



---

Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – October 8, 2024

---

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, October 8, 2024 at Houston TranStar and-via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Robert A. Fry, Jr., Stephen Gilbreath, Jon Keeney, Carol Abel Lewis, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, Allen Owen, and Jeff Ross. Absent were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, and Kendric Jones. 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: Okay, good afternoon everyone. It is two o'clock. I'm going to start on time. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I'm going to call our meeting to order. It's October 8th, 2024. 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, 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 on the public postings. The meeting is open to the public. The public will have the 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 the Texas Government Code applicable to a governmental body that extends into three or more counties. Based on Open Meetings Act requirements, the Gulf Coast Rail District board members participating in Microsoft Teams will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and to record our voting. Therefore, members calling in by telephone will not be able to count towards the quorum. As required, I'm physically present for the board meeting and ask that the secretary, Director Keeney, please conduct a roll call. Please answer audibly when your name is called.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. And that was not a recording, by the way.

Director Jon Keeney: Ronald Beeson.

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

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Robert Maldonado. No?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: He's there.

Male: No, he's there.

Director Jon Keeney: Oh, he's there? Okay. Thank you.

Director Jon Keeney: Okay. Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Okay. Steven Gilbreath.

Director Stephen Gilbreath: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Jeff Ross.

Director Jeff Ross: Virtually here.

Director Jon Keeney: Almost here.

Director Jon Keeney: Let's see. Carol Abel Lewis.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. And I'm here, I hope. Bruce Mann.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, sir.

Director Jon Keeney: Angelique Bartholomew. Allen Owen.

Director Allen Owen: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: He's always here. Kenneth Jones. Jean Mann.

Director Jean Mann: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you.

Director Jean Mann: Virtual.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. And Robert Fry.

Director Robert Fry: Here.

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

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful, thank you. So, we want to confirm the meeting posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Patke?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you very much. I'll move on to item four. Director Keeney, please.

Director Jon Keeney: Okay. Discussion and possible action on the minutes from September 10. Do we have any additions or corrections? Hearing none, I'll call for the vote. All those in favor? Board: Aye.

Director Jon Keeney: Any opposed? Alright, it's unanimous.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. Wonderful. A report from the treasurer, Director Owen, please.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chair, I'll ask Arleste. I see her, she's on. She's got her report for us. You have to turn the mic on though.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Unmute.

Ms. Lisa Patke: We can't hear.

Director Allen Owen: We can see your lips moving, but not talking. No.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Can you hear me now?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Director Allen Owen: Yes.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Okay, great. Alright. Wonderful. We'll start on page 19 in your packet today. You'll see a cover page of the bookkeeper's report. Turning to page 20, this is your cash flow for your checking account. We've got no receipts this month, but we have two checks presenting today, checks 2726 and 2727 for your approval, leaving \$4,515.44 in the checking account. Moving on to page 21, this is your account balances. We show your CDs, your money market, and your checking account for a total of your operating fund of \$1,601,648.68. Continuing on to pages 22 through 23, this is your actual versus budget comparison. The first column there is your September budget, and then your third column is your year-to-date budget. And everything is trending nicely here, nothing out of the ordinary to report. And finally, pages 24 through 27, this is your grant status report, and we're showing no changes from last month. And that's all I have for you, and I'll be leaving the meeting unless you have any questions for me.

Director Allen Owen: Very good. Are there any questions? If not, I'll entertain a motion to approve Resolution 24-18 ratifying our payments. Is there a motion?

Director Jon Keeney: So moved.

