



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – April 9, 2024

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at Houston TranStar and via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Stephen Gilbreath, Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Kendrick Jones, Jon Keeney, Carol Abel Lewis, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, and Allen Owen. Absent were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Robert A. Fry, Jr., 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. It is two o'clock, and I'm going to call our meeting to order, Gulf Coast Rail District. It's April 9, 2024. Today's meeting is being conducted with options to participate in person or by video conference. Public meeting location is Houston TranStar with 6922 Katy Road, Conference Center Room 120A. The video conference is conducted through Microsoft Teams. That link can be found in our meeting invitation, along with the agenda and all of the public postings. It is open to the public. The public has an opportunity to address the board during the public comments, with a limit of three minutes per speaker. If you wish to address the board, please approach the podium if you're in the room or raise your hand if you're online during the public comments period. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with the provisions of Section 551.127 of Texas Government Code applicable to a governmental body that extends into three or more counties. Based upon the Open Meetings Act requirements, Gulf Coast Rail District board members participating in Microsoft Teams will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and for recording of votes. Therefore, members calling in by telephone can't count for the quorum or for voting. As required, I'm physically present for the board meetings and ask that the secretary, Director Keeney, conduct the roll call, please.

Director Jon Keeney: Certainly will. Commissioner Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: I'm on virtually, thank you.

Director Bruce Mann: And loud.

Director Jon Keeney: Robert Maldonado?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He's there.

Director Robert Maldonado: Here, virtually.

Director Jon Keeney: Oh, there he is. Veronica Chapa Gorczynski?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Present, in person. Good afternoon, you all.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Stephen Gilbreath? No. Jeff Ross is not attending I'm told.
Vacant. Dr. Lewis?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Me? I know I'm here. Bruce Mann?

Director Bruce Mann: I am here.

Director Jon Keeney: Angelique Bartholomew? Allen Owen?

Director Bruce Mann: He's here.

Director Jon Keeney: Is he?

Director Bruce Mann: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He needs to unmute.

Director Jon Keeney: There he is, okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He has to unmute.

Director Jon Keeney: Kendric Jones?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Can you unmute, Mayor Owen?

Director Jon Keeney: Is he on there?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He's there, yes. His mic is on.

Director Bruce Mann: It's restarting.

Director Jon Keeney: Jean Mann? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. We do have a quorum, Madam Chair.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Awesome. Thank you so much. Alright, so we will go on to item three, confirm our meeting posting in compliance with the Open Meeting Act.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We did do that. And then let's go on to item number four, discussion and possible action on minutes of our March 12th meeting. Director Keeney again, please.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes. I assume you've all had an opportunity to read the minutes. Do we have any corrections or additions?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: This is Veronica Gorczynski. No corrections or additions, but I'm going to abstain on the vote because I was absent for the last meeting.

Director Jon Keeney: Okay.

Director Bruce Mann: I'll make a motion to approve.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Any additional comments? Hearing none, all those in favor?
Board: Aye.

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

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. We need the report from the treasurer, Director Owen. Is he back on? Not exactly?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I don't see him there.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Darrell Hawthorne is on.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Pardon?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Darrell Hawthorne appears to be on, the bookkeeper/Municipal.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. We will call Darrell Hawthorne for Director Owen, while he's getting back on. Mr. Hawthorne, can you unmute and be in position to provide us with information from your report please? Okay. Since I do not see him and I'm not hearing anything, I would ask you please to turn to your bookkeeper's report in your package on page two. You will see that the majority of our items are as we had presented in the prior month. You can see where we did spend some monies, and have monies for both of our marketing campaign, travel reimbursements for some travel, paying/joining our Transportation Advocacy Group membership (registration), and some monies that were transferred to a money market. Look at that a minute, folks, and let us know if you have any questions about any of that.

Director Bruce Mann: We had a CD that expired April 5th. Did that roll over? Does anybody know offhand?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I'm not going to actually be able to answer that question as to whether it rolled over. How much was that?

Director Bruce Mann: \$100,000.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes. Oh, it's on the other page. I think that they do roll them over. When asked that question last month, they did say that they...

