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Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – April 12, 2022

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A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at Houston TranStar and via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Trey Duhon, Michael Dyll, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, Richard L. Muller, Jr., Allen Owen, Tina Arias Peterman, Jim Robinson, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Abigail M. Gonzalez, Christopher Lane, and Dennis Winkler. 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: Thanks everybody for being here. I'm going to call the meeting to order. It is 2:12 p.m. on today, April 12th, Gulf Coast Rail District. I'm going to read our protocol for today which is we will conduct today's Gulf Coast Rail District meeting with options to participate in person or by video conference due to health and safety concerns related to COVID-19. The meeting is open to the public. Restrictions regarding masks, allowable room capacity, and seating arrangements are in place. The public meeting location is TranStar, 6922 Old Katy Road. It's Old Katy too, right? It's not just Katy—it's Old Katy Road.

Ms. Lisa Patke: It's Katy Road.

Chairperson Lewis: It's Katy or Old Katy?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Haven't updated it yet, it's Katy Road, but you still see both.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Houston, Texas, Briefing Room 216. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, presiding officer of GCRD, and confirm the following board members are physically present: Judge Duhon and myself. Other board members will join us by video conference, and we'll hear those names when we get the certification of quorum and roll call from Director Winkler. Is he on?

Ms. Lisa Patke: He is not on.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So, Judge Duhon, you'll do that for us?

Director Duhon: Okay. Ronald Beeson?

Director Beeson: I am present virtually.

Director Duhon: Got you. Michael Dyll? He's there, I saw the thumbs up.

Director Dyll: Yes, present.

Director Duhon: Abigail Gonzalez? I don't think she's joining us today. Correct?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Correct.

Director Duhon: Jeff Ross? He's online.

Director Ross: Here.

Director Duhon: There he is. Tina Peterman? There she is.

Director Peterman: Yes, here.

Director Duhon: Okay. Dr. Lewis?

Chairperson Lewis: Here.

Director Duhon: Got you. Dennis Winkler? Not on? No? Bruce Mann?

Director Ross: We had him.

Director Duhon: There he is. He's unmuting, I'm sure.

Director Mann: I'm here, thanks.

Director Duhon: There you are, alright. Richard Muller?

Director Muller: I'm here.

Director Duhon: Got him. Allen Owen?

Director Owen: Present.

Director Duhon: There he is. I am present. Christopher Lane? Not present. And then... Oh, we don't have to count Jim Robinson, he's Ex-Officio. But we do have a quorum present.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Awesome, thank you. Thank you all for being here. Our video conference is conducted with the software known as Microsoft Teams. Individual panelists and invite links were sent by board members. Others in the public can join by clicking on the link provided on the meeting agenda which was posted. You will be able to be seen and heard during the conference. Based on the Open Meetings Act requirements, GCRD board members participating in the Microsoft Teams video conference will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and record voting and for us to record the voting. Therefore, members calling in by telephone will not count toward a quorum or voting. Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Veronica has her hand up.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh yes, Veronica?

Ms. Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: Hi, Dr. Lewis. I'm official as of April 5th, appointed by Harris County to the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors, so I want to say hi.

Chairperson Lewis: Wonderful.

Ms. Veronica Chapa Gorczynski: But my oath of office and my other documents aren't in, so I'm pretty sure I count for quorum but I'm going to be abstaining from votes today out of fairness to the process.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Most appreciated.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: So, let us welcome Veronica Chapa Gorczynski to our board. Delighted to have you. She's an appointee of Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and the Commissioners Court, so we're delighted to have that position filled. I will go ahead and say that it's probably been vacant for two years, so we are more than happy to have your participation. I've got your information here and what we're going to probably do, Director, is wait until the next time, once you've had your oath of office, we'll do the formal invite, send your information out to everyone. Did it go out this time?