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

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

Board: Aye.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chairman that concludes the report.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you very much. She's gone. Public comments. Three minutes please per speaker. Would anyone in the room like to speak? Please approach the podium.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Hello?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: You'll be next, Mr. Mazoch. We've got someone in the room.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Just a second, we have someone in the room.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, go ahead. Let him go.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: My name is Joseph Tijerina. I'm an East Ender in the City of Houston, and I'd like to thank you for allowing me to speak at this particular phase of the meeting. What I have to report is that I spoke to the gentleman over rail operations at the City of Houston, and that conversation ended kind of abruptly because it just had to because of the money that was available to do the things they want plus what I want. Now, here's what I wanted or spoke about in my comment two meetings ago was how can a driver know which is the shortest side, at their point, which is the shortest side they can go around the train and continue their day. And that was

what I spoke with the City of Houston... I believe his name is Paul. Either way, but like I said, it just came down with money. But the East End is one of your folks' problems, and he did have some solutions about certain places there around Polk area where the Kroger's is at. And so we have that problem with rail every day almost, and we're trying to resolve it. We're just trying to figure out the best way to do it. I also wanted to mention that my concern being a person that is a public servant, that possibly the UP can help alleviate a disastrous hurricane like Florida's going through to move people from one place to another in a short period of time, even though they're equipped for industrial purposes. But if it comes down to it, could we move people away from danger? And with the current, there is no plan I have or anything like that, but it would take some study. But would the organization be interested in looking into that possibility of moving people from a disaster? And the example I have is what Florida is going through, and what North Carolina and South Carolina's going through. So, that's my public comment for the day. I appreciate you listening. I hope that you'll have the rest of the day welcoming and good news. Thank you very much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you very much, Mr. Tijerina. Mr. Mazoch?

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Doctor, can you hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, we can.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, can start the clock. The previous gentleman talked about hurricanes, and I think this is something with unintended consequences going against Houston in the sense of most of the Southeast because of these two hurricanes has knocked out Norfolk Southern and BSN Railway access into and out of the area and to the various ports that they have. And they're not that big as Houston, of course. But I'm afraid some of this traffic, they can't wait for these ports to open, but some of this traffic's probably going to be detoured through Houston. And as we all know, ground point zero is the Galveston Sub, and I think that is something we're going to have to, again, watch the counts that we've got from the Surface Board due to the Kansas, I mean Canadian Pacific/Kansas City Southern merger. The thing is, number two, safety. Maybe this is outside of this group's ballpark, wheelhouse, but my thing is, maybe as part of the advertisements going out, maybe having some sort of blurbs before or after things with this management that you're buying for advertising the Gulf Coast Rail District. Maybe have a little operation lifesaver jingle at the beginning or end, like...train. That might be good. And lastly, I want to just hear what the proposals are from the FRA and other government groups further down the agenda for congestion. But I still think the ultimate goal is we can't put these tracks under, it floods too much. We're going to have to work with BNSF and Union Pacific and maybe find some ways to get money. Like I've said before, maybe having holding yards outside of the metropolitan area where a train cannot enter the area until there is room either to get to a yard or can cross the corridor without stopping. With that, I have no other comments. Thank you, Doctor.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you, Mr. Mazoch. Is there anyone else who would like to make a comment during this period? Okay. If not, we'll close our public comment section and go on to Item 8, media strategy. Director Bartholomew is not present today, but Executive Director Parker will do a status update for us.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon, everyone. As you all know, our social media campaign ran from January 1 to June 12th of 2024. Culture Measures was our social media consultant and

has provided for us a performance report that we received report on today. I'll just go over kind of the highlights. I will send it out to each of the board members and what I'm asking is that Marketing and Outreach will meet again to review this report and then talk about next steps as far as maintenance is required or needed for our social media campaign going forward. So, some of the key highlights from the performance report included our total impressions, which were over 37,000 across all of the platforms. We talked about growing our audience, engagement success, our hashtag performance, our ad performance, which we took up at the very end, paid advertisement, and then also whether to consider having that going forward. So, those are all things that the committee will consider based on review of this report. So, that's pretty much what we have for the social media campaign update.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. Are there any questions at this point? But we'll do the when is good, do the poll to see when the committee can meet again and review the final outcomes and deliberate, make recommendations to the board about going forward. Alright, thank you. Item 9, East End and Smart Crossing Updates. We've got with us, Jack Hanagriff of East End, and thank you for being here. He's online. I would like to baton hand to you, Mr. Hanagriff.