Ms. Lisa Patke: Just to add to the notes that we have Stephen Gilbreath and Jean Mann on and Allen Owen rejoining us.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, wonderful. So, Director Owen, I have gone ahead with the report.

Director Allen Owen: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We did not get a response from anyone online to lead us through, and so I was kind of walking us through. We've got an outstanding question...

Mr. Darrell Hawthorne: Madam Chairperson, this is Darrell Hawthorne, Municipal Accounts. I don't know why my system was just muted, but I can tell you the CD that was mentioned about, that one will be renewed at the best rate.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right, okay. Wonderful. I think I remembered you all saying that last month, that that's what would happen. So, thank you for that.

Mr. Darrell Hawthorne: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Are there any other questions for Mr. Hawthorne from anyone? Director Owen, if you would like to take over from this point, please do so, on item number five and six for that matter. Director Owen, can you hear us? Are you trying to... Are you trying to duo work with your phone and your computer?

Director Jon Keeney: He's not responding.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, while we're waiting on him to...

Director Jean Mann: This is Jean. I had a hard time logging in, but I'm here now. So, can you mark me as here please?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Director Jon Keeney: No. I'm going to ignore you.

Director Jean Mann: You can do anything to me, but you can't ignore me.

Director Jon Keeney: That's why I said what I said.

Director Allen Owen: This is Allen Owen.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Director Allen Owen: This is Allen Owen. I'm here on the phone. I can see you all, but you can't see me.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. So, do you want to lead us through the vote on item number six, discussion and possible action on Resolution 24-07?

Director Allen Owen: Has Natalie already... has she already given a financial report?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, Mr. Hawthorne did.

Director Jean Mann: Director Owen, we're getting it both from your computer and your phone, so...

Director Allen Owen: How about this?

Director Jean Mann: That's perfect. Thank you.

Director Allen Owen: I turned the mic off. Alright, then I'll entertain a motion to approve Resolution 24-07, which ratifies the payments.

Director Jon Keeney: So moved.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Second.

Director Allen Owen: Is there a motion?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, motion and a second.

Director Allen Owen: There was a motion and a second. Are there any questions? If not, Madam Chairman, that's it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Director Allen Owen: Sorry it took so long to get on.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Director Allen Owen: Obviously, my camera doesn't work, but my audio does.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We can see you. We can see you.

Director Allen Owen: Oh, you can?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, so that's a good...

Director Jean Mann: Yes, when you were talking before, your mic and your camera was working, but you had your phone and it was kind of a double audio. So, you could probably get off your phone, put your mic back on, and be good.

Director Allen Owen: Probably, but I'll just leave it alone.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, Director Mann and Director Gilbreath, we have acknowledged your presence. Director Jones just walked in as well, so thanks to all of you for being here with us at this point today. So, thank you. We're on now to item number seven, discussion and possible action on Resolution 24-08, authorizing the executive director to enter a letter of agreement with McCall Gibson Swedlund Barfoot PLLC for our 2023 annual financial report. Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Katherine Parker: This represents our engagement letter that begins our auditing process. Next month, they will come in and present the audit report, but this just allows us to begin the process. And Suzanne Villareal will be here next month to present that for us. Questions? It's kind of a housekeeping matter, our yearly update.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Madam Chair? Chairwoman?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: I've had great personal experiences with McCall Gibson, so I would like to make a motion to move forward with execution of Resolution 24-08.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Director Chapa Gorczynski. Thank you. A second?

Director Kendrick Jones: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Director Jones. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposition?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Great. Alright, thank you. That addresses that item for us.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Item number eight, discussion and possible action on Resolution 24-09, which is nominating and approving officers for Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors. You will see on that resolution that we want to confirm Director Ronald Beeson as vice chair, secretary as Director John Keeney, treasurer as Director Allen Owen. We would be adding vice secretary, Director Jean Mann and vice treasurer, Director Jeff Ross. Any questions or comments, discussion on any of that?

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Madam Chairwoman, I just want to express gratitude to everybody for volunteering for these positions and giving your additional talent and time to this. It means a lot, and I'm just grateful to you all volunteering to be officers as well.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. I concur.

Director Bruce Mann: I make a motion to approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Bruce Mann, a motion to approve.

