Yes.

Director Allen Owen: We gave them some suggestions of people to talk to...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: ...but I don't know who they talked to and who they picked.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: In some cases, it might be entities, not names. So, like...

Director Allen Owen: There was... Chamber, and...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Exactly. Exactly.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Mayor Owen, we should definitely do that. I just got off the phone with Keri from Fort Bend Chambers... I mean I emailed Keri. So, there's a meeting soon, so let's just try to coordinate some of the talking points...

Director Allen Owen: It is being dissolved, so they're not in it anymore.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Who's being dissolved?

Director Allen Owen: The Fort Bend...

Director Angelique Bartholomew: ...EDC.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Oh, really?

Director Allen Owen: It has been dissolved.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Jeff and I are saying the same thing. Oh, really? We're both saying, oh, really, in a different way.

Director Allen Owen: There are no more employees for the EDC. They've all been given their walking papers, and the county and them are trying to decide what they're going to do going forward. They had a meeting this week in commissioners court talking about the options that were there. It will not be like it is today. It will be in some other form. They will reorganize. It will have a different set of employees. It will have a set board. It will have a different direction.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Will this be going through economic development, Mayor Owen, or something...? There was some discussion around some economic development.

Director Allen Owen: Well, they're talking about 3P type formation. So, I don't know what they're doing. The Fort Bend EDC has lost their lease at their current... Yes, their current facility. It's going to be converted into condos and a bunch of other stuff. So, anyway, it's all up in the air. But the current employees and the current chairman, Jeff Wiley, they have all been given their severance packages. They don't exist anymore. And by June 1, there will be some new organization in place. There is a group of people that have been, I guess, designed to come up with a new form of what it is, but I know that Fort Bend County has hired their own EDC guy. And so it may just be that it's going to be consolidated into...

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Economic development.

Director Allen Owen: ...into the county. But, you know, Chairman Lewis, in reality, Sugarland has about six people working in their EDC, Missouri City has an EDC, Fulshear has an EDC, Stafford has an EDC. All of the cities in Fort Bend County of any size have their EDC.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right.

Director Allen Owen: And the existence of the EDC as it stands today, in my own opinion, served no real purpose.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Got you.

Director Allen Owen: Doing their own deals. ...they did. So, they will not be involved in this, and they were originally... They were very involved because... Barbara probably remembers they were very involved in the 90A project to begin with and were working with that. But anyway, yes, that's... if you've not heard that, that's what's happening.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I understand. Okay.

Director Jeff Ross: Is the scope of work also available for the 90A project?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Probably not yet, but it should be soon, right, Katherine? Do you think? Because I think they're still working... Once they do the contract then the scope of work should roll out of the signed contract. So, I do know that...

Director Allen Owen: ...we got to decide what route it's going to take.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well, no, we already... we did talk about the fact that both the 90A and the Fort Bend Roll Road routes would be considered... We made sure that was the case. Yes, that's in there. That's there. Now, look, as one of my colleagues would say, I haven't personally seen it in writing, but I was assured that there would be no problem and that they actually welcome looking at the two options at least.

Ms. Katherine Parker: We have it on the agenda for next meeting and possibly send it to the committee in the meantime if we have something...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...if we get something, yes. We can find out from Thomas Gray where they are and, as soon as it's ready, get it to Passenger Rail.

Director Allen Owen: Okay.

Director Jeff Ross: Speaking of METRO, what's their leadership situation now?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I don't think we know right now.

Director Jeff Ross: But Tom is gone?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Tom is gone, yes.

Director Jeff Ross: And the mayor...

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Today, I heard rumors about...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Don't do rumors though.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: I'm not going to give you... I'm just saying the mayor is focused on identifying a board, and he's talked to people. I'm not going to share names, but...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, no. No, because this will end up...

Ms. Barbara Koslov: I know I'm not going to say names.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: I just know because we're... I do some consulting...

Director Allen Owen: Well, five of them are his.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Anyway, so he's moving on it. Let's put it that way.

Director Jeff Ross: Every new mayor does. What can you say?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, so anything else on 90A? Alright. So, the next thing I would mention that happened at TRB is I had an opportunity to talk to high level TxDOT folks about getting money for the grade separations, putting money in the Railroad Relocation Fund, and how we're going to approach that. And so it was a positive conversation, and the advisement to me was pursue every angle. So, yes... Remember, we had talked about... And we talked about in lieu of getting the money in this Railroad Relocation Fund, which seems to have a lot of stipulations and unknowns around it, about actually getting the money straight to TxDOT for distribution. And so I talked to someone about that. And so the takeaway was pursue every angle. Yes, let's keep trying to get that identified money in the Railroad Relocation Fund and/or if the legislature would set up a different fund specifically for grade separations, yes, and simultaneously get TxDOT to ask for an allocation within their budget. So, Bruce, I think I saw your hand.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, so if we want to pursue the Relocation Fund, that's going to require some legislation to change the rules on that fund.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right.

