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Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – November 8, 2022

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A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at Houston TranStar and via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Michael Dyll, Robert A. Fry, Jr., Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Jon Keeney, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, and Allen Owen. Absent were Directors Trey Duhon, Abigail M. Gonzalez, Christopher Lane and Richard L. Muller, Jr., Tina Arias Peterman, 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 Lewis: Good afternoon, everyone. We are ready to call the meeting to order (2:04 p.m.). Thank you so much. It is November 8th, 2022. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, presiding officer of Gulf Coast Rail District. Today's meeting is being conducted with options to participate in person or by video conference. The public meeting location is Houston TranStar, 6922 Katy Road in Houston, Texas. We're 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 an opportunity to address the board with a limit of three minutes per speaker. When addressing the board, please approach the podium. If you're online, please raise your hand. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with the provisions of section 551.127 of the Texas Transportation Code applicable to governmental bodies that extend into three or more counties. Based on the Open Meetings Record Act, the Gulf Coast Rail District board members participating in the Microsoft Teams video conference option need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and voting to be recorded. Therefore, members calling in via telephone will not count for the quorum or for voting. As required, I'm physically present for the board meeting and ask that the vice secretary, Director Dyll, conduct the roll call, please. Please respond audibly when your name is called.

Director Dyll: Alright. Can everyone hear me?

Director Gorczynski: Yes.

Director Dyll: Director Beeson?

Director Beeson: I am present.

Director Dyll: Director Duhon? No. Director Gorczynski?

Director Gorczynski: Present. Good afternoon.

Director Dyll: Good afternoon. Director Ross? I don't see him. Director Peterman? Chairperson Lewis is here. Director Keeney?  
Director Keeney: Here.

Director Dyll: Director Mann?  
Director Mann: Yes, sir. Here.

Director Dyll: Thank you. Director Muller? Director Owen?  
Director Owen: Present.

Director Dyll: Director Lane? And Director Fry?  
Director Fry: Present.

Director Dyll: Okay. And I'm Director Dyll and I am, of course, here. I can certify that we have a quorum.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect. Thank you so much.

Chairperson Lewis: We're on to item 3. We want to confirm that the meeting was posted on Friday according to the Open Meetings Act, Ms. Patke?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. We're ready to move on to discussion and possible action on the minutes for October 11th. Again, Director Dyll please.

Director Dyll: Alright. I trust that everyone has got a copy of the minutes and if you've not, let me know. If you want a moment to peruse them, please speak up. Otherwise, I'd like to get a motion, pass them as they stand.

Director Owen: Director Owen makes a motion to approve.

Director Beeson: Director Beeson will second that.

Director Dyll: Any objections? Very good. I think we've approved the minutes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So, all in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great. And we know we have no objections. Everybody online is voting, correct? Yes?

Director Owen: Yes.

Director Beeson: Yes.

Director Gorczynski: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thank you. Alright. Thank you, Director Dyll.

Director Dyll: You're welcome.

Chairperson Lewis: Report from the treasurer, item 5. Director Owen, please.

Director Owen: Madam Chairman, Chris is not here today, and we have representative David Banos, is that right?

Mr. David Banos: Banos, yes. That's right.

Director Owen: Did I say it right?

Mr. David Banos: It actually is Banos, but yes, that's fine.

Director Owen: He will give us our report.

Mr. David Banos: Hi. Good afternoon. Like Mr. Owen said, I'm David Banos, I'm filling in for Chris Palis. Everyone should have a copy of the bookkeeping report dated for today. Past the cover page, you have the cash flow for your district's checking account. Beginning balance of \$92,729.51. We have three checks for your approval and the bank's charge for total disbursements of \$5,759.40. Leaves an ending balance in this account of \$86,970.11. I do have one more check now on this report. This check is number 2645 for Sara Escamilla and that's for \$150—it's for web design. That check will be reflected on next month's report. Following that page, on page 3 is the account balances for the district, shows certificates of deposit, money market funds, and checking account for a grand total of \$1,410,381. Pages 4 and 5 are the actual versus budget comparison for October 2022. Contributions for the month of October is \$3,290 and expenses \$821 which leaves you net contributions of \$2,470. Page 5 is the actual versus budget, it's the same report but these are for the grants and professional contract services and in kind and pro bono items. The balance of my report is the grant status report, it shows your proceeds, your expenditures, and your remaining grant dollars. And that's all I have for the report. Let me know if you have any questions.