Mr. Jack Hanagriff: Good afternoon, everyone. Let me share my screen. Can you all hear me okay?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, we can. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Hanagriff: Okay. And if you all lose the screen, let me know because sometimes it drops off. Can you all see my screen okay?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, so far so good.

Mr. Jack Hanagriff: Okay, so good afternoon. My name is Jack Hanagriff, and I work for the East End District managing the Road and Rail Safety Program, but I also consult with the City of Houston at the Mayor's Office of Innovation and Performance working on the Smart Railroad Crossing Project. So, what I kind of did was mesh both initiatives together to give you one holistic picture of what's going on in the road and rail safety area of East Houston, as well as other parts of the City of Houston.

So, most of our railroad, dealing with stopped train events, blocked crossings, was focused in the East Houston area, predominantly in the East End, and any surrounding neighborhood around the East End because we're all connected. This 16-square-mile area is the leader in the nation in blocked crossing complaints. It's also prevalent with the Houston Fire Department delays by train complaints. So, this is a place where four trains operate. It's the commodity flow for both the Gulf Coast area for both BNSF and Union Pacific Railroad. So, a lot of trains come through here. Anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of all the trains at the Houston Terminal come through this area. So, it was a very nice area to conduct quite a bit of studies on these stopped train events.

As part of this project, we meet monthly with all four railroads and also with Houston Emergency Services. Gulf Coast Rail District also attends. Katherine Parker will attend. And the goal is to talk monthly about any unsafe conditions around railroad crossings. And they typically give us some updates of what they're experiencing. Lately, most of their operating concerns have

been weather events, and we are connected by rail to other parts of the country, so what goes on in other parts of the country affects our trains down here and vice versa. So, you couple these weather events with maintenance events and other things that kind of drives why we're seeing some increase in stopped train events, and you're going to see later in the data how some of this matches up. But this is a very beneficial committee because Union Pacific, BNSF, and the other railroads are really trying to reduce the impacts of stopped train events, especially to first responders, but then ultimately the citizens, the motorists that have to get around trains.

Very fortunate this year under an FY22 grant, I picked up some analysts from Texas A&M, and they're going to help me bring in all this disparate data for the Houston Smart Railroad Crossing Project. You've got the FRA Block Crossing Report, you've got the Houston Smart Railroad Project, the sensors that are out there, and you've got the Houston Fire Department Delay Report. They all tell the story. Some are subjective, some are good data, but bringing them together, we'll start seeing how significant some of these stopped train events are, that they affect more than just one or two people, that it can have cascading effects down the line.

I used the sensors that we have available under the pilot program with the City of Houston to kind of get a snapshot, if you will, every quarter to see how we're doing. In 2023 Q3 and Q4, I really look at the average daily occupancy. That means how long the trains are on the track or on the crossing on a daily average. You can see they're pretty high, depending on what time of year or what's going on. But as we work with the railroad, they're kind of dropping down. I try to keep everything around 10 minutes, 10 to 15 minutes. This year, we also picked up additional capabilities that I'll talk about, using traffic signal preemption that the railroad crossings talk to. So, even though I don't have a sensor out there, I do know when there's an activation. So, if you'll notice in the area of coverage, I went from East Houston to the entire Houston Terminal because we picked up additional crossings, bringing in the traffic signal preemption. So, that gave us additional data on how often these crossings are activated and how long.

Working with the railroad quite a bit in the East Houston area to really focus on some key crossings that are critical to the Houston Fire Department, Houston Police Department, and ultimately those that are trying to get to and from work. And we've been working really closely on anything over three hours. We're trying to get the railroad to notify Houston Emergency Services that they've had a stoppage for whatever reason over three hours. And again, if you notice in the East End, on the average occupancy, we're keeping it around 10 minutes. Now, there's some areas that we know. Hirsch Road is a holding place on the Bell Main. It's holding for, I believe, the port traffic going in there, but they leave Lockwood open. They leave Lockwood open for the Houston Fire Department. That's kind of a couple crossings down, less than a quarter mile. And so they're doing the best they can because if they back the train up even more to stay off Hirsch Road, then they would foul the rail yard and then nothing would move. So, it's kind of a give and take. Leeland and Cullen is kind of newish, popping up at 64 minutes in average occupancy. They build a lot of rail yard traffic there, and they've had a shift in management of this area because they were keeping it down under 30 minutes. Now it's kind of spiked up a little bit, and I'll be talking to BNSF about what we can do to reduce that. These areas where they build trains, we try to keep it around 30 minutes, under an hour, but if they get over the hours and stuff then that's not helping the Houston Fire Department. It's not helping the public as a whole.

