



---

Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – March 12, 2024

---

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at Houston TranStar and-via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Ronald A. Beeson, Robert A. Fry, Jr., Kendric Jones, Jon Keeney, Carol Abel Lewis, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, Allen Owen, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, Stephen Gilbreath, and Jean Mann. 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, everyone we are ready to start. It is 2:05 p.m. on March 12. And I am Dr. Carol Lewis, the presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. Our meeting is now called to order. Today’s meeting is being conducted with options to participate in-person or by videoconference. The public meeting location is Houston TranStar, 6922 Katy Road. We’re in Conference Center Room 120A. The videoconference is conducted through Microsoft Teams and that link can be found in the meeting invites, agenda, and public postings. The meeting is open to the public. The public will have the opportunity to speak to the board during Public Comments. Each public commentor will have a limit of three minutes. If you wish to address the board, if you’re in the room, we ask that you walk to the front. We’ll help you to make sure you have a microphone. If you’re online, we ask that you raise your hand during that public comments period. Board members participating 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, Gulf Coast Rail District board members participating in the Microsoft Teams, we’ll need to see and hear you throughout the meeting to confirm your attendance and to record your voting. Therefore, members calling in by telephone won’t be able to count towards our quorum. I don’t think we have anybody in that position right now. As required, I’m physically present and ask that the secretary conduct the roll call. So, Director Keeney, would you do that for us please?

Director Jon Keeney: Certainly will. Ronald Beeson?

Director Ronald Beeson: I’m on virtually.

Director Jon Keeney: We hear you.

Director Jeff Ross: Is that artificial intelligence?

Director Jon Keeney: Robert Maldonado?

Director Robert Maldonado: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Veronica Chapa? No.

Ms. Katherine Parker: She’s out today.

Director Jon Keeney: Stephen Gilbreath is a no. Jeff E. Ross?  
Director Jeff Ross: I'm here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Carol Lewis is here. I'm here. Bruce Mann?  
Director Bruce Mann: Present.

Director Jon Keeney: Angelique Bartholomew?  
Director Angelique Bartholomew: Present.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Allen Owen?  
Director Bruce Mann: He's here.  
Director Jon Keeney: He's there.  
Ms. Katherine Parker: Mayor Owen?  
Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, here's there.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes. Kendric Jones?  
Director Kendric Jones: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. And Jean Mann? No?

Director Jon Keeney: Robert Fry?  
Director Robert Fry: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: We do have a quorum.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Wonderful. Thank you so much. I thank all of you for being here, for those of you in the room. And thank you very much for those of you online. Thank you for clicking in as well. We'll go to discussion and possible items on Resolution 24-05 ratifying payments. Director Owen, please.

Director Jeff Ross: Item 3...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We just certified the quorum.

Director Jeff Ross: Posting, the meeting posting. You usually talk about the meeting posting.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, I do confirm that the meeting was posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Thank you, Director Ross, I did not see that number three. I skipped right over it. But we were posted by last Friday at two o'clock, so that met that requirement. Thank you. Alright, on to you, Director Keeney.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes. Does anyone have any questions or comments about our minutes from the February 13 meeting? Hearing none, all those in favor?  
Board: Aye.  
Director Jon Keeney: Any opposed? It's unanimous. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Thank you very much. On to item four, report from the treasurer. Director Owen, please.

Director Allen Owen: Madam Chairman, I think Natalie... I saw she's on here. She's going to give the report. Natalie?

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Good afternoon, everyone. I hope you're doing well. Everyone should have a copy of the bookkeeper's report there in your meeting packet, starting on page 27 of the board materials. Looking past the cover page on page 28 in the cash flow of the checking account since your last meeting. No receipts to report and just four checks for approval today. All normal operating expenses. After disbursements, leaving \$183,050.38 in your checking account. Page 29 gives you the detail of all the District account balances as of today. We do have a couple CDs listed there at the top, and then the rest of the money there is in Texas CLASS money market and your checking account, bringing total District funds to \$1,610,500.82. The next two pages there is your actual versus budget comparison for the month of February and your fiscal year so far. Nothing out of the ordinary to comment on there. And then we do have several pages here of your grant status report. No changes to this since your last meeting. That's everything I have on the bookkeeping report, unless you have questions for me.