Director Owen: Thank you, David. Madam Chairman, if there are no other questions, I would entertain a motion to approve... discuss the action in Resolution 22-21 ratifying those payments. Is there a motion?

Director Mann: So moved.

Director Beeson: Director Beeson will motion to approve.

Director Owen: Is there a second?

Director Mann: Second. Sure, Bruce Mann.

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

Board: Aye.

Director Owen: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thank you very much. Most appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Banos.

Mr. David Banos: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, we are now on to item 7, public comments. Is there anyone who's online who wishes to speak? We have a hand. Dominic Mazoch, go ahead please. Remember our guidelines please, Mr. Mazoch.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Dr. Lewis, can you hear me?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, we can hear you.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay. Name here is Dominic Mazoch. I am doing this on Zoom from my home to start the clock. And there's a couple of things within the news. I know it's beyond this particular board's prerogative to do anything, but I do have some concerns about transportation which will affect or could affect rail. Number one, not all the rail unions have approved their contract with the railroads. I think there's like seven different unions that have major contracts

with the big seven railroads and one or two of them are still out, so that has not been completely settled yet. Again, that's beyond the breadth of the board but I'm just bringing this up.

Second of all is the diesel fuel situation. This could affect freight rail, commuter rail, Amtrak, our good transportation guys like the 18-wheelers, and granted groups like... Greyhound, Megabus, METRO. And I think that, again, those are things that are going to be things that could affect us. I hope they don't. And last, as an observation, my mother said something when she was still alive, she said, "Man, that train is long," and I said, "Mother, you see one of these wells on one of these stack trains?" and she said, "Yes." I said, "Per well, that takes two 18-wheelers off the interstate. That's two 18-wheelers we don't have to fight on our highways. That's two 18-wheelers that are not tearing up our roads." And she said, "Well, that's something I need to think about." And I think again, this is maybe beyond what this group can do but maybe through the American Association of Railroads, that could be something as an ad for the future for a public service announcement. And with that, no other comments. Back to you, Dr.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thank you, Mr. Mazoch, appreciate your being here. Any other individual representing themselves or others on our web would like to have an opportunity to speak? Seeing no other hands, thank you, we will close out item number 7, public comments.

Chairperson Lewis: Move on to item 8, discussion and possible action on Resolution 22-22 authorizing the executive director to negotiate a contract for a project manager position. So, this is something that we've talked about a while. We have many items on our list and many elements we're trying to accomplish, and I think we've gotten to the point where it's more than one person can keep handling and actually get everything we want done effectuated. I think you'll hear through Ms. Parker's report and mine all the things that we've got that we want to move forward with, and we can go forward more expeditiously with additional hands. I think each of you has had an opportunity to look at that job description to get a sense of what we're trying to accomplish. So, before we even consider the resolution, I'd like to offer an opportunity for conversation and discussion amongst our board members.

Director Keeney: I'm totally comfortable with the way you've designed the job description.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you, Director Keeney. Ms. Chapa Gorczynski, I see your hand.

Director Gorczynski: Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Just wanted to say I like the job description. I think that I have been a proponent of Katherine getting help now for two years, even before I was on this board because Katherine is everywhere to everyone, and we can't carbon copy her. So, for us to be able to get a project manager to help with additional research and work that we need, I think it's the right move. I think the timing is good. I'm glad we have the funding for it. So, I'm definitely in support of this and will say it's long overdue and thank you, Katherine, for hanging in there.

Chairperson Lewis: Indeed. Alright, thank you. Anyone else?