In looking at just the sensors in the East End District, this kind of really gives you a good snapshot. This is the train trap or the train triangle, as some people have called it. This is the

neighborhood of fire station, schools that are completely surrounded by tracks. It's in the center of the East End District. It's nationally famous. It's been studied by the Federal Railroad Administration. The City of Houston also requested some railroad crossing elimination funding to do an additional crossing study. This includes Lockwood crossing, which was part of METRO's BRT consideration. So, you can see we have a little better information there. Again, Hirsch Road seems to be the most prevalent one. And Market Street up there by McReynolds, which is another famous location, seems to be jumping up a little bit. A couple of notes at Hirsch Road. Again, the railroad is considering, instead of making that a staging area, making that a throughput subdivision. In other words, no train enters that area unless it's cleared to get into one of the two yards that it's trying to go into or get out of the yard. And then Market Street, Union Pacific Railroad is working with the school and has created a curfew while no trains will run with an hour window in the morning and an hour window in the afternoon. And so far, that appears to be working because I look at the sensors during school times, and I see a dramatic reduction in activity there. The railroads, Union Pacific, BNSF, all the railroads actually like this data because it kind of gives them a scorecard, if you will, and it kind of gives them some better information of what to look at. Because before, just like us, they were dependent on citizen complaints, and you know those can be varied on how they complain. So, having this good data to tell a better story has been beneficial not only to the City of Houston, but also the railroads.

On Houston Fire Department delays, this is something we're working close on. The fire department reports anywhere from about 100 a month of delays, and that is a moving train or a slow train... I mean a moving train or a stopped train. They don't differentiate. So, we've been working with the fire department to kind of break that up a little bit because a stopped train is something that's significant and we want to work on it. A moving train, the train's just doing its job. I mean, it's like traffic on a freeway. It is what it is. The other indicates that was a non-stopped train event, that just had the word railroad in there. And then I look at impacts to the East End District. So, I try to break up these monthly reports to tell a better story and really focus them on the stopped train events.

As the City of Houston, we look at the most prevalent fire districts that are being delayed by trains, and we've been starting to branch out outside of just the East Houston study area and looked at some of these other fire districts. You can pretty much tell the neighborhoods we're going into as a city to try to get better capabilities to these fire departments and police departments, to pretty much make train operations kind of visible to them so they can see where the stopped train events or the occupied crossings are.

So, good news. The gentleman earlier said, when he talked to me, that there were some great ideas, but we didn't have funding or that Houston didn't have funding. The City of Houston, well, first of all, one thing we did... We were able to use preemption capabilities to get data off of 71 crossings now. You can see by the map, that's pretty much the Houston Terminal. Whereas before, we were getting data from seven crossings, predominantly in the East End. Now we're able to use the preemption data, traffic signal preemption data, to know when a crossing is activated, and we can start seeing where these trains are and how long they're occupying these crossings more as a terminal instead of just one little sliver of the city. Again, right now we're trying to socialize this capability within the Houston Emergency Services. We're also working with Houston TranStar to get this same data on the public-facing map of TranStar so now the citizens can see where the crossings are activated and how long, in real time. All this is in real time.

This is an example of what the fire department and police department and some city operations could have access to. This is a system that is owned by the City of Houston. It's also available to 13 counties and the Houston-Galveston Area Council. This is provided at no cost to provide additional capabilities in asset protection and also real-time mapping. So, this is live police and fire calls, and live railroad activity merged together in a single map.