Director Allen Owen: Are there any questions for Natalie? Seeing none, is there a motion to approve Resolution 24-05 ratifying the payments?

Director Jon Keeney: So moved.

Director Ronald Beeson: Second.

Director Allen Owen: The motion and second. All those in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Allen Owen: Aye. Thank you, Natalie.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Thank you. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Just a second, please. Just to confirm the names, we had the motion from Keeney, and the second, we had both online and in the room. So, which one? Ronald Beeson online who second it?

Director Allen Owen: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, so we have Ronald Beeson as seconded it online.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, Director?

Director Jeff Ross: Yes, my monthly note that we have several of our members who still have not yet contributed. I won't call them out, but just take note of that on page 30. Director Mann from Montgomery County was going to look into their issue up there, but we're still lacking some of those.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you. Alright, thank you, Director Ross. So, on to item seven, discussion and possible action on Resolution 24-06 regarding annual review of investment policy and qualified brokers. And we did some conversation about that last month. But, Ms. Parker, do you want to add anything before we take this resolution forward?

Ms. Katherine Parker: This is a yearly update. Natalie is also available to answer any questions concerning our investment policy. And in your packet, you'll see the list of brokers and the resolution that's associated with that. Natalie, anything you want to add for information sake?

Ms. Natalie Galgano: No. This is just an annual housekeeping item to keep you in compliance. The list of authorized brokers does get updated every year for any potential banks that we could potentially use, but you'll see the list is much more lengthy than the ones that are actually available to take public funds at the minute. But we like to keep it updated so that if a bank opens up an opportunity, we're able to move forward with any investments there on the District's behalf. This is just an annual housekeeping item.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Director Jeff Ross: Madam Chair, question.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, sir.

Director Jeff Ross: On this list of authorized brokers, are any of these firms being boycotted by the state of Texas right now because of their investment strategies? Like we run into in the bond market?

Ms. Natalie Galgano: I'm sorry, I couldn't quite hear the whole thing. If they're available for investing right now because of their involvement in the bond market?

Director Jeff Ross: No, no, no. I work on the MUD board, and we hear about firms that bid on bonds. And if they have policies that are considered to be anti-oil and gas, the State of Texas has basically a mark against them, and they can't compete in Texas. It costs the taxpayers a lot more money, but that's the policy. I'm wondering, does this list reflect who the State of Texas will let us work with or not?

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Yes, so this list is a little bit over inclusive. Like I said, not all of these banks comply with the Texas Public Investments Act currently, but we are always trying to open up those avenues for the District if we can to have more banks available. So, these are the banks that we have been able to work with in the past. They might not be a possibility at the moment but having them on the list for the year lets us pursue those avenues as they open up. But we do look at each of those individually before we move forward with any CDs or investments with them.

Director Jeff Ross: Alright, thank you.

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Absolutely.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Any other questions, thoughts, comments?

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

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay, Bruce.

Director Jon Keeney: Second.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Bruce, second Keeney...moved and seconded. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Any opposed? Alright, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, that takes us to...

Ms. Natalie Galgano: Thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you, Natalie.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. That takes us to number eight, public comments. Is there anyone in the room who would like to address the board?

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: Ma'am, I reserve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Pardon me?