Director Mann: Yes. Thank you. No, I think this is important, especially as we start to move forward and try to work on the CREATE type model for our region. It's going to be imperative that we have resources to do it. So fully supportive. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Great. Thank you. Alright. Yes, sir.

Director Fry: She said there's funding in place. Where did the funding come from?

Chairperson Lewis: Ms. Parker?

Ms. Katherine Parker: From our current budget. Basically, I'm asking and I'm sitting down with Mr. Palis to talk about using some of our project development, but it is a matter of just a line item for that lump sum of \$50,000.

Director Fry: Okay, so money's in... We've got it. Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes. It's currently in our budget and we'll go through all the details of it once we hire someone, but this is just an opportunity for you all to approve us starting this process of hiring someone.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you for that question. Alright. Anyone else? Alright. Whenever you're comfortable, we would entertain a motion.

Director Keeney: Move to accept.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. We've got Director Keeney, motion. Is there a second?

Director Mann: I'll second, Director Mann.

Chairperson Lewis: Director Mann, second. Thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Anyone opposed? Alright, great. Thank you. We'll get moving on that and most appreciate it. And that means that you all will be able to see us accomplish even more, so we're excited about that.

Chairperson Lewis: Item 9, report from the executive director. Ms. Parker, please.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon again. A few items on my list, one of which is most important to me, it's TTI administrative support, an amendment for our interlocal agreement. This is basically Lisa's work with our board. We approve an additional monies each year, and it's that time of the year to do that. Because it is below \$25,000, it's something that I'm able to approve but I always bring it before the board. So, in December we will probably have that actual paperwork in front of you for the board to look at, but that is in the works.

Okay, go to the next one. I attended a number of meetings this month, felt like I was on skates, but they were all very positive meetings. The first was a Surface Transportation Board field visit. This was as a result of the hearing that Councilmember Gallegos and Commissioner Ellis testified before the Surface Transportation Board earlier that month about the proposed merger between Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern. So, as a result the board, two members of this five-member board which is an independent federal agency, they are charged with economic regulation of various modes of surface transportation, primarily freight rail, they came to the Houston area. Robert Primus, who is the vice chair, and Karen Hedlund and also Deputy Director Joshua Wayland were in attendance. Mayor Turner, Councilmembers Cisneros and Gallegos, State Representative Garcia, and representatives from Sheila Jackson Lee's office, the fire chief, there were many people there to discuss rail operations in the City of Houston. And I was asked to speak on York and Sampson and the challenges that exist there and then also the city's recent application but also the Rail District's history with this project in particular.

Next, I attended the State of TxDOT luncheon with Eliza Paul and Laura Ryan. Commissioner Ryan was there on a panel discussion about the state of TxDOT and some of their projections for mobility and transportation issues for the state. TAC and TPC monthly meetings. And next was the Greater Houston Partnership Future of Texas. They have various speakers and this particular was Comptroller Glenn Hegar. We had a very positive conversation after the meeting about the Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund. It is on his radar, and I asked the question, “Does it require legislative action for us to fund this?” And he said, “No, basically it’s an ask from his office to the legislature.” So, I’m looking forward to continued discussions with him. He discussed the 26 billion plus surplus that exists, and I said, “Can we just peel a little bit off for us? Not only for the Rail District but for smaller cities and larger cities as well to be able to have a local match for these federal funds that are coming down the pike.” And he understood the importance of that so hopefully that will help us to push that effort further along.

And last... Well, next to the last, the South Texas Transportation Summit, I want to say thank you to Mayor Keeney for providing information about this conference. It was sponsored by BAYTRAN, Economic Alliance Houston Port Region, and Bay Area Houston. And some of the topics were petrochemical industry growth and transportation goods movement and infrastructure projects, supply chain capacity expansion, and the latest federal dollars that are available for various entities to apply for, so quite a bit of information.

