



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Workshop Meeting – August 10, 2021

A workshop meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at Houston TranStar and via the BlueJeans web-based platform due to the disruption of normal business during the COVID-19 pandemic. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Michael Dyll, Abigail M. Gonzalez, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, Richard L. Muller, Jr., Allen Owen, Jim Robinson, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Trey Duhon, Tina Arias Peterman, 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: Alright. Thanks to you all for staying on. So, we will, and we call the meeting to order. It's August 10th. It's 10:14 a.m., so we'll call to order now. Director Beeson, would you certify our quorum, please?

Director Beeson: Yes, I sure will. In lieu of a roll call, how about I go down the list of known participants and if anybody doesn't hear their name called, let me know. Michael Dyll is here. Jeff Ross is here in person. Dr. Lewis is here. Bruce Mann is on video, correct?

Chairperson Lewis: Correct.

Director Beeson: Richard Muller's here in person, Allen Owen is on video, and Jim Robinson is on video.

Chairperson Lewis: Correct.

Director Beeson: Anyone else?

Director Ross: Abby Gonzalez.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Beeson: Oh, and Abby Gonzalez. Okay, sorry. Anybody else?

Chairperson Lewis: Hold on just a second, Director. Do we hear another voice?

Director Gonzalez: Yes, that's me, Abby Gonzalez.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, right. Director Ross mentioned that you were here. Thank you for speaking up.

Director Gonzalez: Okay.

Director Beeson: Thank you. Just for the record then, those absent are Judge Duhon, Director Winkler, and Director Peterman.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright.

Director Beeson: Back to you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you, awesome. We are certified. The meeting was posted on Friday, Ms. Patke, correct?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes, it was. Yes, correct.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, awesome. The minutes for June 8th. Which was our last in-person meeting, sort of hybrid I guess I should say. Director Beeson, please?

Director Beeson: Yes, discussion and possible action regarding the minutes of June 8th. Any discussion? If not, I will entertain a motion to approve those minutes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, we have a motion from Director Owen. Second anyone?

Director Mann: I'll second it, Bruce Mann.

Chairperson Lewis: Bruce Mann seconded.

Director Beeson: Thank you, Bruce.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, great.

Director Beeson: Okay. Minutes are approved. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Director Besson: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Item 5, a report from the treasurer. Director Owen, please.

Director Owen: Do I have a report?

Chairperson Lewis: You have the great Cory Burton.

Director Muller: You have an accountant.

Mr. Cory Burton: Yes, right.

Director Ross: He's sitting down here.

Director Muller: Defer to your consultant, Mayor.

Mr. Cory Burton: His assistant is here today. Good morning, everyone. Cory Burton with Municipal Accounts & Consulting.

Chairperson Lewis: Mr. Burton, hold on just a second. Can you all hear him?

Director Owen: Yes, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect.

Mr. Cory Burton: Alright. If you'll turn past your cover page, you will see your operating fund checking account. No receipts this month. Expenses totaled \$10,625. The big one there being your annual audit fee to McCall Gibson Swedlund Barfoot. Other than that, everything else was typical in the check stack. Next page is your detail...

Director Owen: Very good. Is there a motion to approve the report?

Chairperson Lewis: He's still kind of walking through it. Give him just another second.

Mr. Cory Burton: No, that...

Director Owen: I thought he said that there were no other changes.

Mr. Cory Burton: I'm fine. There really was no other material activity to report this month in our report.

Director Owen: Motion to approve.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, Director Owen, motion to approve.

Director Beeson: So moved.

Director Ross: Second, Ross.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, we've got a motion and a second. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect, Alright, thank you. That's approved. Thank you, Mr. Burton.

Chairperson Lewis: Director Owen, we've got Resolution 21-11, please, for ratifying payment.

Director Owen: Is there a motion to approve the ratification of 21-11?

Chairperson Lewis: Do I hear a motion?

Director Ross: Motion, Ross.

Chairperson Lewis: Ross.

Director Mann: Second.