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: I reserve.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I don't know what you mean.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: In other words, I'll let Lindsay talk, then the next after Lindsay. I may or may not...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. I just want to make sure you knew that once we close it, we can't come back to it.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: I understand that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Alright.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Just make sure you signed in. Alright, good.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. Let's start with Ms. Lindsay Williams.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: Hi, everybody. Thank you for letting me speak today. I am Lindsay Williams. I'm the president of Super Neighborhood 64 and 88, Greater Eastwood and Wayside. So far in 2024, we've seen an average of 192 trains a month pass through the Galveston subdivision at the Eastwood Crossing. Thirty-one percent of those came to a complete stop at the intersection or more than 10 minutes. Parked trains sat stationary at the intersection for approximately 45 minutes on average. And the single longest blockage during the month of February was 8 hours and 45 minutes. And just before that was just a few hours before for 5 hours and 32 minutes. The FRA logged nearly doubled the amount of blocked crossings in February for the prior month. More importantly, the FRA data for February continues to show that the east end has the country's worst freight blockage concentration with trains blocking streets. We anticipate this will only worsen as commerce to the Port of Houston grows. And there's a real human impact to the numbers. Houston Fire Chief Samuel Pena said that hundreds of 911 first responders have to be rerouted because of trains blocking grade separations, lengthening critical emergency response times. And in many instances, two simultaneous trains can occupy dozens of crossings in all directions, leaving drivers trapped in Eastwood with only one outlet at an underpass at Polk Street. The West Belt, a running line through Eastwood at Cullen in downtown, on February 7th had more than seven hours during one morning for commute hours. State Senator Carol Alvarado posted on social media that she had personally

encountered the blockage. And that same day, a second train blocked traffic during the evening rush hour, causing an 18-wheeler to have to reroute onto a residential street, nearly taking out a fire hydrant at the corner of ... and Milby Street.

At the same Eastwood crossing, a train sat during rush hour, and two cyclists were seen lifting their bikes through the stalled train cars just seconds before the train started moving. I can forward those videos if you'd like to see them. The numbers tell us that one out of every five trains make it through the Galveston Subdivision without stopping, and survey after survey of resident feedback shows that stationary trains are the primary concern for residents in the super neighborhood. The City of Houston could apply for the BIL funding for the West Belt Project phase one because there was a completed Gulf Coast Rail study in 2012. However, we've lost another year of BIL funding and CRISI grant money because no other East End grade separation studies exist. Federal money is available for these studies, and the Gulf Coast District...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Time.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: ...identified ten priority intersection...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Time.

Ms. Lindsay Williams: ...last year, and the Gulf Coast Rail District could apply for those fundings to study them.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Ms. Williams...

Ms. Lindsay Williams: Yes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Ms. Williams, I need to alert you that you've kind of got to the end of your three minutes. Thank you for what you've let us know. And the public is always free to send in comments in writing, which is not limited to the three minutes. Dominic Mazoch?

Director Jeff Ross: Can we ask her questions?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I think we determined no... I'll explain that in just a minute. Dominic, go ahead please.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Hello?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, go ahead, Dominic.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay. Yes. Can you hear me, Doctor?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, we can.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay, my three minutes started. I think after some in the agenda after the public comments, I think some in the agenda after the one with public comment, I think you're going to be talking about the Houston Area Rail Transformation Project. And I would like to maybe bring up a point. I know this is being has been the model would be the CREATE project in Chicago. But maybe the thing is what else is going on in the Texas triangle in view of rail?

Because, again, I understand the Galveston subdivision with trains being stopped there. But the thing is not only do you have to deal with that, but you have to deal with the whole system. And is that... anything of the CREATE or THE HART anywhere else in the Texas triangle and has there been any studies about maybe doing something about it on a triangle basis. I know railroads are private property. I understand that. I don't have a problem with that. But maybe the thing is particularly Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe getting together and saying, "Hey, let's have some trackage rights on each other. Let's work together so that we can keep the rails flowing." I think there's some more things that can be done, not just in the Houston area but within the private railroads themselves, and the Texas triangle, and maybe even farther out. Maybe... I'm not saying Union Pacific. Maybe trains should not even leave... yard and just west of El Paso coming into even Texas if that train isn't going to be able to cross Texas, or San Antonio, or the Houston rail area without stopping. I think the Galveston subdivision is a small thing of the whole problem of let's get our rail network working together more efficiently. And the comments back to you, Chair. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you, Mr. Mazoch. And... Yes?