And then lastly, the FRA, or the Federal Railroad Administration’s Grade Crossing Safety and Railroad Trespass Prevention Workshop—that’s a mouthful, that I attended in Raleigh, North Carolina, November 1st through 3rd. So, this workshop was held on North Carolina State’s campus. The goals were to identify existing emerging technologies related to mitigating, reducing, and eliminating rail crossing and trespasser incidents. Also, to raise awareness of the dangers and effects of highway rail grade crossing incidents. And lastly, to seek out low cost solutions and to discuss technology improvements to... safety at these same crossings.

So, on day one, there were over 40 presentations over this three-day span, so quite a bit of information but very enlightening for the North Carolina area. So, trespasser prevention, we talked about data analysis, local mitigation strategies, how they involve the public and the community engagement. One of the things that stuck out for me on day one is that for their area, for their state, there were 766 trespassing fatalities and the cost or comprehensive cost of that is \$12 million per fatality. So, you do the math. So, getting everyone out there to assess what’s going on, the length of time it took for people waiting for first responders to come or being able to clear the accident, so all of that went into that cost.

Day two, we talked about specifically grade crossings, some highway design, innovative technologies. There was a representative from BNSF who discussed their drone program that they use along their right of way. And then there was also a research institute that talked about what was called the RAILS program—it’s Railroad Artificial Intelligence Learning System. So, it’s an opportunity to provide education to people who a lot of times do not realize they’re trespassing when they walk along the track. It’s just something that they’ve done, and they don’t realize that they are trespassing. So, they gave case studies on local projects about how to mitigate that.

And on day three was the research and development funding opportunities. The FRA talked about the IJA that are available. CRISI is coming up, RCE has closed but there are a number of grants that are available for cities, counties, and DOTs to apply for. There was also a

presentation from the grants management team and their civil rights team. I was invited to come to this because Houston will be hosting the FRA workshop in May of 2023, and the Rail District and the City of Houston and others will be sponsors. And so, this gave us an opportunity to see what they have done, what we can glean from what they've done, and how we can make it fit for the Houston region. I think that's it.

Director Mann: I just have a couple questions.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Director Mann: Thank you. So, for a path forward on the Railroad Relocation Fund, so we should all be beating up Hegar and saying, "Put it in the budget." Is that what I'm hearing?

Ms. Katherine Parker: He's responsible for basically funding that fund. And so, because of the surplus, I just asked that could it be considered that this be what's used for that. And apparently someone had talked to him about it before, he was very familiar when I approached him about it. So, I wanted to know kind of the process. If there's no need for legislative action and we're just asking, then when he does his presentation from a budget standpoint to be in the policy...

Chairperson Lewis: Right. So, just as a follow-up thought on that, I will tell you that... So, let's hold that conversation until my section.

Director Mann: Yes. No, that's fine.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Any other questions or comments to Ms. Parker?

Director Mann: I have one other question. So, I wasn't able to make it. How was the Transportation Summit?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Southeast?

Director Mann: Yes.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I learned a lot. It was a great mix of not only transportation modes but from petrochemical side to even the legislators talking about how their various districts were affected by these funds and how even though they may not agree on everything but that these are positive measures in transportation and mobility within their areas. And then the supply chain was a very interesting presentation by Margaret Kidd, that she provided, just about the Houston region ... So, it was great. This is I think the first time that the three of them have come together. In the past, I think BAYTRAN has done something similarly, with all three together so I'm looking forward to next year and them having it again.

Director Mann: Thank you.

Director Keeney: Just a comment. I was at the Transportation Summit that she's referring to and not that I was there to observe our executive director; however, she was just networking the heck out of the place. So, it was very easy to spot her... very easy to spot her doing her role. And to me, that summit brought together a lot of the political players in this region that needed to have a conversation with each other. I know that I developed a whole set of networking contacts,

including the logistics manager for one of the major chemical corporations, and he's going to share information with us, and they primarily ship their chemicals by rail. And so, we have that sort of a network out there that we can begin to tap into. And I compliment our executive director on her willingness and ability to work the crowd.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Very great. Thank you for that. So, I have a question too, Ms. Parker. Real interested in technological and AI approaches to addressing grade separation. So, I don't know if there's anything more to say about that, but I guess when we do this in early summer, I guess it would be, that would be something that I would love for us to do some focus on. And look, I've got so interested in artificial intelligence because it just... It's fascinating how technologically things are able to do a little bit beyond what we could do ourselves. It can be places where we personally are not. It can then do assessments through algorithms that would take us whatever, three days, to calculate by hand. And so, I'm just curious as to what that means with sort of the research community and how we might be able to apply those to help us with our many challenges in this region.