Director Kendrick Jones: Second.

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

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Any opposition? Wonderful, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Moving on to 24-10, discussion and possible action ratifying committees for Gulf Coast Rail District directors. So, we went through, again, just to make sure that all of our committees are well constituted. And then we did some name changes. So, if you look at what we have... You know, we had Bylaws independent. There wasn't a lot for Bylaws to do. Something may have come up once every two or three years, quite frankly. And so there is a link between Bylaws and sort of Legislative in terms of those pursuing often times legal questions, and pursuits, and clarifications. So, we wanted to roll Bylaws into Legislative and Funding. We changed the name from Passenger Transit to Passenger Transport—that seems to make a little more sense. Then of course we've got the Houston Area Rail Transformation, which took under and sort of assumed our previous Roadway/Railway committee. We have Marketing and Outreach, which Director Bartholomew is chairing for us. And those are what you see as the committee positions. So, if you all would like to look those over. You might have... I don't know if you looked at them before the meeting, but please take a moment to just check and see if you had any questions.

Let me mention that at the moment, under Passenger Transport, METRO is not a voting member. Hopefully, they will become one, but we're still fine because our quorum is seven. So, that is the thing that we look at with our quorum being seven. At the point at which METRO does become a voting member then... And we talked about it, then the Houston Area Rail Transformation will have seven folks, but we just said that we would just go ahead and post those. There's no reason not to. So, that's how we'll address that, should that become something that we need to think about in the future. Does anyone have any questions about any of these?

Director Jon Keeney: I move to approve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Director Keeney.

Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Second.

Director Stephen Gilbreath: Second, Gilbreath.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. We'll do Gilbreath, since he's online. Thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposition? Alright, thank you. Look forward to everyone's continuing commitment...

Director Jean Mann: Are you saying you're going to post that METRO is a voting member?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: No, I'm saying...

Director Jean Mann: ...before they...? Okay. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: No, no, no, no. I'm just saying that at this moment, we do not exceed quorum with that committee because they are not a voting member. That's the point. So, if they ever are on, we'll have to readdress that.

Director Jon Keeney: No big deal.

Director Jean Mann: Okay. I'm sorry.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's okay. Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: We'd have to address it with each of the committees then...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I think the other one is just six though. One, two, three, four, five, six. Yes, it's just THE HART.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. So, moving on to item ten, public comments. Is there anyone in the room who would like to make a comment?

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: I yield to Leslie. Is it Lisa?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Lindsay.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: Lindsay... Lindsay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Lindsay, are you on today? I see her.

Director Bruce Mann: I see her name, but I don't see her.

Ms. Katherine Parker: You can put something in the chat. Maybe she'll...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes. Alright, her hand is not up this time.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: Well, I'm just here to listen today. I actually... for once, I was just here to listen. So, just hello.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Hello. Alright, we are going to have someone come forward.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: Good afternoon, everyone. I just want to mention as a public comment...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Say your name for us, please. Please say your name. State your name for us.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: My name is Joseph Tijerina. I'm a resident at Eastwood Civic Group and also a resident, and I just wanted to share with you that there has been some major improvement in our neighborhood for the... Lindsay was telling me with the rail line, how it exists in our

neighborhood. But it crosses Lawndale, and I live just blocks away from that rail line, and I noticed less traffic that has to be diverted onto Broadmoor. I thought that's worth mentioning in this public comment, because I'm sure you have enough on your plate every day, just like everybody else. I just want to mention that to you. Lindsay is helping me understand... Like I know transportation... concrete freeways and farm and market, but I'm also unfamiliar with rail lines, and she's doing a great job instructing me what rail line is what, so give me some time, and I'll get that right. But otherwise, compliments to everyone in the room and on TV. You're doing a great job. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well, thank you.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you, wonderful. Alright, is there anyone else? Okay, if not, we'll close item number 10 and go on to item 11, media strategy presentation from Culture Measures. Director Bartholomew I don't believe is on, but maybe Ms. Katherine Parker will take that for us.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright, thank you. We will have a presentation from Ms. Erika Johnson, our social media consultant. She's been extremely busy, and so we've asked her to present in each of our meetings to give us an update on how we're progressing on our social media campaign. Thank you so much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Hello, Ms. Erika. She's on. I saw her. She's got herself...