Ms. Katherine Parker: So, Bruce can let him use one of the mics there.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. Make sure you tell us your name please.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: My name is Joseph Tijerina. I'm an Eastwood resident, and I would like to mention to you that I agree with Lindsay's comment and concur. That's it.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Mr. Joseph Tijerina: Thank you.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, in answer to the question, Director Ross, about do we ask questions during the public comment... In response to the do we ask questions during public comment, we kind of determined with one of our prior attorneys that doing that might take us into an area where we start talking about something that we haven't posted on our agenda, and theoretically could be unwittingly pulled into going beyond our posting. So, what I would suggest is if we heard something that we want to respond to that we make note of it and circle back with Director Parker and include it on our agenda for the next month. In which case, then we're free to discuss anything that we posted under the open meetings requirements.

Director Jeff Ross: Okay. Can we get a different attorney?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Not at the moment.

Director Jeff Ross: Because there's a difference between deliberation and asking her...

Director Kendrick Jones: Yes, but even during our meetings with public comments, we don't respond. We just allow the citizen to say whatever they choose, good or bad, then at a later time if the individual, commissioner, or judge would like to respond back, you get with that person outside of the meeting.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, I think that's a general take on it. And so, again, the public comments are not limited by time if they want to send something written. But in the interest of making sure we don't drift into...

Director Jeff Ross: Deliberations, I understand.

Director Kendrick Jones: If you would like to dialogue, we always say it's best for either the citizen or for that individual to speak upon a specific agenda item.

Director Jeff Ross: In plain English, just to ask, is there anything else you wanted to add to this?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes, the... Yes, and honestly, I don't know but METRO also used to engage in dialogue. I don't know if they still do. But just to keep us out of trouble, right?

Ms. Katherine Parker: She understands as well, Ms. Williams (understands).

Director Jeff Ross: ...get in trouble, so...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Ross.

Director Jeff Ross: Anyway. I like my job too. I really don't want to get in trouble.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Here's the thing. So, everybody has a basic nature. It's just basic nature is to color outside the lines. My basic nature is to color within the lines. So, we're going to color within the lines.

Director Jeff Ross: I expect that Lindsay and the east side communities have been to city council and talked to city council about this. Is that correct?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Probably...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Correct.

Director Jeff Ross: I would suggest that if the members of this board who are appointed by the City of Houston have an upcoming meeting with the current mayor that we ought to have it on our agenda as well, because we're hearing this comment repeatedly, and we ought to share with the mayor that we are hearing it as well.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Director Bruce Mann: And I think just bigger picture, this is why THE HART was created.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Exactly. And we've got on the agenda today a HART update by Ms. Parker. Some of the comments that we heard from the public section actually will be addressed in that. Not specifically to the east end but in terms of what we're doing with HART. And, again, the point I'm making is that if we, as a board, want to talk about the east end, we can put on our agenda for next month, and then we can talk about the east end once it's on our posted agenda. Alright. Is there anything else on public comments? If not, item nine, media strategy presentation from Culture Measures. Ms. Bartholomew...Director Bartholomew?



Director Angelique Bartholomew: Thank you so much. I want to first thank the board for allowing us to proceed with the marketing strategy and plans for really moving the media and marketing and social media forward. The committee shared an email to represent the video that was done, and I want to thank Ms. Erika Johnson, who's here today, who will provide us with a briefing of the video that's been produced. And we will continue to launch the social media platforms as well. So, thank you to the committee for serving in this capacity to get this done efficiently and cooperatively. And I'd like to ask Ms. Johnson if we can share the video.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Absolutely. Good afternoon.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Good afternoon.

Ms. Erika Johnson: So, the video you're about to see today is a part of the GCRD story. The purpose of this... I'm sorry. The video that you all are about to see today is a part of the GCRD story campaign. So, this campaign, the purpose of it is to introduce the mission and the vision of the organization, as well as the board members. There will be several videos within the series. We're going to do HART videos so the public can also see what THE HART program is about. And we're also going to a video, that's why we're here today, to show the behind the scenes of the board meeting. It's so important to show the visual story of what you all do, and these are the components that connect the public with the great work that you all are doing within this organization.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Going back to the beginning.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: And it will share all of the social media platforms after the meeting so that we can all go in...

