



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – April 11, 2023

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at Houston TranStar and via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Robert A. Fry, Jr., Kendric Jones, Jon Keeney, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, Allen Owen, Tina Arias Peterman, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Veronica Chapa Gorczynski and Christopher Lane. 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: It is 2:01 p.m. and we're going to call our meeting to order today. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, presiding officer of Gulf Coast Rail District. We are at April 11, 2023. The meeting is being conducted with options to participate in person or by video conference. The public meeting location is Houston TranStar, 6922 Katy Road, Houston, Texas, Conference Center Room 120A. The video conference is conducted through Microsoft Teams and that link can be found in the meeting invitation, the agenda, and the public postings. The meeting is open to the public. The public will have the opportunity to address the board during public comments with a limit of three minutes per speaker. If you wish to address the board, please approach the podium or raise your hand if you're online during public comments. Board members may participate by video conference in accordance with the provision of Section 551.127 of the Texas Government Code applicable to a government body that extends into three or more counties. Based on the Open Meetings Act requirements, the Gulf Coast Rail District board members participating in the Microsoft Teams will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and to record voting. Therefore, members calling in via telephone will not count for our quorum or for voting. As required, I am physically present for the board meeting and ask that the secretary, Director Keeney, do the roll call please. Make sure you're audible when your name is called.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Ronald Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Robert Maldonado, Jr? Veronica Chapa Gorczynski? Stephen Gilbreath?

Director Stephen Gilbreath: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Jeff E. Ross?

Director Jeff Ross: Got your back.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Tina Arias Peterman?
Director Tina Peterman: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Carol Lewis?
Chairperson Carol Lewis: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Gosh, I'm here. Bruce Mann?
Director Bruce Mann: Yes, sir.

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

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you, sir. Kendric Jones?
Director Kendric Jones: I'm here, but...

Director Jon Keeney: Christopher Lane?

Ms. Lisa Patke: I'm sorry, we're having audio issues. He's here but he's just audible (Kendric Jones).
Director Jon Keeney: Okay.
Director Kendric Jones: Yes. It's not allowing me to...

Director Jon Keeney: Jean Mann?
Director Jean Mann: I'm sorry. What was the last name you called?
Director Jon Keeney: Jean Mann?
Director Jean Mann: Yes, I'm here.

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

Director Jeff Ross: Maldonado has checked in.
Director Robert Maldonado, Jr.: Maldonado here.
Director Jon Keeney: Okay. Thank you.
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, thank you.

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

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Perfect. Thank you so much. Thanks to all of you for your in-person attendance, and those who are online, thank you very much. I want to confirm with Ms. Patke that we did get the meeting posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I think we posted actually by Thursday afternoon this time in recognition of Good Friday.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So that did in fact occur. The next item on the agenda is discussion and possible action on Resolution 23-09 recognizing Harris County Commissioners Court appointment of Robert Maldonado, Jr. to position number two of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors. You have a resolution in your package that recognizes that appointment and now therefore be it resolved that the board of directors of the Gulf Coast Rail District by this resolution formally recognizes and confirms that Robert Maldonado, Jr. has been appointed to serve as a member of the board of directors of the Gulf Coast Rail District for a term ending February 2025. Passed and approved this 11th day of 2023 April at the regularly called meeting of our GCRD board.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Is there a motion?

Director Jeff Ross: So moved, Ross.

Director Jon Keeney: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Ross and second Keeney. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposed? Alright, thank you. That motion carries. Mr. Maldonado, we recognize and welcome you.

Director Robert Maldonado, Jr.: Thank you for having me.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Next item five, discussion and possible action on Resolution 23-10 recognizing City of Houston appointment of Stephen Gilbreath to position number four of the Gulf Coast Rail District board of directors. And there's a resolution in your packet for this particular appointment. Now therefore be it resolved that the board of directors of the Gulf Coast Rail District by this resolution formally recognizes and confirms that Stephen Gilbreath has been appointed to serve as a member of the board of directors of the Gulf Coast Rail District for a term ending January 2025. Again, passed and approved this 11th day of April 2023 at our regularly called meeting.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Is there a motion?

Director Jeff Ross: Motion, Ross.