Ms. Katherine Parker: No. We're set for May 10th, once she finishes the training and oath of office and all of that, then on the May's agenda we'll have the resolution.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect. What we'll do is I'll go through our committees and look at where it makes sense to have your committee participation and talk to you about that, so we will get that done all in time for May. I think you'll find it's an exciting time for Gulf Coast Rail District. We've got much to do so thank you for being on today. Let's confirm that the meeting was posted according to Open Meetings Act, Ms. Patke?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes, it was.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, indeed. Discussion and possible action on minutes from March 8th, Director Duhon?

Director Duhon: Alright. So, everyone should have a copy of the minutes from March 8th, 2022. Hopefully, you have had a chance to review.

Director Duhon: Does anybody have any corrections to the minutes? If not, I will go ahead and make the motion to approve the minutes of March 8th.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you. Can we get a second, please?

Director Mann: Second, it's Bruce Mann.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. That's Bruce Mann, second. Thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Wonderful. Thank you, everyone, that is an approved item.

Chairperson Lewis: A report from the treasurer and then ratification of any payments that we have. Director Owen, could you lead us on 5 and 6, please?

Director Owen: Madam Chairman, thank you. I don't see Cory there. Who is sitting there with you? It's not Cory Burton, I know that. Who is that?

Ms. Katherine Parker: No, Mr. Palis is our representative, Chris Palis. He was introduced at our last board meeting so he will be with us from this point forward, so he'll make our presentation.

Director Owen: Alright. Chris, it's your show.

Mr. Chris Palis: Good afternoon, everybody. I appreciate you all having me here. You have the bookkeeper's report in front of you. This is for April 12th, 2022. On the first page is the cash flow report. You can see a balance of \$41,365 starting out, and you can see a receipt for \$75,000 from Harris County and three checks being presented today. Actually, there was four, there was one added that wasn't included but it's another check for Texas A&M Transportation. You can see the balance is \$113,375. The next page, this is your account balances showing all your CDs, your money market fund at Texas CLASS, and your checking account at Central Bank, leaving a total balance of \$1.4. The next page right there is your actual versus budget. You can see actual revenues here of \$75,536 with the total expenses of \$3,250. And second page, no activity there, same thing there. Then the following pages are just the grant status report and the Belt Project that has been unchanged since last meeting.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Tina Peterman has a question.

Chairperson Lewis: Ms. Peterman, Director Peterman please?"

Director Peterman: Yes, hi, good afternoon. Hi, Mr. Palis. In the past, we've talked about taking some of the money that's in the Texas CLASS investment pool and moving that into CDs as short-term rates have started climbing.

Mr. Chris Palis: Okay.

Director Peterman: Do you have a status on the logistics of making that happen?

Mr. Chris Palis: I don't at this meeting but when I get back to the office, I will catch up on that. That was probably a previous discussion with, I believe, Cory maybe?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Chris Palis: And so, I will get with Cory Burton on that and get with the investment team to get some of that money out of there and invest it into those CDs. So, the report next month most likely will have that shown being invested in those.

Chairperson Lewis: And if I could, Mr. Palis.

Mr. Chris Palis: Yes, ma'am.

Chairperson Lewis: If I could ask that even before then, once you have that conversation, if you could send that information via email to Ms. Parker.

Mr. Chris Palis: Absolutely.

Chairperson Lewis: And then she gets it distributed to us.

Mr. Chris Palis: Yes, ma'am.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Mr. Chris Palis: Will do, yes.

Ms. Katherine Parker: It looks like one issued in March and then April from the conversation, so that may be the two were started.

Director Owen: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Tell us exactly where you are, Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: On page 21, the account balance.

Chairperson Lewis: Page 21.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Right. Looks like April 7th and the 6th of April... I mean, March 7th...

Mr. Chris Palis: March 7th and April 6th.

Chairperson Lewis: It's April 6th.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Is that correct or no, can you tell me? Yes, because we did discuss that the last meeting so maybe he's started that process.