Ms. Erika Johnson: Can you hear me now?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, we can.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Okay. Sorry about that. Good afternoon, everyone. Today we're going to cover the social media campaign updates and also review some of the content our team has created. It's important to know that this is an organic campaign. We are not using bots or paid followers, so you'll see a slow uptick in followers, and what we're really focused on is the impressions and where you show up on the search engine. Lisa, we can progress to the next screen. Okay, and the next one as well. So, we just concluded the GCRD Story Campaign on March the 31st. This campaign introduced the Gulf Coast Rail District to the general public and covered the history, mission, and the team as well. The last meeting, I showcased the introduction video, and you all viewed that. But this meeting, I want to showcase the video that is featuring Executive Director Ms. Katherine Parker. If you can click on the hyperlink, Lisa, and we can show you that video.

Ms. Lisa Patke: I don't know if it's sharing. Hold on.

Ms. Erika Johnson: It's the red hyperlink.

[Video plays]

Ms. Katherine Parker: I'm Katherine Parker, executive director of the Gulf Coast Rail District, and I'm honored to lead an organization with the vision to transform transportation in our region. Our mission, to enhance safety and security at rail crossings and to elevate mobility, access, and quality of life for our community. Imagine a future where travel is not just about getting from...

Ms. Lisa Patke: Let's start this over again. I need to share it in a different screen.

Ms. Katherine Parker: She needs to share it in a different screen...

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, it's probably just playing in a different window...

Ms. Lisa Patke: It is.

Ms. Erika Johnson: ...if you have your links open externally.

[Video plays]

Ms. Katherine Parker: I'm Katherine Parker, executive director of the Gulf Coast Rail District, and I'm honored to lead an organization with the vision to transform transportation in our region. Our mission, to enhance safety and security at rail crossings and to elevate mobility, access, and quality of life for our communities. Imagine a future where travel is not just about getting from point A to point B...

Director Jean Mann: Can anybody else hear this video?

Ms. Katherine Parker: ...journey enhanced by commuter rail, plus rapid transit, and cutting-edge technologies. That's the future we're building at GCRD...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Just a minute. Let's see. We can hear here, but they can't hear it online.

Director Kendric Jones: Are you sharing the screen with them?

Ms. Lisa Patke: I was, yes.

Director Kendric Jones: Oh.

Ms. Lisa Patke: I'm not sure why they're not hearing.

Ms. Erika Johnson: The other option, too... We can send out the links after the meeting, so if you all want to view it. And it's also available on social media as well.

Director Jean Mann: What social media platforms?

Ms. Erika Johnson: So, it's Instagram. It's LinkedIn. It's YouTube. And it's Facebook. And I have those listed in the presentation. We can progress to the next slide. I hate that you cannot see the videos, but the next campaign is the...

Director Kendric Jones: Could they not see it, or could they not hear?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: They couldn't hear.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Could they not see it or hear it?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, Director Mann, you said you could not hear, right? But you could see?

Director Jean Mann: Yes, I could see, but I couldn't hear anything.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, could anybody else online hear anything, or was it just Director Mann who is having audio problems? Was it everyone?

Director Stephen Gilbreath: I could not hear it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, nobody could hear it. Okay. Alright, we'll go ahead during this period when everyone is on, and then... And we'll...

Ms. Katherine Parker: We can provide the links.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes... Alright. Go ahead.

Director Stephen Gilbreath: I did go on LinkedIn. And these videos do work, and you can hear them. So, they are working on social media.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, wonderful. Thank you. Alright, go ahead.