So, now police and fire, when they start getting back access to this, they can see what crossings are active, and then you can also see how railroad crossings can impact or stopped train events can impact first responders. So, this is additional preemption data that we picked up. We're able to use it in a map interface and then we're able to readily share this capability. This is what we're also trying to get into Houston TranStar. Last year when I gave this presentation, you all talked about can other jurisdictions have access to this capability. Yes, they can. Everybody can have access to all this core mapping software, and then it's up to how can we plug in their preemption data into this map. Right now it's just Houston preemption data, but you can bring in other TxDOT preemption, TxDOT roads, other city roads can all be shared with this. We have the mechanism to do that, so there's some things we're looking at, but you can actually track a train as it moves down the crossings and lights them up. It's still kind of glitchy in some areas. We're still validating because it's relying on another capability that's not owned by this program, but it is useful information. It does help us identify where these hotspots are and also can help the first responder in real time identify where the train is.

This is the good news. The City of Houston received \$3.4 million over a four-year period under the Safe Streets Program. This was awarded last month. They're going through the agreement process now to expand the smart railroad and smart intersection capabilities. This is the study area. It's East Houston area. It's all these fire districts and police districts, and neighborhoods could potentially get a part of this. It supports public safety efforts and post-crash care. We want to get real data on intersection anomalies, intersection congestion, and railroad congestion to all the fire stations and police stations that operate in these areas because our goal is to try to give them opportunity to be able to look down a flow path, in other words, a main corridor because we have fire districts. It's not unheard of for District 19 to shoot all the way from Fifth Ward down to District 26 or 46 which would be down there in Sunnyside. They'll get on Scott Street or South Wayside and just shoot all the way down there, take Telephone Road. We're going to try to put technology out there so they can see the way is clear. It'll also give police access to cameras at these intersections so they can better deal with traffic anomalies or criminal activity in these neighborhoods. So, it's another set of eyes. It's going to have emergency routing studies. The whole goal is to hopefully reduce response time. And then again, these capabilities will be shared to the public through Houston TranStar once this system is built. And the overall goal is to reduce crashes by identifying cascading effects that contribute to a crash. This technology will not only monitor the railroad crossing, but it'll also monitor these intersections looking for unsafe behaviors and what conditions those are in. We're trying to study the environmental conditions that can contribute to a crash or contribute to delays in response of first responders. But this is good news, it was \$3.4 million.

This is kind of a snapshot of where it's projected to go and what kind of crossings will be involved. It's 25 railroad crossings, 32 high-entry intersections, and it's using known emergency routes like Scott Street, Telephone Road, Mykawa, and all the crisscrossing goes on there. Way up there in Lyons, up out of Fifth Ward because I know that's a concern to first responders and the public. Market Street, you've got McReynolds School. You also have the crossing that merges Denver Harbor and Pleasantville together. That gets choked. And then you have the



world-famous Clinton Drive, which is notorious for stoppages. The possible railroad corridors are Baytown Sub, Bell Main, East Bell, Galveston Sub, Harrisburg Sub, Mykawa Sub, West Belt. All the little fun places we've talked about over the years, T&O Junction, Tower 26, Tower 85. You Gulf Coast Rail District personnel have probably heard of these places. This is where the study's going to be done. To put the equipment out there, they're going to review transportation system infrastructure. Another thing they're going to look at is evaluate existing traffic signal preemption because first responders are supposed to have the capability to change the red light to a green light when they're running lights and sirens, and that doesn't always work well. It's also when the fire station gets its signal or its tone for a fire call, it's supposed to change the traffic signal outside of the fire station so they can get out of the fire station. The goal is to bleed off the traffic so the fire truck or ambulance can get out in the traffic and move. But right now, it doesn't work well because it's antiquated. So, there's going to be funding in that as part of this study to look at that. There's going to be funding to look at CAD integration. How do we get all this information to the dispatch systems, not only to the first responder in the field, but also at the dispatch, so they can better plan their emergency routes to avoid congestion, traffic congestion, and train congestion? And then, again, detect unsafe motorist behavior, and then, again, everything will be shared, public-facing products.