Ms. Katherine Parker: We definitely can invite some of them. Actually, the young lady from BNSF is a graduate of Texas Southern and so she presented on the drone work that BNSF is doing. That is very interesting and provides a lot more than just your simple camera, what we have at quite a lot of crossings now.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. My ear had picked up on that drone piece. I wondered about that. Anyone else? Alright. Thank you so much. Busy month.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, item 10 announcements from the chair. 1a that we have on our list is the Gulf Region Systems Working Group meeting. So, we've decided we're calling it GREAT. So, those of you who did participate in our Legislative and Funding Committee meeting I guess last month, the beginning of last month, and then we were able to report on it during the last board meeting, I know that we've been talking as a region about establishing what we now are calling a programmatic approach to better coordinating and aligning our needs in this region as we sort of parallel and look at how freight moves, particularly on railroads. We are talking about this being a multimodal effort. METRO is a key participant at the table. The folks at the meeting, just to sort of give a span of who the stakeholders are, there's Gulf Coast Rail District, H-GAC, railroads participated by virtual, there was a representative from another... Katherine... Bruce, who was that young man who was sitting on the end?

Director Mann: Yes, I never caught where he...

Chairperson Lewis: I did, and I wrote it down, I made a note as to who he is, but he's with a company that's interested in this, so a private sector representative.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I'm trying to think.

Chairperson Lewis: I can't remember. I don't want to say because I'm not really sure. City of Houston, Port Houston, TxDOT. Am I missing anybody?

Director Mann: No, I think that's it.

Chairperson Lewis: I think... Yes, that's it. So, what I will tell you is that there is agreement among folks around the table that we really want to do something like this because it would help us leverage our resources and get far more than we've been getting. If one is interested in looking at the CREATE website, you will see that they've been able to sort of proffer more than about \$76 million in projects of late. And theirs is largely seems to be a consortium between Illinois DOT and their MPO. In this region, we've got a lot that we're still talking about. One of those elements is how we would structure ourselves. And so, there's no answer to that right now but that's why we ended up saying we are at least a programmatic approach because it's probably not an entity, an agency, an organization. It is an approach that we agree to. And so, there's still much to be decided upon in terms of how it's pulled together, what we pull together.

One of the things we're talking about is having a list of priority projects for the region that everybody sort of agrees on so that we are approaching our needs in the region as one. And so, we think that that will go a long way as we move forward. I will mention to you that there is a lot of energy behind Gulf Coast Rail District being sort of the central focus of where things from GREAT emanate. It's not a done deal but there's a lot of thought that we might be best positioned as an entity to sort of leverage and move forward with this idea. So, in order to no longer, say, do something like CREATE, we did agree on... And you all, if you've been in these meetings, you know that that can take a minute, we did agree on a temporary name for ourselves which is GREAT, so now we will call ourselves GREAT. It stands for Gulf Regional and then the rest of it is our systems working together. So, we're calling ourselves GREAT. One of the things that Director Mann and I are working on is... And all of us, but I think he and I are kind of taking a sort of a lead position in trying to formulate the background prospectus as to what this all is, what we're actually talking about, why we need it, the purpose of it, the stakeholders, and then a little bit about how it would work. So, that should be done... We're going to meet again in a couple weeks actually, so our movement on this, we want to go rapidly. It's sort of a sooner rather than later thought.