Director Bruce Mann: Second, Mann.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Ross and Mann. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Awesome. Any opposed? Thank you. That motion and resolution passed. Welcome.

Director Stephen Gilbreath: Thank you, appreciate it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We're glad to have you.

Director Stephen Gilbreath: Glad to be here.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, so we are on to item number six, discussion and possible action on the minutes for March 14th. Director Keeney, please.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes. I assume each of you had an opportunity to read those minutes and I need a motion to approve or modify. Any input? Then a motion to approve?

Director Bruce Mann: So moved, Mann.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. I need a second.

Director Allen Owen: Director Owen seconds.

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

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

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you very much. Item seven, report from the treasurer.
Director Owen, please.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair, Chris Palis is sick today and there will not be a report. He has no one from his office to attend in his stead so he asked that we just skip his item today. So that is my motion.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright, if we go to item number eight. Director Owen, please.

Director Allen Owen: Yes. I need a motion to approve Resolution 23-11 which ratifies our payments that have been made.

Director Tina Peterman: So moved, Director Peterman.

Director Allen Owen: Is there a second?

Directors Jon Keeney and Ronald Beeson: I'll second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, we have Peterman and...

Director Allen Owen: Director Beeson second. All those in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Allen Owen: All opposed? Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Perfect. Thank you so much. So, we are now to item nine, public comments. Dominic Mazoch signed. Dominic, do you want to come to the front?

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Well, yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Just come to the front sort of where the podium is.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, no problem.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Does that work for Mr. Mazoch, Ms. Patke?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: There is no speaker here. Can you hear me though?

Director Jon Keeney: Sure.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, no problem. My name here is Dominic Mazoch, I...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Hold on just a minute, we need to ask. Does that work for your recording, Lisa?

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Oh, okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you. Press one more time. There you go.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Test, test, test. Okay, thank you. Name here is Dominic Mazoch. I am in the Conference Center at TranStar. This is a meeting, and my three minutes starts now. I know we're going to have increase of freight traffic in the area irregardless of recent mergers of the Kansas City Southern and Canadian Pacific Railroads. Ideally, I think Los Angeles has the best answer for some of this when they built the Alameda Corridor Trench. There's one small problem with the trench. It floods there. So, my idea would be using maybe tax abatements, tax credits and stuff like that sort of thing. It's that we work with the private railroads to provide storage areas where trains can be held without blocking the main line and without blocking the corridors into the City of Houston.

For instance, on Canadian Pacific/Kansas City, maybe some of the areas around Kendleton to be expanded for that. On the Union Pacific Glidden Subdivision, the area at Glidden would be done. Up on the north end, ... In other words, a train would not come into the Houston Metropolitan area unless there was a clear shot for that train to go completely through the terminal or there would be room within the final destination of the train within the terminal. I think that way, we would have fewer blocked intersections, air quality would be better, and so on and so forth.

And even then, I think we need to think further. I think we need to think Texas Triangle. For instance, I'll just give an example. Outside of San Antonio, Texas, the old SP and ... line each other on I-35 which doesn't have Union Pacific. Maybe work with Union Pacific, maybe that could be a place to hold trains where they don't even come into the Texas Triangle unless there's room in the Triangle. Or even more we say Union Pacific to dispatch, or trains don't even come to Texas if they can be held at San Ysidro Yard in Mexico until they get picked up. But I think with some planning, with some extra yards in areas outside of metropolitan areas, we can make our tracks a lot more fluid in these corridors without spending a whole bunch of money, railroad money, and then tax money. I believe in thinking of cheaper, faster, stronger. So, with that, I have no other comment. Back to the Chairwoman. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you, Mr. Mazoch. Ms. Patke, do we have anyone with a hand raised online?