Switching back over to the East End District, the East End District working with the FY22 Safe Streets Grant, as well as some studies by Texas A&M. We're doing a lot of various feasibility studies, traffic conflict studies along Wayside, Lawndale, Harrisburg, areas where we're known to have high crashes, areas where we're known to have traffic congestion caused by train and other anomalies. So, this is kind of a snapshot in a railroad environment of where we're kind of doing these studies and what railroad corridors or railroad intersections are kind of part of this study.

And then this is something that the city and others are looking at. I think the gentleman earlier talked about this. How do you notify the public of an existing bypass? East End District is doing a pilot where we're going to put up signage to try to bleed off some of this traffic because everybody just sits there waiting for the train to move for 30 minutes or so. They have no idea that there's an underpass a block over. So, we're going to look at signage to help guide the public that's not familiar with it, how to get over to the underpass, and hopefully bleed off this traffic. Even if you know there's an underpass, you can't get to it because the traffic's so backed up. You can't get down there. And what we're seeing is people are doing creative driving. They're driving the wrong way; they're making illegal right turns because they're trying to get around these long lines of cars to get to the underpass. So, maybe if we can bleed off that line, that'll help not only the public but first responders get where they need to go.

Another thing that's being worked on by the City of Houston and Union Pacific Railroad is the Bell Main, and through one of the council districts and commissioners' offices, they're looking at this whole list of crossings on the Bell Main to look at some other bypass consideration. The Houston Smart Crossing Project and the East End District and Texas A&M kind of studied this area, and it's going to require a lot of signage. It's almost like Disneyland parking notification. You're going to have to notify people how to get around these areas. This is also the area that's got Hirsch Crossing and Lockwood, and a lot of people don't know Lockwood is open. So, it's one of the best routes. It's a big area and involves TxDOT roads, city roads, freeways, so there's a lot of people involved. So, I think Union Pacific and City of Houston and I think Gulf Coast Rail District is kind of paying attention to this area as well, and we did supply some of the studies from Texas A&M. And that's our update for today.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you very much. That was absolutely 100% fascinating. Obviously, there's been a lot of advancement from last year when we spoke. So, I think the low-cost wayfinding and really all the other non-grade separation responses are encouraging. I noticed that in the data, some things are going up and some things are going down. It's kind of a hodgepodge in terms of. In one of your initial slides, there seemed to be more events with the time dropping, but then there were more events with longer than three-hour stoppages too, so it's kind of a mixed bag in some of the circumstances but very exciting. I guess as we think, and I'm glad Ms. Parker's sitting here, as I want to think about how we, Gulf Coast Rail District, can sort of leverage what you're doing to other parts of the region. And the fact that you mentioned the map, that we asked that last year and now that capability's there, is certainly something that we're going to want to take advantage of. So, are there any other questions or comments? Go ahead, Director Mann, B. Mann.

Director Bruce Mann: Jack, thanks. Just a quick question. So, if you all can share the preemption data with TranStar, at some point is there some way to be able to share this with Google to get it into Google Maps and Waze to help people reroute?

Mr. Jack Hanagriff: Yes, sir. My understanding is Google Maps and Waze already lists TranStar data, and Google Maps and Apple Maps actually will indicate a stopped crossing based on driver stoppages. If so many cars stop at this railroad crossing, it'll pick that up, it'll draw a red line, and it'll put an X on the crossing. What I don't know is how many cars it takes to do that, and what's the threshold of timing. That's why these sensors are very important. But yes, we are. My understanding is you put it in the TranStar system, and Waze and the other ones do lift that data as well. They ingest that data and correlate it to their data. So, hopefully in the future, in the really near future, we'll have training operations as part of the traffic congestion model.

Director Bruce Mann: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Anyone else?

Director Jon Keeney: Just a thought. As this data really becomes available to be useful to the public, I would suggest that we put out a campaign out of this railroad group.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I like that idea, and you'd leverage our social media to that end.

Director Jon Keeney: Correct.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I like that idea. That's a great suggestion. Director Gilbreath?

Director Stephen Gilbreath: I just wanted to make sure or ask if we could get a copy of that presentation if we could, please.