I will tell you all as an attendant to that, H-GAC is sponsoring a freight conference in early December, and people from CREATE will be invited down to give us a little more background information about their particular structure and how it works and all of that. So, it'll give us a little more background. So, that'll be something for us to look forward to. So, with that, just on that piece, I'll pause a second and see are there any questions, comments, or thoughts or discussion around that item a? Ms. Chapa Gorczynski, I think I see a yellow and yes, a hand.

Director Gorczynski: Thank you. So, I'm really excited about this opportunity for Houston. I feel like we're a little bit behind other competitive metropolitan areas but that doesn't mean we can't catch up. I have not been a part of these conversations with my entity which is totally okay. I want to ask is GCRD the definite lead for bringing this vision and moving it forward? And I would say my fear is that other entities wanting to ramp up and add rail, whether it's the city or the county or H-GAC, it wants to become kind of the expert, and my fear is I've not necessarily had the best experiences. It's been great with the city, but with other entities that are wanting to have this expertise and maybe say, "Oh, no. We want to take the lead on this." I think I just want some assurance. Is the GCRD, is this going to be a part of the mission? Is this what the region is going to be getting behind?

Chairperson Lewis: So, Director Mann and I will both answer this. I would say that there is energy behind GCRD doing that. I would not say at this point that it is sort of carved in stone or there's nothing written to that. I would say that in conversation with others, we've had detailed

discussion about why GCRD is well positioned. And so those sort of rough sort of guidelines/sort of criteria would be number one, our coverage of the majority of the region which no other... Only H-GAC can say that they cover as much as we cover. We talked about this, that if there's something we don't have, it's a couple of the counties that are not in GCRD like Brazoria, like Liberty, like Chambers, but we talked about the fact that they could be brought in under a Memorandum of Understanding, still brought in under GREAT under this MOU. So, that's probably our biggest advantage. Secondly, our second... Well, maybe not biggest, but our second advantage is that we are able to compete for and leverage requests for federal funding. H-GAC, while they have the coverage, they do not actually implement, and we are an implementing agency. So, that's the other secondary advantage that others, like H-GAC who has the coverage, doesn't quite have. I understand that MPOs might have opportunities to do implementation, but our H-GAC has not done it, so this would not be sort of a place where you would want to start exercising that since it hasn't really been done in the past. So, those are the two basic things that I would say now that the energy is behind us but still there's nothing... As one of my old colleagues would say, "Show it in writing to me, Carol." Director Mann?

Director Mann: No, I think everything you said, and the reality of it is even if H-GAC wanted to implement, they don't have the head count to do it, they don't have the resources. So, the Rail District is the only multi-jurisdictional entity that can take this on and has the ability to apply for the grants. So, I think it's a no-brainer but until the T's are crossed and the I's are dotted, we won't know for sure. Just personal conversations with Greg, he thinks this is where it should be. So, the railroads think this is where it should be, so you've got three of four of the bigger stakeholders all thinking it should end up here.

Director Keeney: May I comment?

Chairperson Lewis: Absolutely.

Director Keeney: Just to build on the conversation, it's extremely heartwarming to hear that there is an initiative and a push behind this organization taking a lead role. Part of the thinking behind the conference that our executive director and myself were referring to is the fact that H-GAC cannot take that leadership role on a regional transportation strategy. The more we can assert ourselves, and when I read through all the statutes and all the documents about why this organization was formed, this is right up the alley of why this organization was structured in the first place. And so, I would just encourage you all to just keep moving forward and if there's any of us on the board who can facilitate or help, I certainly would volunteer and I believe everybody that I see on the screen would offer the same sort of help if needed.

Chairperson Lewis: Definitely appreciate that and I know we're going to need something. And I think one of the things that just in my sort of history of having done things like this before, it's always important to have voices that are speaking positively about it, the heads nodding yes about it, and that's not only us but within our organizations, those you represent. So, those of you who represent the other cities, multiple cities in Harris County, multiple cities in Fort Bend, it's important that everyone understands and kind of says yes. So, if you're asked about it... And then there will be a point when we'll want you to take this along with other items back to your naming bodies to make sure that they are in concurrence with what GCRD is doing because our board is representative of others. And so, we need to make sure that that remains front and center in what we do and how we talk.