Mr. Chris Palis: Okay, okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Mr. Chris Palis: But I'll check up on for next month's meeting.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Mr. Chris Palis: I'll absolutely email you, let you know which one.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Mr. Robinson has joined us.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Director Robinson?

Director Robinson: I'm here, yes. I'm having technical problems. I finally got it to connect though.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, you're not asking a question, you're just letting us know that you are present, correct? Correct.

Director Robinson: I couldn't understand the question.

Chairperson Lewis: No, I was just saying you didn't have a financial question, you're just making us aware that you're on?

Director Robinson: Yes, ma'am.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. Alright, perfect. Are there any other questions, comments about the financial report for Director Owen and Mr. Palis? Alright.

Director Owen: If none, Madam Chair, I would move that Resolution 22-04 ratifying those payments that were just discussed be approved.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. We'll consider that a motion.

Director Duhon: Second.

Chairperson Lewis: That's a second, Duhon. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Anyone opposed? Alright, thank you.

Mr. Chris Palis: Thank you all, thank you very much.

Chairperson Lewis: See you next time.

Director Duhon: Thank you.

Mr. Chris Palis: Absolutely.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, so we're now on to item 7, public comments. Is there anyone in the public who would like to comment on anything today?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Lindsay Williams.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: Hi. I put my name there, yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, Ms. Patke, please, introduce who we have, please.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Lindsay Williams is online and would like to make a public comment, and Dominic.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: She can go first. I'm not in a rush.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Last name Williams?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, Ms. Williams, please proceed.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: Sure. My name is Lindsay Williams and I chair the Trains Committee in the Eastwood Civic Association, and I'm here today to continue the conversations about the ever-strained relationship between the trains and the community. Small business owners continue to suffer substantial losses each time a train is stopped, and in March, one line alone showed to have 73 hours of stoppage, and that's just one line. And just this past weekend, I heard of a small child crawling underneath a stopped train, pulling his bike along with him. And so, it's just growing more and more dangerous for residents each day and it just needs to be addressed. The last time I attended, there seemed to be consensus around the issue the community is facing, and I would hear back on efforts residents and small business owners can do to gain movement for underpass crossings and quiet zones, but I haven't heard back yet. Residents and small business owners are ready to collaborate with the Gulf Coast Rail District in order to improve the situation. And in addition, there's going to be a joint committee meeting on May 12th at City Hall specifically to address the train situation in the East End with the FRA confirming attendance, and it would be fantastic to have representation from the Gulf Coast Rail District to speak on our behalf. And while I understand I don't think this is on the agenda so I don't think you can necessarily comment back but thank you for letting me speak and I look forward to our continued conversations.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you, Ms. Williams, and you're always welcome. Alright, Mr. Dominic Mazoch, please.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Yes, thank you. For the record, I'm Dominic Mazoch. And I noticed that there is a discussion about what I would call—of course, I'm a native Houstonian, I'm a Southern Pacific fan—about what I used to call the Bellaire Branch of Southern Pacific Line which is now the Westpark extension. I don't know anything about what number 8 is so I will listen carefully to what you are going to present today. Last time I was here though, I mentioned something about somewhere, and I'm thinking along the Beltway 8 corridor, and this would take a lot of money, it would take a lot of coordination between say HCTRA, the Port Authority, the Coast Guard, the railroads, is actually a drawbridge toward the east side of the ship channel corridor. And the reason why I'm saying that is, and I think the previous speaker kind of said it, is all freight traffic coming from the 225 corridor, like from Strang Yard, the two container ports, has to come down the 225 corridor. All that traffic has to come down and then go north toward the Englewood City Gas Complex and then those trains will either be yarded or go on to other locations. And maybe there needs to be long-term exploration of another line further east where trains do not have to come into that funnel on the east side of town.