Video Plays: Imagine a future where transportation goes beyond merely moving from point A to point B, focusing on safety, sustainability, and community. The Gulf Coast Rail District is at the forefront, driving innovations that enhance quality of life and ensuring every journey is safe. Our projects are more than just infrastructure. They represent our commitment to our community's growth and wellbeing. Join us in shaping a future where every trip is a step towards a better world. The Gulf Coast Rail District—safe, sustainable, together. Imagine a future where transportation...

Ms. Erika Johnson: ... This clip is available on all social media platforms. So, what you see now is an organic growth so I encourage you all and I could send the links for you to follow each of the platforms and share within your network. So, yes, that's the first video. You'll see the rest of the videos come out as we continue the series through the end of March. Do we have any questions?

Director Jeff Ross: I think it's a good presentation. And I talked to you earlier, Erika, about... the older generation and trying to adapt to this. You started talking... it starts talking about safe, sustainable, and community at the beginning. At the end, you change community to together. You could maybe just keep the word community in there. I mean, that was just the way I reacted to it when I first heard it.

Ms. Erika Johnson: I can definitely see your point. Sometimes we change the word, so it doesn't come off redundant...

Director Jeff Ross: Yes.

Ms. Erika Johnson: ...when people hear things. We change the words a bit. So, that's something that we can note, and we can continue to say community in our upcoming material.

Director Bruce Mann: One quick question. It looked like... And maybe it was just the overlay, but it looked like the safety vests said Gulf Coast Rail District. It went by quick. But if the safety vests actually said that we probably don't want it to because we don't have anybody running around in a safety vest saying...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: In a safety vest.

Ms. Katherine Parker: I didn't notice that.

Ms. Erika Johnson: It's stock material with the safety vest. You probably saw the logo in the corner.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Logo in the corner.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, but there's no safety vest with that.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, alright. No, that's fine. It just made it look like...

Ms. Katherine Parker: We haven't got that savvy just yet, Bruce. We're going to be doing merch soon.

Director Jeff Ross: Is it pixelated just because of the way we're viewing it right now? Because it looked like light streams along the railroad tracks and the overhead wires and stuff...

Ms. Erika Johnson: Yes, it's because it's being streamed.

Director Jeff Ross: Okay.

Director Bruce Mann: What was that location?

Ms. Erika Johnson: That was on the east... What...?

Ms. Katherine Parker: That's the West Belt actually.

Director Bruce Mann: Okay. No, and that's why I was asking, because...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Okay. Yes, I provided to her... I provided I think three locations for her... for them to do drone work.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: You all will receive all sorts of social media platforms.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Director Ross.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Alright. So, any other big questions?

Director Jon Keeney: Just a comment. I just feel that brief video is a really good way to introduce us to the public, and I think that's what your primary goal may well be. But it sure came across that way to me.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Well, thank you. That means we hit our mark, so thank you. I appreciate that.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you. And I agree. And I want to caution us against individually directing towards things that are our opinions and do a real hard line between what's really my opinion and what might someone else disagree with. Because we all think differently. I'm going to draw lines, just don't color everywhere. So, we're not going to ever have everybody agreeing necessarily on every single piece, but I really appreciate what Director Keeney said in the big picture, and that's how I was looking at it. At this moment, we're starting with people not knowing what the Gulf Coast Rail District is and just trying to get out there who are we and what are we doing. We're out there, we're trying to do passenger transport, we're doing freight rail. That's what we're doing, and that's who we are. We're wanting to make thing better for our future. Then, again, this is not going to be a singular piece, so it's going to go with other pieces.

Director Bruce Mann: The reason I asked that question my question is because one day that video is going to be outdated.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Although I do think that was a real important question, because we don't want to misrepresent.