Director Keeney: Sure. And just a quick additional comment. If the funding doesn't go through Glenn Hegar and you need political support for that, for Pete's sakes let us know. We all have a variety of contacts out there and I assure you I can bring it up in front of Mayor and Council who appointed me to this board.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect.

Director Keeney: And you've got 31 little cities around here who are quite interested in success associated with this.

Chairperson Lewis: Sounds wonderful. Love that. Is there anyone else? Alright. If not... Director Beeson, are you wanting to speak?

Director Beeson: Oh, did I raise my hand or something? Sorry.

Chairperson Lewis: So no, you don't want to speak? You're flashing blue. Okay. But that's fine, I just wanted to make sure that if you...

Director Beeson: I'm good. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, perfect. Thank you. Alright, so item b is TAG Legislative Committee meeting. So, I met with others, TAG Legislative Committee meeting. Your BAYTRAN director was represented there as well. And so BAYTRAN actually already has their own legislative agenda pulled together and advanced, so she presented that. I presented the three lower case Roman numerals that you see here for our own things that we're talking about. I will tell you that on lower case i, the people on the call are very encouraging and supportive of the Transportation Reinvestment Zones. We talked about the lawsuit a little bit that's got us held up, and one of the sort of side conversations, nobody knows exactly where this is going yet but state legislator Terry Canales who filed this bill, where that he would go in this second time and try to clean up the language that's got it in court. So, that was discussed.

On the second one, the Railroad Relocation Fund, again, everybody on the call was supportive of it. The thing that I would add to what Ms. Parker found out from Comptroller Hegar is that there are others around the state who are also interested in getting the Railroad Relocation Fund funded. So, recognize that money going into it is not going to just be for Houston, it's for the entire state. But what TAG is talking about is making sure that we all go in united from all of our various positions around the state asking for that fund to be funded. And then of course, we'll have to go in and compete for the money that's there. But once it's there, we're sure that we'll be able to get our fair share.

And so, I think to your point, Mayor Keeney, we will actually pull together in writing why the Railroad Relocation Fund is important, and then I think we'll try to schedule a meeting with Comptroller Hegar. So, at that point, once we get it, then we will want all again, everyone that you know to be encouraging to the state legislators about funding that particular item.

Director Keeney: Sure.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, absolutely.

Director Keeney: Absolutely.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, and then the next thing is the Vehicle Registration Fee and so again, on the call, we had that. Director Peterman brought that to us, and we talked about it a little bit, but I will tell you that other folks on the call were very interested in this item as a way to try to get funding. And someone mentioned one of the entities in San Antonio did it, and they're getting quite a bit of funding from their capacity to do that. So, that's still, again, something that TAG is going to be working on. And so that committee will meet again as well.

Director Keeney: Do you mind if I ask Mayor and Council and get sort of a head count on what their attitude is about this vehicle...?

Chairperson Lewis: Would love for you to do that.

Director Keeney: Sure. Okay. I'll...

Chairperson Lewis: Now, what I wish we had for you because I'm a "show it to me in writing," I wish we had a sort of a one-page prospectus to give you some guidance about what it is and how it would work. So, we might see, Ms. Parker, if we could pull something together.

Ms. Katherine Parker: For the vehicle registration?

Chairperson Lewis: For the vehicle registration fee? Something that you pull together but then you could use for talking points.

Director Keeney: Sure. No problem.

Chairperson Lewis: We would love that. Alright. So, those are the three things that we had talked about in the TAG Legislative Council. So, between those two sort of things, those are the big things that we got. We will be meeting with stakeholders around to try to make sure that our items are going to be considered and those things that if anybody... So, my position is I like to talk about what we're doing with everyone, so if anyone does not support it, I like to know early. I'm not one who tries to sort of slide it under. I want everyone to know this is what we're doing, so if anybody has any discomfort or unreadiness, I want to find out about it soon. So, we will be talking to many people around the region about all the things that we have here, just to see sort of what the temperature is about all the things that we're talking about. So, Ms. Parker, next month, you might hear some other folks that we've had an opportunity to meet with because we're trying to get on a couple calendars. So, any other questions, thoughts?