Second of all, building the Alameda Trench in Houston is impossible because of our flooding. Stopped trains is, again, a problem, both of the railroads, but can we do something to say we've got Lloyd Yard in Spring. We have the old Glidden facility on the Glidden Sub on the Union Pacific. We have places like Kendleton. I know a nonmoving train doesn't make any money for the railroads, but maybe there should be coordination to have places outside or on the very periphery of the Houston/Galveston area where the incoming train would be able to park, not block the main line, and would not be allowed to come into the Houston terminal area until that

train has a place to come in. Once that train has a place to go, it can come in and not stop. I think that could be coordinated between the railroads. Maybe there's some money somewhere with all this infrastructure bill money in Washington. I think there could be some short-term improvements, and I know railroads, these are private properties, but I think that with some investment, and I know a mile of rail is not cheap, but still then I think there might be a way to put a little bit of investment in so that our lines through the city can be more fluid. And again, if this merger between Kansas City Southern and Canadian Pacific comes through, that's going to even put more pressure on our terminals. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thank you, Mr. Mazoch. Appreciate your being here. Going on to item 8, discussion and possible action on Resolution 22-05 authorizing executive director to approach Harris County, HCTRA—HCTRA's not on here, but H-GAC, METRO, Fort Bend County, and municipalities along this corridor and Fort Bend and a joint participation project to study the feasibility of Westpark extension. I'm going to ask Ms. Parker, Director Duhon, and Director Ross to lead this conversation for us, please.

Ms. Katherine Parker: The Passenger Rail, newly named Commuter Transit, met on last week Thursday to discuss this project. Director Ross, if you want to give information from our meeting.

Director Ross: Yes. As I understood it, Katherine, Director Lewis, and Director Owen were at a Fort Bend Mayors meeting when a discussion came up with some of the mayors along that Westpark line out there, and the county commissioner as well, about a bus rapid transit extension into Fort Bend County. And METRO, we know is currently doing a study called the University Line Study that starts in Northeast Houston, comes down south through U of H, Texas Southern, the Rice Ion, and then further out to Uptown, and the study currently ends at Wilcrest and Westpark Drive where there's a bus operating facility. And so, what we want to do is figure out what it would take to extend that study into Fort Bend County and how those costs could be apportioned and carried by a number of different agencies. And so, there's a lot of them stated in here but if anybody else came up who looked like a funding source, I think we ought to be open to it. And to extend that study so that we can participate in the long-range planning. And this would utilize the 50 foot of the Westpark corridor that METRO has retained when they built the Westpark Toll Road, when Harris County Toll Road Authority built the Westpark Toll Road. So, it's an extension of that study to see how we can provide a service to the Fort Bend County residents out there.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Any other comments from any of the members of the Commuter Transit Committee. As Ms. Parker named in her introduction, our committee title was Passenger Rail, so as we're sort of modulating from rail and broadening our definition of what we might be able to respond in terms of commuter capacity, the committee will be renamed Commuter Transit Committee. So, are there others who may have participated in that meeting who might have comment or perspective to offer on this item?

Director Robinson: Well, let me just comment on behalf of METRO. METRO is very open to working with the District on this. Hopefully, we can get a number of entities that would be interested in making a study of this kind go forward because this is a logical progression to try to bring that corridor on out into Fort Bend County.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you for that. Others?

Director Muller: Allen, you're muted.

Director Owen: Now I'm not. Madam Chairman, I'll just say that to reiterate what Jeff said, I think in our meeting that night, Commissioner Meyers expressed a great deal of interest in Fort Bend County helping us and we need to strike with him before he gets redistricted out of that district, but I think we're alright with Morales being the county commissioner. And of course, Mayor Groff, who is the mayor of Fulshear, is very much in favor of bringing that into his city, and I think we can probably take it on beyond to Weston Lakes and Simonton once it's in place. So, I encourage us to continue to work with the parties you've named and especially Fort Bend County. As we said in our meeting the other day, it goes back to what Rick said at one time, we need to start showing these people that are putting money in this project that there's something in it for them. And I know that Fort Bend has contributed their \$25,000 again and it's just another way for us to say, "Hey, you're in this organization and we're going to bring a project to you."