Ms. Lisa Patke: No, we don't.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, great. Thank you. Alright, if there's no other public comment, we would be ready to go on to item number 10, report from the executive director, Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon, everyone. Can you all hear me? Good. Lisa's pulling up the presentation. I just have four items on today. First of which is a HART update. We know that HART is our newest committee partnership between various member entities and adjacent

counties related to a programmatic approach for garnering federal funding. So, our latest update... Can you do the... Should go to the next slide, when she gets back. For this particular update is our TxDOT 10 list. This list represents is what the working group discussed and gathered input from various partners to engage TxDOT in a more detailed study of 10 locations, which we have listed on the screen. This list is not designed to necessarily show the highest priority projects but intentionally reflects the Greater Houston region needs and known high volume rail and personal vehicular crossing locations. This list is foundational to our next goal to produce grant-ready projects for our region this year. HART is pleased to begin this multiyear programmatic approach and work together with our partners to prepare for successful applications and potential partnerships. So, this represents our... I'd like to say our second list. Our first list was the one that we submitted for that last round of grants, and this represents the second list of TxDOT crossings that we are working forward. So, we've been asked by a number of groups as to what this list is, and this is what we have to date. Our HART committee will continue to meet once a month. We are separating into smaller committees to work toward recommendations to our larger working group and that will actually begin this week. Next slide.

I attended the Southwest Rail Conference April 3rd and 4th, and I jokingly said to Tyson that I was attending, and he said, "Well, you can come and be on stage with me." So, this was the result of that. We did a joint presentation. His was about people building America. I specifically talked about GCRD and the HART initiative for our region. There was a lot of positive feedback. Some people had heard of it, a lot of people had not, so it was opportunity to share with those in the DFW area about what we're doing. There were quite a few representatives there. Some of the other... Over the two-day timeframe, there were various topics that were discussed, great seminars related to the effects of long trains, trespassing, a lot of industry companies that were represented that do business with our Class I and short line railroads. Our presentation was talking about creating infrastructure partnerships. Our conference keynote speaker was Karen Hedlund who's the vice chairman of the Surface Transportation Board who specifically referenced the City of Houston visit and talked about what they viewed when they came down to look at York-Sampson crossing. So, we are being noticed and we are being discussed at various tables. Quite a bit about passenger rail. Also, federal funding. And also, short lines that are here in the Texas region. And then lastly, reconnecting rail corridors, Gulf Coast, and Texas. So, there were a lot of rail partners, a lot of rail information to be gathered and discussed. A great conference that Peter LeCody and his team put together. Next slide.

My last two pieces before Dr. Lewis is our project manager update. I want to thank Director Peterman and Director Ross for helping me to interview our candidates and we've come up with a selection. I've made an offer and I'm waiting to hear back from our candidate for the project manager position. And hopefully this will help us be able to advance some of our work by adding to our team here at GCRD. So, thank you so much to those board members who took time out to interview and review applications.

Lastly, the FRA Grade Crossing Safety and Railroad Trespass Prevention Workshop, it's a long name, will be May 9th through the 10th of next month. I'm on to present about HART on that first day, on the 9th, as part of their workshop, which is the same day as our meeting. But I'm sure that I'll go there, and we'll continue on with our meeting because we need to have each of our meetings to continue with our progress. That's all I have on my list. And for that workshop,

thank you to those who participated in the April, I think 8th and 9th... staff participated in that initial meeting that we had with the FRA. Thank you. Any questions?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Questions, comments about Ms. Parker's report?

Director Jon Keeney: Good job.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. Alright. So, Ms. Parker mentioned that she won't be here... Announcements is me, so this is item number 11. The last bullet there is the next meeting is May 9th, so Ms. Parker already announced that she will not be here that day. So, you will recall the last time she was not here, and Ms. Patke was not here other, so everything fell on I want to say poor little me. And we had just incredible contributions from the staff here at TranStar, so I cannot say enough about how much they helped. But they help every month though, really. So, trustfully, Ms. Patke will be here next time so that she and I can share the load when that point occurs.

So, things we've got on the announcements by me, the Rail Relocation Fund. You all know we're trying to get money out of the Legislature. The \$200 million was what was put in the budget. It did go up before funding on Thursday. We haven't had any feedback, so I guess that means it was not taken out. So far that amount is there. We were really hopeful that we could get it increased but that did not happen. But there's still two years coming, so we'll see if we can get started. This one might happen next time.