Director Mann: I have a question about that. So, did you guys have any discussion on... And I'm not saying anything that hasn't been said before that TxDOT, previous TxDOT executive director talked about this... legislatively changing the scope of TxDOT to be more than a road department?

Chairperson Lewis: That is an interesting question. I think people feel that is probably unlikely to happen right now. It may be that we might see some baby steps happening just with things that TxDOT is doing. So, TxDOT has in the past supported passenger rail between San Antonio and Austin. It wasn't consummated, it didn't happen, but it wasn't because TxDOT had not supported it. TxDOT was supporting it. So, I think we've got some avenues to sort of, if you

would, consider it drip some water on that stone that over time could help us move forward a little bit. Ms. Chapa Gorczynski?

Director Gorczynski: Yes, ma'am. Thank you. Just wanted to offer if there's a group that is going to Austin next session. Like many of you, I'm already putting together my calendar for 2023. This is the year that we could plan to go as a group and whether it's we share a bus with TAG or somebody else is that we make the trip and shake hands and remind people that the district is here and what our mission is and what we're advocating for or at least want to inform them on. So, you're already shaking your head, like we're thinking along the same wavelength. So, Ms. Katherine, just let us know if there's a bus and I'm on it.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. So, TAG always does what they call Green Light Houston. And again, it's associated with BAYTRAN. I don't think it's been dated yet, but I know that it will come up. One of the things I think that they try to do is look at the calendar and see when the committees are meeting because you don't really want to go when the Transportation Committee is meeting because then you won't be able to talk to them. So, they kind of try to look at that. So, I think there still might be some things that they want to see. Last year, we did last session, we did go on our specific items that were on. And so, I think there are some things that we might ourselves as things unfold see if there's a reason that we GCRD would want to go independent. But let me say as I say that, one of the comments that has come back to the Houston region since the early 2000s is that we tend to go up individually as opposed to as sort of a consolidated, speaking-with-one-voice group in the region. So, I think that's the advantage to have the TAG umbrella is that we do have the opportunity to go sort of in one voice, and I think that advantages us. So, that doesn't mean if we've got something individually that we wouldn't go back about something independent, but I do think there's a huge advantage to us being identified as a part of that bigger body. But by the same token, I think we want our legislative folks to recognize that GCRD is its own independent entity with an agenda that we want to advance as well. So, I appreciate your asking that question.

Director Mann: So, that made me think of something while you were talking. So, I think next week the Partnership has a Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Committee meeting. Do we want to try to get the Rail Relocation Fund and vehicle registration fee on their legislative agenda?

Chairperson Lewis: I think we would love to. The thing I think we need to do, I keep at we need to get it on paper, so we have talking points about what we're talking about. But then I think yes, getting it on their legislative agenda... When I talk with Amy at BAYTRAN about us making sure that our whole legislative package from the region looks solid, and I think they would appreciate that as well. Anyone else? Alright. Well, if there's nothing else, that takes us through our agenda. Our next meeting is December 13th. For those of you who've been long GCRD folks, you'll say that we don't meet in December and we have not in the past, but this December we feel like we're going to have much on our agenda. Usually in December we just sort of hold paying our bookkeepers until January sort of, that's the normal December thing, but this time we will come back because we'll have a couple items to have on. Trustfully, we'll have more on this legislative agenda to talk about, and secondarily we should have a project manager piece to come back with as well.

Chairperson Lewis: So, if there's nothing else, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Director Keeney: So moved.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Mayor Keeney said so moved, and I see and hear the seconds in the background. We'll accredit Mayor Owen. Alright. So, thank you all. We'll see you next month. (Adjourned at 2:54 p.m.)

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