Chairperson Lewis: Appreciate that. And just to confirm that point, when we were at the mayor and council members meeting, both council members and mayors from both the two cities that you mentioned approached us. Because that night, we were talking about ending at Fulshear, and they came up to us afterwards and said, "Why are you stopping at Fulshear? We want you to come to us as well."

Director Owen: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: At that point, we said absolutely. Director Muller?

Director Muller: Yes. Let me just echo I did have a conversation with Commissioner Morales about the concept of transit out this corridor, either bus rapid or any form, he was all in favor of that. So, I know this isn't Commissioner Meyer's precinct anymore, but I do think we'll get support from Commissioner Morales. But the question I guess I have for the group is do we have a consultant in mind to do the study and do we have a budget for a proposal? Again, going back to let's prove to people that we know how to get stuff done. If we're going to ask them to support the study, I'd rather us go with, "Please support the study and here is a consultant and a price and here's a proposal on allocating the cost."

Director Owen: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I think... Jeff, were you about to respond?

Director Ross: I was.

Chairperson Lewis: Please go ahead.

Director Ross: We don't have any of that yet. This all came about within the last couple of weeks, and so what we wanted to do is talk to the board and say, "Here's the direction we want to go in." And we talked about a starting place would be whoever's doing the METRO study right now, from Northeast Houston over to the Westpark, Wilcrest, the bus operating facility, would be a logical firm to talk to about what's an extension of their study, because they're already understanding what it is that we're trying to do in the community at large. So, that'd be a

starting point, but I'd seek direction on whether we need to go through a separate Request for Qualifications statement. I've not been in any procurements through the District yet so I'm not sure what their rules require.

Chairperson Lewis: Right. Yes, I would say that I'm pretty sure our rules are going to require us to do something open procurement.

Director Owen: Yes.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: And so, yes, I do know that that's one thing that we would have to do. Director Owen?

Director Owen: Rich, one of the things that you're not aware of but Judge Duhon is, he's just hired Robert Trump from Commissioner Meyers' office. And he was on the meeting the other day and there's a lot of work that's already been done early on along that corridor that Robert can make available to us. So, with Judge Duhon's permission and letting us use him.

Director Muller: Why do you think I don't know that, Allen?

Director Owen: Well, I don't know. Did you not know that?

Director Muller: No, I knew that.

Director Owen: Okay. Anyway. He sat in on the meeting.

Chairperson Lewis: That's good. We want to leverage all of our relationships, especially those around the table. Very important and thank you for that, Judge Duhon. Other comments, thoughts?

Director Muller: Yes, I think it's great. This is a good step in the right direction. I guess we need to figure out how we go about... I mean, maybe Jeff or who had the contact with the consultant group that could at least get an idea as to whether adding this on to their existing contract is something they would be willing to do or able to do, at least get an idea of what the cost would be.

Chairperson Lewis: Right. I think we're going to have to do some exploration to see if that's even something...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Possible, yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. Katherine used the word "possible." I would say within the bounds of what would be considered practice, protocol practice. I do think that because it is new work and was not awarded with METRO's, that it is going to have to be in a competitive arena. I don't think that we would be in a position to successfully advance the idea that this could not be done by another consultant. I think that there's too much evidence that projects are segmented, and work's done by different consultants all over, I could probably say the world. So, we would probably not be able to say that. But what I do think is extremely important is that we have to

work together on that piece, and I think the committee, along with Ms. Parker, will walk through all the steps that we need to take. Because there are a lot of actors that have to be a part of this. I mean, a lot, almost everybody. So, we're going to have to have lots of heads nodding around our regional room about how this links together and how it works together. So, those are the things that with the action today we'll begin to be able to answer a lot of those questions. But as Director Ross said, the first thing was to make sure that we're not going down a path that the board was not fully 100% behind. Anything else?

Director Muller: Okay. So, we're going to pass this resolution and then what are we going to do with it?