I wanted to mention to you all the next bullet there is that we are working on a strategic plan. Director Keeney came forward with the thought about us kind of restructuring our strategic plan. We're doing that. We didn't really have one. For those of you have been on GCRD a while, you'll remember that we've had workshops generally annually. We did not have one this year because we had a really large turnover of our GCRD staff. I'm just excited about all of our new folks coming on but the timing was not such that we could have sort of our annual workshops. So, we did talk about earlier, for everyone who's new and there are a lot of new people, pulling up the reports from the last workshop so that you can at least see what we had done, sort of what we're standing on, although much of that you'll see will be rethought as we go forward with the new strategic plan. So, we actually are going to be presenting to you within the next... I think we're saying within the next couple months, we should be able to roll all the way through it, but you may see elements of it along the way. We are going to revise our mission statement; we are going to revise our vision statement as well. And we are going to focus on having five-year performance measures, outcomes, and goals. So, we'll know exactly what we're trying to accomplish over a five-year period, so that should be very interesting. So, you will see more about that in the weeks coming.

The next thing I want to mention, and you all will not believe this, but H-GAC has given me a date for releasing the request for proposals for US 90A and it is April 19th. So next week—yay, Director Owen—we should have that RFP released. Thomas Gray from H-GAC tells me he will pull together that first stakeholder group within the first couple weeks. I think Jeff Ross will be on that. So, we can look forward to that going underway and getting started. They also tell me

that the extension of Westpark should not be as onerous and that in fairly short order we should be getting that rolled up as well.

Director Allen Owen: Good.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes. So, those are the last things we have on the announcement. I will say as we talk about HART. HART too... I'm going to baton hand back so we can stay according to our Open Meetings requirements. I'm going to baton hand back to Ms. Parker to talk a little bit about maybe expectations for HART and things we're thinking about in that regard.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you. So yes, I'm looking at the question in the chat from Lindsey—will there be an opportunity for residential involvement in HART at some point? At some point, I'm sure. Right now, we are just working to make sure that we have our structure together as far as projects being submitted and how they are put forward. But yes, definitely, that is our plan. Again, anything related to grants will have to have public involvement ultimately in the end. But right now, as I said, we are still labeling ourselves as a working group. So, we're doing our best to try to make sure that we can have everyone that needs to come to the table and that we're ready for these Notices of Funding Opportunities that are coming up because one just came out actually today for Safe Streets. But that we have a list that is able to be presented, that's our goal. That all of our submissions are worthy and competitive whatever area they come from within our region. So yes, definitely. Just right now at this point, I can't tell you that. But it is a part of our plan.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Absolutely. As Ms. Parker said, I will say just so that folks are aware. At the last meeting we did talk about public involvement. It came up as an item and we know that it is very important. We will not go... The thing that can make folks comfortable is that with any federal project, we all know we cannot send it in, if we have not had an opportunity to allow folks who live proximate and far away for that matter to have a voice. So, that will absolutely be there. We don't know the format yet or how it will roll out but we're definitely thinking in terms of that. So, let me ask are there any other questions or thoughts from any board members either online or in the room?

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: This is Director Owen. Have we heard from Fort Bend County yet on their representation? I keep following up on this.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: No.

Director Allen Owen: I will again if we haven't.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, we have not. I'm actually going to reach out to them tomorrow and ask again. But when Ms. Parker and I met with them, they indicated that it was forthcoming, but

we have not at this point. But we're looking forward to that. So yes. If there's someone you know that you can speak to as well, we would be delighted.

Director Allen Owen: I will. I mentioned to the new commissioner, and I will mention it to him again. It'd be a great opportunity for him to put somebody on there that he likes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, alright.

Director Allen Owen: Because he's very much in tune with transportation. That's why I thought it'd be good for him to find somebody.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, I don't know if you noticed but when Ms. Parker put the list of grade separations up, there was 1 from Fort Bend County in that list of 10. So, there are five within the City of Houston, three Harris County, one Baytown, and one Fort Bend in our list that's going forward. And City of Sugar Land had one in the prior list as well, too. So, as you talk to your commissioner, you can let them know that Fort Bend is being represented and will be taken forward.

Director Allen Owen: I'll reach out to him today.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Anyone else? Anything else? Alright. Motion to adjourn?

Director Jon Keeney: So moved.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, Keeney.

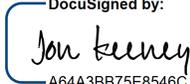
Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And Mann. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We are adjourned (2:27 p.m.). Thanks, everyone. See you next month.

ATTEST:

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Jon Keeney, Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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