Ms. Erika Johnson: I'll just cover the campaigns, and then we can send out the links post the meeting. But the next campaign, which is running in April, is the Rails for the Safety. We're highlighting completed projects and analysis that you, that the organization has completed, so there is a link for... there is a current first post for the Bringham Bridge and the US 90A analysis video that we're working on as well. We can proceed to the next slide. The campaign after that is the Community Rails Campaign, and we're showcasing community focus initiatives and partnerships. In particular, partnerships around THE HART group. We can proceed to the next slide. The last campaign is Innovate GCRD. We're positioning GCRD as a subject matter expert. We'll highlight innovative projects and technologies, and then provide more updates on THE HART program as well. Next slide please. So, if you haven't done so, please follow these social media platforms, in particular LinkedIn. As we know, LinkedIn is a network-based platform, so our reach only expands as far as those who like the page. And so if you can follow, like, share, and click, that would help us with our organic reach. Again, we have not deployed paid ads yet, and we do not have bots or paid followers. It's really important for us not to inflate those numbers for us to see the reach organically. Next slide please. And so I spoke about impression earlier. These are some early analytics about the impressions. And so we had 352 impressions, and the reach was 182. Again, these are early numbers before we have deployed any paid ads, and so those numbers will grow over time significantly in May when we deploy a paid advertisement campaign. There is a pretty extensive analytic report, and I put that hyperlink in this PowerPoint, but I also can share it with the board as well. Any questions?

Director Bruce Mann: Sorry. For our LinkedIn page, you might want to do a better about section because it starts with, GCRD is a political subdivision of the state of Texas. People probably turn off right after that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I don't know about that. I think people just... I think it just kind of does that, right? Okay. And you're onto the next thing.

Director Bruce Mann: Right, so that's why I'm saying we want to change that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I think it's okay. I think it's okay to leave it because it's true, right? And people don't know that. People don't know that we are a political subdivision, and so I think we're good there. Right?

Director Jon Keeney: Well, another way to say that is the GCRD was created by the state legislature as opposed to...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: A political subdivision.

Director Jon Keeney: ...political subdivision. When you throw the word political in... Being a politician, I understand that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. I'm not a politician, so guess I'm not...

Director Bruce Mann: Well, I just think we want...

Ms. Erika Johnson: I can definitely...

Director Bruce Mann: We want to get to the why first. And like if we start off saying, GCRD was created to enhance the economic benefits... Okay, now I understand what you are. And then the second sentence, we could say, GCRD was created by the Texas legislature in...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: 2007.

Director Bruce Mann: And then have the how. But I think we have to lead with the why.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright, thank you for that suggestion. Alright, Director Mann?

Director Jean Mann: Yes, I don't know if this is a reasonable request, but I would like to know, could you provide us...? So, we have a ground mark with the reach, right? And you're going to be doing paid advertising. Can you give us a projection out like of your goals and what you want to accomplish with the reach?

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely. I could provide that for you. And I'm using other organizations as well that are comparable. I knew starting off, because of the nature of the content, that we're going to have a slow uptick, and it's really going to be based on aligning with the network of those who are aligned with this organization to build it out. But yes, I can provide those numbers to you at the next meeting.

Director Jean Mann: Yes, that would be good. And I realize it's a slow crawl, but I would also like to see projections maybe for the next six months of where you want to be and then like where we are.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely. Especially in May, when we do the targeted advertising, it's easier to do those projections. Organic is kind of... It's not hit or miss, but it's not as predictable.

Director Jean Mann: Yes.

Ms. Erika Johnson: But with paid advertising, I can provide some solid numbers for you.

Director Jean Mann: Okay, great. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, others? Alright, so one of the things that I want to say is that this reminds me of other organizations that I'm affiliated with. And part of the thinking is that we also have to do the pushout, not just rely on the people we hired. So, I, at this point, don't have it on my LinkedIn. That's what I'll do. That's going to be on my list of things to do tomorrow is to put it on my LinkedIn. I'm going to tell you all, that's a big thing, because I've only put... People ask me to accept, so I keep accepting, accepting, accepting. I've literally only put up one thing. So, my 2024 goal is to be better at LinkedIn. So, this will be the second thing that I've put on, but I encourage each of us to do that because then that'll help a lot, too, with our own networks. Then if I start doing a little more, then... Because the one thing I put on, I'll tell you that I got tons of hits on it. I was so amazed.