Mr. Jack Hanagriff: I'll send it over.

Director Stephen Gilbreath: Great. It was a good presentation. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Anyone else? Alright, thank you again, Mr. Hanagriff. We'll be calling on you again maybe in six months or a year and see how much additional good news you'll have for us.

Mr. Jack Hanagriff: Yes, thank you very much.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, so thank you. That was hugely informative. Item 10, project manager update. Dr. Koslov is sitting here.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Good afternoon. I'm going to give a quick update of what I've been working on this past month or since the last board meeting. One of the big things I've been addressing is the US 90A corridor study that H-GAC is project manager working with HDR. In late August, they had a steering committee meeting, and then just last week they had a stakeholder meeting. During that time, HDR also produced their existing conditions report, which helped inform them on how to develop their alternatives. So, they have a list of alternatives. They presented it both to the steering committee and the stakeholder committee. At the stakeholder meeting last week, there were about 22 people online, and there were a lot of comments. There's a lot of things that H-GAC and HDR need to go through and respond to. I think one of the things Scott Parker tried to tell everyone is we're doing this at a 30,000 level. There's certain specific details. We're not going to design the alignment, and we're not going to have answers for specific alignment issues, but we're going to look at what the issues are and how they impact various things. There's like five different alternatives, and some are old alternatives that have been looked at before. One of them is in the METRONext plan. So, they're just evaluating and waiting, and they're doing their analysis based on zonal areas, so they're not taking the whole length of every corridor or every alternative, they're looking at sections, and how does this piece impact this part of the alignment or the corridor, and so on and so forth. So, we're moving along. They hope to have kind of their recommendations of their alternatives later this month or early November. They're going to have a stakeholder meeting, another one, late December, early January. So, I've been working on that and reviewed the reports and have been in contact with both Thomas Graves, project manager, H-GAC, and Scott Parker with HDR.

I attended our most recent HART meeting where we talked about how we're moving forward. I've been working with TAG a little bit. They're refining their legislative agenda, and the number one thing there listed on their agenda that they want to take when the legislative session is open is how to get more funding and more attention to the need to improve roadway, railway, grade separations. So, I'm working with them, working on the wording, and we've identified different local elected officials we need to start visiting and talking to so we can carry that forward. I've also talked to a few folks just about what it would cost and how we'd go about getting a consultant on board, one to maybe do a grant writing for the next round when there's a new CRISI coming out. Also trying to understand, well, what would it take to, one, do maybe conceptual engineering and planning on grade separation, and that's one level. The next level, which becomes much more technical, would be final design, and that's much more costly. So, just what is the difference between the two? What does one entail versus the other? Final design, you have your geotechnical, your right-of-way. You might have to do some environmental assessment. So, there is a big difference between just doing conceptual planning and early engineering. And then also I've talked to some folks. We know what our ask is, but just get a feel for the cost and what it entails when you're ready to construct that grade separation and what would be better alternatives. So, when we're ready to go, it's like we just talked about, that there are other things we do besides grade separations because it's a very costly endeavor and a very time-consuming endeavor. So, I've just been trying to educate myself so I can bring more information back to you about the options of doing some sort of improvement for roadway/railway intersections or interchanges. And that pretty much concludes what I've been working on this month.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That sounds good. And what we just heard from Mr. Hanagriff, we know there are a lot of ideas that we can take forward in how to branch out beyond what they're doing for East End. His focus is East End and, again, they are beginning to look more citywide, but hopefully maybe we can accelerate some of that from our post here. Other questions or comments for Ms. Koslov? Alright, seeing none, we'll move on to Item 11, report from Executive Director Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks again for your service to the board. I meant to tell Jack Hanagriff, thank you again for presenting. I think he's off. We talk almost weekly, so I'm pretty sure I'll get to talk to him again. And thank you to Ms. Koslov for the update as well.