Director Bruce Mann: Yes. No, I'm talking about the...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Oh, right. Right.

Director Bruce Mann: Because eventually it won't look like that.

Ms. Katherine Parker: True. Right.

Director Bruce Mann: That video...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Because that's the West Belt.

Director Bruce Mann: Which is the best thing that could happen.

Director Jon Keeney: Sure.

Director Bruce Mann: Because that means, oh, look, we did something.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Progress. Progress, right.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Agreed. That's the whole picture. And giving people that are not familiar with GCRD the meaning behind what we're doing and the progress that we're making.

Director Bruce Mann: Right.

Ms. Erika Johnson: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you very much.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: So, she's been following us around. So, we did a presentation at North Houston...

Ms. Katherine Parker: ...Association.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...Association the other day, and she was there taking snippets... get to see that event.

Director Jeff Ross: Well, they've been filming this meeting.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: And they've been filming this meeting, yes.

Director Jeff Ross: I need to talk to my agent about that.

Director Jeff Ross: That's a joke. It doesn't need to be in the minutes.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: We need one of those disclaimer sheets at the door.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thank you very much, Ms. Johnson. Alright, any other questions or anything else, Director Bartholomew?

Director Angelique Bartholomew: No. I really appreciate it. This is a big step, and I know that it takes a lot to move in that direction when you're not familiar with the platforms, but it's truly what's needed.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Absolutely. Alright, next item, project manager update by Barbara Koslov. And Ms. Koslov is here, our project manager.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Okay...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you, Barbara.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: I'm just getting started. I've spent more time familiarizing myself with HART and the Chicago CREATE. I looked at the different alignments that we talked about, what 90A might become one day, and then we talked a little bit about 290 and the opportunities there. So, most of what I've done is kind of just familiarized myself and understand what you are all about. I think it's a great program that you're pushing forward. I'm trying to understand HART. I put together one half... I don't know if you want to call it a handbook or a manual but a document that kind of does two things—spell out what HART is, the history, how it was established, the goals, the objectives, the vision. And then how do we move forward. There have been some projects that have been identified. There is a number of grants. We talk about them all

the time, CRISI and some of the other grants that are available. So, kind of laid that out in a document and talk about partnerships, because we don't have a lot of many. So, we need to talk about our partnerships—how are we going to include the City of Houston, or TxDOT, or work with H-GAC? And then kind of more of a strategy and a long-range plan, how we can sustain or bring more on, become kind of a leader in the state of the kind of work we're doing. This is just an outline. It's one page, so I haven't really started writing anything yet. But I am going to work with both Carol and Katherine to see if this is the direction you want to go, and then I'll start populating it. So, I was at the meeting with Carol last week at the North Houston Association Transportation Committee. We need to do more of that, because... It wasn't a big crowd, but Carol talked a full hour, answered a ton of questions because people really didn't know what it was. And I think they were all very excited to hear about the work that both the Gulf Coast Rail District is doing and the goals of HART and how that can make a difference. A lot of north Houston is very rural, and it's up in northern Harris County and part of Montgomery County. And they've got a lot of grade crossings, and they already were jumping on, "How do we get our projects on the list?" So, that was good. And the final thing to say... Oh, turn it over. I did go through the most recent Texas Freight Mobility Plan update, and there is a whole page that lists projects of grade separations, but they're ones you are already on top of, particularly all the West Belt improvements. So, I was trying to see if we could find other synergies where they've identified improvements that we can be part of, but I think we're on the same page with that right now. And that's kind of where we are. Thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Questions for Ms. Koslov?

Director Jon Keeney: Welcome.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Thank you.

Director Bruce Mann: I just have a comment real quick.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Yes, sure.

Director Bruce Mann: The more...especially once this thing goes viral because everyone cares about the Rail District... It would be good to have FAQs or something so we're all saying the same thing.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That's a good idea.

Director Bruce Mann: Especially about HART, as we're trying to roll this out. Just we all need to be singing from the same sheet of music. Because what you say and what I say might be two different things, and I just need to make sure we're all aligned.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I agree with that. Yes, absolutely. I think that's a good idea.