Director Jon Keeney: ...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, right. That's hilarious. Okay. But anyway, yes, let's just make sure that we all push it out in our networks, and that will help as well.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, I just added 10% to our hits, plus your two posts.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Good. Good. Alright, so, look, we got a competition. When I put it on, let's see how many I get.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, that's going to help significantly, because you're telling the algorithm that you want to share it to your network, and then it helps the algorithm, and it helps the audience find your network as well. So, that's important.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, good. Alright, anything else, Ms. Johnson, today? Alright, thank you all.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Nope.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: The other thing I want to mention though is to you all, kind of look at these as a package. Right? So, there is an upcoming one on THE HART. There's the first one we saw, the one that... ones of the ones we had today was specifically about our passenger emphasis. We got the 90A coming up, which we're all working on with energy. So, just kind of look at them as a package. Don't just look at one and say, well, this one didn't talk about roadway/railway... just 90A. So, just kind of remember that as you look at the individual

postings. Alright, thank you very much, Ms. Johnson. We look forward to talking to you next month.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Next, we are on to executive director's report, Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you so much. Great to see everyone this month. Next slide. So, the March meetings included TAC, Regional Transportation Plan Subcommittee, and Transportation Policy Council. These are committees of H-GAC, which are the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. I know a lot of times, we give out these acronyms, and we don't really talk about what they are. So, those are monthly meetings that I attend. Next is the Long-Griggs-Mykawa CRISI grant preparation meetings. CRISI is Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements. So, this program provides funding for projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of inner-city passenger rail and freight rail. The notice of funding opportunity was released on March 29th, 2024, and there's 60 days to prepare and submit a grant application. So, the City of Houston, TxDOT, METRO, and Southeast Management District... TxDOT is the lead on this application. They are working to have this done by May 28th, 2024 at 11:59 Eastern Standard Time. So, that's their deadline. There have actually been almost five weekly meetings to prepare for that. I'm sure THE HART will be asked for some letter of support for this grant request. I know that our next meeting this month, I'm sure that will be on our list to discuss. The next meeting is the Rail Corridor Collaborative. For 2024, they are continuing to coordinate with local railroads and east Houston communities to manage expectation of stopped train events. We heard some of that today. They conduct studies for understanding secondary impacts caused by train operations and unsafe motorist or pedestrian behaviors affecting public safety and mobility. They will continue to evaluate transportation conditions that contribute to the community instability related to local business disruption, school delays, access to clinics and other neighborhood programs. During these meetings, we also discuss national blocked crossing trends and the railroad crossing sensor activities that are at targeted crossings within this collaborative. Jack Hanagriff is the East End District manager for this effort, and this collaborative effort speaks to the concerns that are raised most times by East End residents but also some that attend our meetings. Jack usually comes to us maybe once a year to give us an update on the work that's being done at this location... in these various locations.

Next update – we talked about the audit engagement letter. That's kind of an administrative piece.

And next, we're happy to say that Harris County has reappointed our director, Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, for another term here on the board. We received that letter just earlier this month. So, thank you so much for your service to date, and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Alright, next slide. Alright, THE HART... We will meet, as I said... the advisory group will meet later this month. We met with FRA to discuss some plans for a joint workshop with GCRD, H-GAC, and the FRA. We talked about agenda items and potential dates. We discussed that the FRA would focus on grant preparation and information, as at that time NOFO had not been administered. So, now that it's in place, specific questions about applications they won't be able to answer, but they can provide general information about grant preparation submittals.

Lastly, our project manager update. Ms. Koslov wasn't able to be here today, but she did provide an update. She is working on THE HART manual and will be meeting with Mayor Keeney actually this week. If there are any other directors who would like to meet with Ms. Koslov about her work, please let us know. We'll be able to schedule that. She is diligently working on THE HART manual, which includes an introduction, background information... so that we can add the history of this work. She is also working with GoRail to discuss our position paper information piece that we... our funding piece that we talked about with HART for rail and roadway safety. And I have also added her to the list to work with the US 90A Corridor Study, so the H-GAC's Thomas Gray will be able to provide her with updates on meetings and any information that's passed along for the committees for this UPWP study that we are coordinating with H-GAC. Alright, that's it for my piece. Any questions?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I have one. So, once we do the FRA grant workshop, what would be the next anticipated call that they would put out? Do we know? Because the CRISI one they just put out was 60 days. So, what's anticipated after that?