Ms. Katherine Parker: At this point, once we pass the resolution, then we'll begin to have those conversations with each of these entities about how we move forward, especially with the financial piece of it.

Director Muller: Do we need...

Director Ross: Well, we're going to need to develop a scope of work.

Director Owen: Right.

Director Ross: So, we can define exactly what it is we want done.

Director Owen: Exactly.

Director Ross: I would love to meet with the consultant who's doing the work with METRO or whoever's managing that current work at METRO, because they have a scope of work for their piece, and I would think that'd be a good point to review to define our scope of work. We'd have to figure out what an estimated cost is so we can go talk to partners, and then we'd have to go through the solicitation of consultants.

Director Muller: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: I think also the other part that makes sense to me is that we actually work with the METRO project manager. That probably is our starting point before we would take an additional step. But Director Robinson, that's easy to find out. We can find out who the METRO project manager is, and I think that's where we would begin before we would reach out to the METRO consultant. I think I saw Director...

Director Muller: So, which of our committees would the actual conduct of this study fall under? Because I guess what I'm maybe getting to is I think every... I haven't heard anybody that's opposed to passing the resolution. I think everybody thinks it's a good idea. But what I would maybe recommend is if we pass the resolution, we also include in the motion and direct the committee that would be responsible for the study to come back with a scope of work, a rough budget or idea of how we get there. What I really do not want us to do is pass a resolution and then go talk to all these people and not have anything to say other than, "We think this is a good idea."

Director Owen: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Muller: I want us to be able to say, "This is a good idea and we have thought through the mechanics of how we do the study and roughly what we think it would cost and here's what the scope would be," and all that. Yes, I don't want to just hand them this resolution, I want to hand them something concrete when we have those conversations, is my take.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Owen: I agree.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I concur that once this resolution passed, the next step is for Passenger Transit Committee to develop the scope of work and approach that has to be taken to proceed. That would include having a rough idea of budget elements and how that budget would be accommodated. Alright.

Director Muller: That's right, thank you.

Director Owen: Right.

Director Robinson: Yes, that sounds reasonable to me.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, with that, are you all ready for a motion? Any other hands, comments, thoughts?

Director Owen: Did we agree that Jeff can proceed in at least talking to the other people? I think that's the question he asked or least he ought to.

Chairperson Lewis: I don't know that we would need board approval for the chairs of Commuter Transit to continue conversations in this regard. I think what Jeff really wanted, the resolution, to make sure when he's having conversations, he's doing it with the full support of the board.

Director Ross: Right.

Director Owen: Okay.

Ms. Katherine Parker: This just allows the District and the board to be on the same page when we do have those conversations, basically.

Director Mann: Yes. And I don't think there's any problems with conversations happening without a resolution because we've had plenty of conversations with railroads about railroad priorities and projects without ever having a resolution.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. I actually concur and in the interest of full disclosure, and I'm sure Jeff doesn't mind, Jeff asked for this so that he could proceed feeling confident about that. Because I started off at the same place, that I'm not sure we need a resolution, and then what came back to me was that Jeff says he'll feel more comfortable with this if the full board is behind him, so that's the rationale here.

Director Ross: Well, I think that this is a project that's been around for a while but there's this new interest in it. And so, I think it's important that the board is aware of it, and is saying, "Yes, that's something we really want to pursue." It's just a confirmation of one of the things we're doing because this can get to be a very big expenditure, and it can get to be a lot of effort on our time. So, we need to be aware of that.

Chairperson Lewis: It undoubtedly will. Absolutely correct.

Director Ross: Full anticipation is we'd come back to the board and say, "Here's the package, here's how it works, and here's how much we're going to ask the Gulf Coast Rail District to fund."

Chairperson Lewis: Exactly.

Director Ross: And then the board will act on that and say yea or nay at that time.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, do we have a motion yet? Well, I can tell you we don't yet, so is there someone who would be interested?

Director Ross: I'll make the motion.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, Ross.

Director Owen: And I'll second.