Director Jon Keeney: Yes, that's exactly what was on my mind. Good.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Okay. So, Barbara, if you could add that question to your list. Thank you. But, Yes, that's exactly what we wanted Barbara to do, and we're most appreciative. And I will say that whenever we talk to somebody about HART, people are ready to help us in Austin next year and beyond. Honestly, I'll tell you the truth, someone walked up to me and asked me,

“Have you thought about going to the National Federal Delegation and asking for earmarks?” I said, “No, we hadn’t thought about that.” She said, “Well, I’m going to talk to somebody,” because she was thinking about. So, I think that just, again, the exposure is going to open doors for us that we hadn’t thought about, and we need that. So, thanks to all.

Director Angelique Bartholomew: I do want to add that it’s probably going to be important for us to have those FAQs in order to respond to people making inquiries and responses that we begin to receive on the social media platforms and everything. And hopefully we can consult with Ms. Erika about how we can respond to that and have answers.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: That sounds great. You got that task added to your... Alright, that takes us to number 11, our report from the executive director. Ms. Parker?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Alright. Good afternoon, everyone. I’m doing double duty today. Lisa is not here, and we miss her. But my piece is short.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Don’t you need a microphone?

Ms. Katherine Parker: Do I need a microphone? Can they hear me?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Because I think when Lisa transcribes, she transcribes...

Ms. Katherine Parker: That’s true. Thank you so much. As I was saying, yes, Lisa took a well needed vacation for today, and we’ll see her next month. On my list, I have a short list, but quite a few meetings attended in the past month. We talked about the North Houston meeting. We also attended the UP breakfast where we met the president, Beth Whited. Greater Houston Freight Committee had a meeting. We are... I also met with GoRail, and they invited Dennis Kearns from Texas Rail Association to talk about the conversation we had last month of whether this should be a statewide effort for our funding piece for THE HART, or should it be a region effort. We also have had a TAC meeting, and TPC meeting, and also HART meeting. Those are all monthly meetings that roll around pretty close together in the month. We will be meeting with Commissioner Alvis on March 27th, so we are happy about this upcoming meeting, and we are moving forward full force with hopefully our funding piece and ideas about how we can either get on the legislative agenda through an appropriation or possibly something separate. We’re kind of open at this point. We want to be able to attack it from all angles. So, there are a lot of conversations going on that are centered around rail and THE HART. Also at the meeting with the City monthly about preparation for the CRISI Grant, which comes out in April... There’s not a set date, but it’s soon. So, everyone who is applying... We know that Griggs-Long-Mykawa will be one of those applications. And under THE HART banner as well, we are working on a workshop for THE HART committee, or GCRD members and those who would like to be a part. That conversation will happen tomorrow. The FRA representative will talk about questions. We met with the smaller committee to come up with the questions we’d like to ask the FRA and then also to have them present a workshop. So, you know, from how to apply, what is needed, what are letters of support, is your city ready to be able to apply or even administer the grant and be able to keep up with the maintenance and all that’s required for it. So, that is all kind of happening as we speak. And lastly, there’s one other thing I know I’m missing about HART. Bruce, help me out. Did I miss anything from our last conversation? I think that’s it.

Director Bruce Mann: No, I think that’s it.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Oh, okay. Once the workshop date is set, we will present to TAC and TPC about HNTB's next study. We did the first TxDOT ten—if you remember, the first set of ten crossings. This next set will be the Glidden sub that will be evaluated. So, once that technical report is done then we will present to TPC and TAC kind of an intro, if you will, about THE HART. And we will include the date for the workshop so that we can invite all of the members that are part of those two committees to invite members from their member entities to be a part of the workshop. So, that kind of all is rolling together. And I think that's it as far as my meetings are concerned and HART. I think I rolled it all together. If I've forgotten something, you all let me know.