Director Bruce Mann: RCE?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: RCE?

Ms. Katherine Parker: RCE next.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And there's a calendar that's out. They don't have specific dates, but I can have the months.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right.

Ms. Katherine Parker: ...general months.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, for the CRISI, everything had been stacked up for Mykawa-Griggs, etc. Do we have something, or do we plan to have something in queue for when the RCE comes out...RCE comes out?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I'm hoping so. I've had requests for grant information. And if we can get them to a point of readiness, yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. And so then lastly, since TxDOT is involved with Mykawa-Griggs, we don't need to ask them for a letter of support this time. Who do we need to ask for... ask in Austin for letter of support for the package? Who's lead? Is it the city...?

Ms. Katherine Parker: TxDOT is the lead.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: TxDOT is lead. So, then this time... letter of support from them.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes, for that project in particular, we've only been asked to talk to the Class I's about their contribution.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: What role they will play. That's what GCRD has been asked to do as a part of that process.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: And that will probably be through the Rail Division, but...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, you and Bruce are going to do that? How is that going to happen?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I need to talk to him about that. But, yes, we can coordinate that conversation and see what role they will play in this application.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Alright. Alright, thank you. Any questions from anyone else about Ms. Parker's report? Alright, onto item 11, information from the chair.

Director Jon Keeney: Number 13.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Number 13? What did I say? 10?

Director Jon Keeney: 11.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Well...

Director Jon Keeney: We all know where you are.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, 13... I guess. But we did have a meeting with our Texas Transportation Commissioner, Steven Alvis... The way the commission is designed, certain individuals essentially represent the region from which they kind of reside, and so he is ours. It was Director Beeson, Director Bruce Mann, Director Keeney, Ms. Parker, and myself who were able to meet with him. We wanted to familiarize him with GCRD, I think, because he just got on it probably at the tail end of 2023. So, we wanted to familiarize him with GCRD. His interest was essentially in THE HART. He left us with one big question, which was if we were to give TxDOT one priority grade separation, which one would it be. So, we said we'd come back and look. I did tell him that it would have been Griggs-Mykawa, but that one is proceeding, so we don't need to identify that one now. And so we need to go back and look at the list. The other, of course, piece of that is that it has to be on TxDOT right of way. So, we'll go back and look at the list to start with that. THE HART is working on a list of ten. We'll look at that, pull out the ones that are somewhere approximate enough to TxDOT right of way to count, and then we'll look at those and be able to provide really the backdrop, but all the data. Because that's the other thing, he would want to see all the data in terms of the crossing, delays, traffic volumes, benefits, cost, etc. And so we will see where that leads us. Of course, there's no commitment, but at least once we pull that together then we can circle back with him. And so that was, I think, the big takeaway. And so for anyone else who was there, Director Beeson, Bruce Mann, Director Keeney, do you want to add anything to that summary?

Director Jon Keeney: I thought the communications were very direct and specific, and we have a better sense of what they're looking for, and which we have the capability of supplying to.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright. If there's none... Any hands up? Is there a hand up?

Ms. Katherine Parker: No, I have one other thing on my report.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Oh, okay. Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Seeing Jeff Matters' name there jogged my memory. The Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant progress meetings are monthly with HBT. And so March 27th was our last meeting. We meet monthly to talk about what all the FRA is requiring of the City of Houston to progress this project, and also the fund that currently has the CMAQ monies and then also how these new ones will be applied, how everything is as far as our preliminary engineering... how that will be applied and how the City is trying to make sure... make it as seamless as possible. But it is progressing well. So, just wanted to make sure... I know that HBT has questions usually about that for their board.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright.

Mr. Jeff Matters: Thank you for that update.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. With that, is there anything else from anyone?

Director Jon Keeney: Are you going to talk about the June situation?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Later.

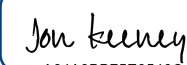
Director Jon Keeney: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, with that, we will thank everyone for being present, online and in the room, and we'll look forward to seeing everyone on May 14th for our next meeting. So, thank you very much.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We had great attendance today. Thanks, all (adjourned at 2:44 p.m.).

ATTEST:

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Jon Keeney, Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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