Chairperson Lewis: Owen. Okay. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Any opposed? Alright, great. That carries for us. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Number 9, report from Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon again to everyone. Just a few items. We're on track with our resolution progress. The City of Houston passed their resolution at the April 5th council meeting. Fort Bend is slated for it to be on their agenda actually today. As stated in the finance report, we did receive our \$75,000 contribution from Harris County. And also, for the addition of METRO to the board, I've met with the City Legal concerning that, and they will begin that process of putting together a concurrent order with the help of Harris County. And once they've kind of put that draft together, they will coordinate with METRO as well, and I've been in contact with all three entities with an update.

I attended, of course, the TAG, TPC, RTP, all of those meetings that we have monthly. And also, the Real Plan Freight Workshop number three, which is I think the last workshop for that particular project. And also, the TIP Subcommittee that H-GAC had just recently. Had an opportunity to present to a class at TSU, a master's level class, and get to talk about the Gulf Coast Rail District and some of the work that we're doing here. And lastly, we are working on updates for the website. It's coming along nicely and once I have more of a complete project, I will provide the link to each of the directors so that you can see some of the changes that we've made to bring us into 2022. And as we stated before, on our next meeting we will kind of have our official welcome of our new board member, Ms. Gorczynski, but thank you so much for attending today. That's my notes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Tyson has a comment.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Oh, okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Tyson...

Director Ross: Katherine, this is Jeff Ross. Katherine?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes.

Director Ross: Have we heard anything from H-GAC on the Southwest Cities Study, the US 90A Bus Rapid Transit study?

Ms. Katherine Parker: We did meet with Thomas about an update, and we discussed time and how we could cut out some of the length of the study. He agreed that 18 months is too long and that 12 months would be a better benchmark. Hopefully next month, he'll be able to come and give us more of an update, but we did discuss that.

Director Ross: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Tyson?

Chairperson Lewis: Just a second. There's a little more on that piece. H-GAC and their process is not necessarily as rapid as we would like because they also have to go through TxDOT. So, actually the requirements and everything for their scope and their review and their posting, for all of that to happen, we're probably not looking at this to actually be posted and then hire a consultant until probably August/September. And the good news from the conversation, as Ms. Parker said, they were thinking initially 18 months, but we were able to express the extreme interest in this corridor by many people and ask if they could cut at least 6 months off and try to get the work done in 12. I'm sort of repeating now, but he was amenable to that. So, just so that folks know, we're probably looking at summer '23 before we have that work actually completed. Now what will also happen though is that there will be an advisory committee and all of the stakeholders will be involved. So, once the consultant is brought onboard, we'll begin to participate sort of in whatever the regular time period is established—every month, every two, whatever—to at least be a part of the study and the process as it goes along. So, that kind of gives a perspective from the full sense that people can begin to think about.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I think we had a comment from Tyson. I'll read it from here. Some of the federal grants have a planning component that you may want to look into to offset some of the cost of passenger or other studies. Who was the top one?

Ms. Lisa Patke: From Tyson.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Is there another one?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I think that's it.

Ms. Lisa Patke: On Lindsay, noting there are currently 300 pass crossings in the entirety of the East End. I live right by one. If there is flooding, it's drained within an hour. And that was from Lindsay earlier.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright, thank you. Alright, anyone else have any questions for Ms. Parker or thoughts about what she's been busy with over the last month? Okay. Alright. The next item, 10, announcements from me. Our next meeting is May 10th. Every month I want to tell you that we have fully consummated Commerce/Navigation. The good news is that it is still alive. What I'm not quite happy with is that we're not quite there. But I'm going to look at Ms. Parker, I think we are almost at the lip of the cup, so we have another meeting to be scheduled within the next couple or three weeks. We're waiting for that to be scheduled again between the City of Houston Public Works and HCTRA. And so those are the parties that we're looking at to get us all the way across the finish line.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Possibly TxDOT for the design piece on that.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. What Ms. Parker said is possibly TxDOT may be somehow in the mix. But the good news is we're still making our way toward completion and there has been advancement since the last meeting. It's glacial but it is definitely moving forward.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I like that.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Is there anything else?