Director Bruce Mann: And Glidden sub, for anybody that doesn't know, is just in this area... it parallels 90A, Sugar Land, Fort Bend, Richmond, into Houston. So, that section of track, looking at it as a corridor.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes. And I think, lastly, as there are monthly meetings about upcoming grants, the West Belt as well, we meet basically monthly with FRA as to the details of that project. So, it is moving forward, and we are seeing more light at the end of that tunnel. So, thank you.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Anything else for Ms. Parker? Alright. That takes us on to the next item on the agenda, which is report from me. So, I'm listed to update us on 90A. I actually thought about whether I was going to put that on every month, but I decided probably not because there're many months won't be enough to necessarily report on. But in this month in specific, HDR signed the contract and began work on March 6th, so that's going forward. Their initial meeting was this morning at 11:30, and I couldn't go, nor could Katherine, because we had another event going at the same time. But next time the meeting occurs, I'm sure one of us will be able to go. And we can talk about how Director Ross wants to cycle in and at what intensity you want to do that. Then you had said Director Owen was going to be on the stakeholders group with elected officials, not the technical groups like us. So, that's going forward. I wanted everyone to know that.

Director Jeff Ross: Did they populate the stakeholder group now?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: They are populating. They had a list, and then they have asked for additional names, as I recall. I haven't seen it circle back. Because they asked everybody for additional names, not just us... H-GAC and everyone. So, I haven't seen it back...

Director Angelique Bartholomew: Who requested the list? Who's putting together the list?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Thomas Gray at H-GAC. I think we... As I recall, somebody from Fort Bend was on there. I know Perri D'Armond is on the list...

Ms. Katherine Parker: Right. Right.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: ...from Fort Bend. I can't remember who else.

Ms. Katherine Parker: It may have been the county engineer...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: The person from Fort Bend Toll Road. We can check.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes, I'll look and see. And I think that was a part of HDR's...

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Their TAC.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Right, to develop that. But we can definitely put names on that list.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Right. So, if you had someone that you feel should be added, let us know, and we'll get those in. Alright. The next thing we have on the agenda is to announce our next meeting date, which is... It's April already—April 9th. Goodness gracious. This year is flying by, like flying. It's listed for April 9th on a Tuesday. Thanks, everyone, for being here. If there's nothing else, ...

Director Bruce Mann: Just really quickly.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Yes?

Director Bruce Mann: Since we're all here, congratulations on your lunchtime award today. She was recognized by COMTO, who's the National Association for Transportation Professionals. There's a Houston branch, and they awarded her Women Who Move Our Region, the inaugural award today. So, congratulations to you for that.

Director Jeff Ross: Well done.

Chairperson Carol Lewis: I thank everyone who came. And the thing I said is that I am not here because of me. It's everyone who has worked me around for all these years. So, I get to stand up and be the award winner, but really, it's all of the hard work of all the folks around that allows someone like me to get to that point.

Director Kendrick Jones: Those people that help you color outside the lines?

Chairperson Carol Lewis: Exactly. Somebody, something to color outside the lines.

Director Jeff Ross: I need to address this. Okay?

Director Jeff Ross: Carol and I have known each other about four decades.

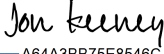
Chairperson Carol Lewis: No, it's true.

Director Jeff Ross: And Carol is a traditional incrementalist. And when I got on a plane, she gave me paper that had been written some 20 years earlier about incrementalism. And she anticipates where the boundary is and makes sure that she does not even get up next to it but as close as she can. I, on the other hand, operate as if there are no boundaries until somebody tells me they're there. Okay? So, I don't impose one. I just wait until I get feedback that says, "Maybe you've gone too far."



Chairperson Carol Lewis: It's true. And the world works because there are people like us who... There you go, provide the balance. And he is absolutely correct in everything he said. Thank you. Thank you, all. I thank everyone, and I will see everyone on April 9 (adjourned at 2:50 p.m.).

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
  
A64A3BB75E8546C  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jon Keeney, Secretary  
Gulf Coast Rail District

Transcription services provided by Transcription Panda.