Director Bruce Mann: That would be my first comment. My second one is if we want TxDOT to kind of put it in their request, the best way to do that is actually probably start lobbying the Transportation Commission to tell TxDOT to put it in there because they're not going to do it without the Transportation Commission kind of blessing it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, the other attendant piece, which we had started on before, is that we really need to get our documentation solid. So, we had documentation before that was rationale, but we need to work harder on that and have it a really solid standalone piece about why we're actually even asking for this. And I'll say for Katherine, last time, I don't know that I ever saw that. All I ever saw was what we had pulled together. I don't know if the Texas Transportation... the rail folks, if they ever had a solid position paper. I never saw one from them. The only thing I ever saw was ours. And so that's one of the things that we might go ahead and take on under the... We can do that under THE HART umbrella, is to really get a solid position piece about why these funds are needed from the state of Texas. Then, Bruce, once that piece is solid, people can take it to whomever—take it to the commission. We're going to have to talk with the legislators themselves and with TxDOT's own staff.

Director Bruce Mann: Just to add, if we want to go through the legislature, we need to talk to the two chairman because if they're not on board, it won't go anywhere.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, I think we understand that. That's without saying, right. And here's the other piece, it's not just us. We're not by ourselves. This really is a statewide ask. And so I think we're talking about aligning with others for the ask.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Tyson dropped a comment just about maybe renaming the Relocation Fund to something that communicates... in the future. So, yes, really just the mechanics of how



to make it work for what they're trying to do on their list and what... those of us who are outside of that purview can take advantage of it as well.

Director Bruce Mann: I think you guys can move on this, I suppose, but in the last legislative session we had or maybe it was the one before, I can't remember, we hired a consultant to help us get some stuff through. This might be something that we want to hire a consultant to help us get through.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I think that's a valid point. Because when we were successful, we did have a consultant. And I understand that the Texas Rail Advocates did have one, but obviously they weren't successful. And part of it may have been that they didn't have a position piece that we could all speak from. You know, it's like everybody who's singing this song needs the same sheet of music. And so our board can under THE HART. So, here's the thing about that. Yes, under THE HART, we can consider if GCRD wants to hire some help, Mayor Allen... Mayor Owen. I keep saying Allen first. Mayor Owen, if we want to hire some help again on this. Alright.

Director Bruce Mann: If the mayor is supportive of it, the new mayor, he's not so long gone from Austin. I'm sure we could probably get some help, if he's on board with what we're trying to do.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right. And, yes, I don't know. So, the thing is I don't know that we will talk to him before we need to start this. I think GCRD is not in...

Director Bruce Mann: Right.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...the list of entities he plans to in the first six months of his tenure.

Katherine Parker: Now, let me say I have had a conversation with his, let's see, deputy assistant... I can't remember all their titles but pretty close. Just to talk about our conversation about THE HART and GCRD going to TRB.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: So that they would be in line with the mayor's conference, which is going on, I believe, this week. So, they know us, and I'll be attending the intergovernmental breakfast on I think next week or the week of the week 24<sup>th</sup> is sticking in my head. So, that's an opportunity to kind of make sure that these initiatives are thought of.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And they were very thankful to hear about the information and the work that we had done to date.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: So, that was a positive. Yes, I had that conversation right before we went to DC.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. And maybe the other thing is to talk with that person and ask who is the legislative point of contact.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Right. Right.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So that...

Ms. Katherine Parker: ...David, and then I have to see who the new governmental relations person is.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's the point, right? That's the point. And have those conversations about what we're interested in. But the thing, from my... We can only go so far with those conversations until we get the position paper written. The thing we really... And we had something before, but I think what we had before can be stronger and better structured.

Director Jeff Ross: And we need to find projects that are in the districts that dominate the legislature. So, if this is mostly an inner urban problem...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: It's not.

Director Jeff Ross: ...then Republican legislators aren't going to pay any attention to it until we find similar problems in their districts.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's not hard to do. TxDOT did grade separations throughout the state of Texas. One of the pieces that we used for support was TxDOT's document. It wasn't even two years old at the time. A statewide how these things... So, again, just pulling from that document is what we can do.

Director Jeff Ross: Yes, you got to create a vested interest on their part.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right. Right. Alright. Well, that is the last thing on my list. Is there any other interest in commenting on anything we've talked about, anything from Katherine or from me?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Bruce's hand is up.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, go ahead.

Director Bruce Mann: No, I think just... I know you're aware, Dr. Lewis, but maybe not everyone is. Last month at the Policy Council, they approved the Regional Goods Movement funding call, so there were quite a few... at least two rail projects that were approved by the Policy Council at H-GAC that included Sugarland ITS (Fort Bend)... and Port's grade separation on Port Road. So, those ones right off the top of my head. So, some of the projects that are on our list have now been funded through H-GAC.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, thank you for making that point. Alright. Anything else? Alright. Well, our next meeting is scheduled for February 13<sup>th</sup>, so we will look forward to getting some things done in the interim and getting back together on February 13<sup>th</sup>. So, with that, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Director Jeff Ross: So moved.

Director Allen Owen: So moved.

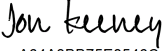
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, we got Ross and Owen. Everybody is in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Awesome. Alright. Thanks so much. We are adjourned (3:04 p.m.).

Appreciate everybody's attendance and input. Thank you.

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
  
A64A3BB75E8546C...

Jon Keeney, Secretary  
Gulf Coast Rail District

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