Next slide. My report for October, of course, includes the meetings that were attended, TAG, RTP, and TPC, whether in person or virtual. Also, in September, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Houston Health Department to discuss locations and concerns related to Fifth Ward. Issues included lights and gates at the Market Street crossing, the McReynolds Middle School, which has been a controversial crossing and also very publicized, to talk about pedestrian bridge and crossing options, and also Lyons Avenue as it pertains to blocked crossings in that location. So, there's a lot of eyes on this area. Harris County has applied for a planning grant for the McReynolds Middle School near Market Street, and then also 14 crossings within the East End Triangle. Harris County and the City of Houston applied for the RCE grant. That was recently, September 23rd was the deadline. So, TxDOT is also exploring options for this same location. I also had the opportunity to meet with the City of Houston representatives and Amtrak to talk about information from Amtrak related to their ridership numbers and routes in Texas. They also discussed the work of other Texas cities and their buy-in as it relates to high-speed rail and where Amtrak is currently. I had a wonderful opportunity to participate in the WTS Industry Leadership Tea as industry leader, along with Barbara Koslov and Dr. Lewis. We enjoyed afternoon tea and insightful conversations with all who attended. Each participant had the opportunity to have an engaging discussion with each of us in a small group. So, we each had a table, and Ashley Jones, who's the coordinator, kind of likened it to speed dating. They had so much time to make it to each table, and our conversations were centered around leadership, Houston's transportation future, career development, those were the three topics.

Next slide. So, just some updates as we do annually. We are preparing for the extension of the TTI Administrative Support Agreement, which is Lisa Patke, so that's very important for her work to continue with the District. And we will also prepare for our reappointments and appointments for two-year terms beginning January 2025. And then lastly, our payment request to each of the member entities. So, this time of the year, we're starting actually a month early, we normally do it by November. We're starting October to get all of that information out to our member entities so that we're on par for January. That's all I have.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any questions for Ms. Parker? Okay, so I do trust everyone's antenna were up that the request for annual payments are going to go out very shortly. So, we know that you will work with your governing bodies, etc., to ensure that we get our coffers filled for FY25. Thank you very much. Any other questions or anything else for Ms. Parker? Not seeing any hands.

Alright, that will take us to Item 12, announcements from me. Ms. Koslov mentioned the LAR and that TxDOT has advanced with 175 million for grade separations all system, the addition of 25 million for short lines. That is progressing well. We last month had sort of I'll say a flurry of activity about getting in front of the Finance Committee out of the House, and we were able to do that through correspondence. So, it ended up that this LAR was not on the agenda, so you can't speak to them about things that aren't on that agenda. It had actually been on the beginning of the month, but we were able to get correspondence in and got positive feedback back from them that it's looking good. We have heard from well-placed sources that we need to work very hard between now and December to make sure it stays on. We were pretty much informed that once we get to January, things are going to be going quickly, and items that are not solid by January are going to be at risk. So, what we want to do is make sure it's solid going into the end of this calendar year.

The next thing is the Commerce/Navigation that we're trying to get from FHWA to FRA. And at this point, we're getting positive feedback from FRA about the movement, but it has not occurred yet. So, you all know, I had an arbitrary sort of date of July 15th to get it moving, and that arbitrary date has come and gone, but the good news is that we are in communication with FRA. We are still getting head nods that they want to move the money from FHWA to them, and the repercussions of that are very important because that would allow us to take that off of H-GAC's books, a project that we've had there for a number of years. And at this point, if we can get it moved, it would be an advantage for the region in terms of the total amounts of carryover money we're carrying over year after year after year. So, that's those two items.

Any questions about either of those? I don't see anything on the monitor. Alright. If not, that takes us to our next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 12th, and so we would look forward to seeing you then and advancing all of our agendas and talking more about the progress we make over the next month. And with that, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.


Director Bruce Mann: So moved.

Director Jon Keeney: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, we have a motion and a second. If everyone is in favor, we can adjourn. Thank you, Ms. Patke, as always. We look forward to extending that contract.

Alright, see everybody next month. Thanks for coming, you all. And those of you in the audience, thank you (adjourned at 2:51 p.m.).

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
  
A64A3BB75E8546C...

---

Jon Keeney, Secretary  
Gulf Coast Rail District

Transcription services provided by Transcription Panda.