Director Ross: Director Lewis?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Ross: Is that project one that would address some of the concerns that Lindsay Williams was bringing up on the East End?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. It would absolutely open one avenue that people would have to leave the East End that they currently do not have.

Director Ross: Okay. Well, too bad it's glacial.

Chairperson Lewis: I know. Everyone thinks too bad it's glacial. But we'll see. I'm not sure the meeting will happen before May 10th, so I might not have anything more to say before May 10th, but I'm going to say, okay, maybe by the June meeting we'll be able to get all the way on that one. And the other backdrop to it, just so people know, and this sort of takes us back historically, is the original idea was for us to have this sealed corridor that starts all the way up at 610 and goes through and gets us all the way to pretty much Gulf Freeway. Some of the streets were closed and then some were grade separations. So, I think between Commerce/Navigation and 610, I think there are three grade separations. One of them, I always have to ask Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: York/Sampson.

Chairperson Lewis: Which one's being done with NHHIP? The furthest one north, I think, right?

Ms. Katherine Parker: The closure of Runnels is under NHHIP, yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So, one of them, the closure of Runnels, is a part of NHHIP, so that's part of the sealed corridor. And so, the point we've always made is that that's what our ultimate goal is, but we can't approach it for the entirety of the corridor. We have to approach it one project at a time. So, if we can ever get this one done, then we would talk about rolling up the next one and talk to the board about that still being our ultimate goal, to have that sealed corridor. So, that's just, again, sort of historical backdrop.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Tyson is making a request to speak.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Tyson?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Just as a quick update. So, it's Nance Street that would be grade separated and ultimately not closed but, excuse me, it would be grade separated there. Lyons was the street that was clear north that was contemplated but I don't think that that one made sense at the time. But then Runnels is optional for closure, but may be closed because of 45, they're still working through that. And then you have the Navigation/Commerce, right? And York/Sampson then that were considered for the separations.

Chairperson Lewis: Correct. That's correct. Okay. So, thank you. So, you're saying the NHHIP, say again which one it does, NHHIP.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Grade separates Nance.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Grade separates Nance.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Possible closure of Runnels.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Correct, yes.

Chairperson Lewis: And possible closure of Runnels.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Is on our list as a closure.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. I see Director Gorczynski kind of nodding about that. So, that presents, again, that idea of that sealed corridor, what might happen with NHHIP and what we are trying to do, and then what would leave us to continue to approach once we cross this first hurdle.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. And as you progress those discussions with the City and the other agencies, Dr. Lewis, as it becomes... I guess, start engaging UP at such time so we can make sure we get the right agreements, and then make sure that for design review and everything, that we get everything in place there as you start identifying the funding. That'll be an important component from a design review, but then there's also right of way of UP's that's contemplated

that's needed for drainage there, that there's also interest there for the TxDOT NHHIP project as well.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thank you for that.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes, we've been engaged with TxDOT on their project for quite a few years and obviously have the history of the other grade separations that we're working on with the Rail District and the City then.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Anything else from anyone? Alright. I will entertain a motion for us to adjourn and we'll look forward to seeing everyone on May 10th. Between Ms. Parker and Ms. Patke... Are we supposed to be able to get back downstairs next month?

Ms. Katherine Parker: No, and he just told me today.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So, the answer is we will be back in this room in May, so it will be June before we get back downstairs. Alright, thanks.

Chairperson Lewis: Is there a motion to adjourn?

Director Mann: So moved.

Director Ross: Second.

Chairperson Lewis: I've got a motion and a second. Alright, thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Goodbye, everybody. Thanks much. Everybody have a good month.

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
*Dennis Winkler*  
74AA3473698F440...  
Dennis Winkler, Secretary  
Trey Duhon, Vice Secretary  
Gulf Coast Rail District

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