Chairperson Lewis: Second, Mann. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Any opposed? Alright. Great, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Item number seven, discussion and possible action on 21-12, approving Central Bank as the new repository. Let's pull that resolution, which I'm not seeing in my stack. Lisa?

Ms. Lisa Patke: It should be on page...

Director Ross: 35.

Director Beeson: Here you go.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, I found it. I just found out, Alright, great. Alright, so this names... It goes through our history whereas we used to have Compass Bank, approved in 2011. And whereas Municipal Accounts & Consulting recommended that we move from BBVA to Central Bank as a new bank repository. Are there any questions about that? Mr. Burton, you want to talk about it at all?

Mr. Cory Burton: Sure. This is just a result of BBVA is in the process of getting acquired by PNC Bank. BBVA has done an outstanding job for you as well as other clients for several years now, but PNC Bank is more of a hands-off type of bank, self-service. BBVA has an experienced public funds department that will be dissolved as part of this acquisition, so we won't have that support group once PNC completes that acquisition in October. And so, a few months ago, we met with several banks in the area and ultimately settled on Central Bank as being the most qualified and experienced bank that has a public funds group that can adequately serve your needs. So that's our recommendation at this time is to switch depositories from BBVA to Central Bank.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great.

Director Muller: Motion to approve.

Chairperson Lewis: Motion, Muller.

Director Dyll: Second, Dyll.

Chairperson Lewis: Second, Dyll. All in favor?

Director Ross: Question.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, question.

Director Ross: What other banks... This is Director Ross. What other banks did you talk to and tell us about Central Bank because I've never heard of them?

Mr. Cory Burton: Sure. Central Bank is local to the Houston market. They've been around for several years, and we've worked specifically with their public funds department going on at least five years now. We did meet with all the other local and national banks here in the area and gave everyone the opportunity to solicit a bid. Basically, put out an RFP. We met with some of those banks in person. Ultimately, most banks aren't interested in serving public entities such as yourself because there's a lot of red tape associated with you versus you and I going in independently and opening up a checking account. So, we gave virtually every bank in the area the opportunity to bid in.

Director Owen: This is Director Owen. Are there any requirements of pledged securities against those deposits?

Mr. Cory Burton: Yes, sir. This is Cory again. And so yes, you'll need to update your collateral security agreement, one with Central Bank now. And so yes, we usually don't keep a whole lot of money in your checking account. We try to keep that as lean as possible because you get better interest rates on the CDs and money market. But there...

Director Owen: As long as it... Yes, as long as it's out of the insured amount.

Mr. Cory Burton: Correct, but we'll have the DPA in place in the event that you go over \$250,000, to make sure your funds are adequately collateralized.

Director Owen: Okay, good.

Chairperson Lewis: Any other questions? Any other conversation? Alright, we have a motion and a second, all in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposed? Alright, thank you. We are passed on that, so thank you very much.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Item 8, public comments? Is there anyone on the BlueJeans who would like to provide any comment?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Good morning, Dr. Lewis. This is Tyson Moeller from Union Pacific on listening today.

Chairperson Lewis: Good morning, Mr. Moeller. Glad to have you as always.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Thank you.

Director Muller: I'm sorry, who was that that talked?

Chairperson Lewis: Tyson Moeller from UP.

Director Muller: UP, yes. Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: And there's another person on, I think. She's not here anymore. It was someone who had logged in under the name Amber. That person is no longer joined.

Ms. Lisa Patke: That's for that computer.

Chairperson Lewis: Pardon?

Ms. Lisa Patke: That would be for your computer that you're on.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, oh. Well, isn't that interesting?

Ms. Lisa Patke: The TranStar one. You're Amber.

Chairperson Lewis: I'm Amber. I'm Amber. Nice to know. Nice to know you, Amber. What happened to Amber? Alright. So that takes us through item number eight. And I think Tyson participated in our Roadway/Railway group as well. So glad that you're here with us today as we talk about all of these items.

Alright. So, number nine is the Charge to the Committees, and so we were asking in the month of July that each committee would meet and bring back a recommendation for GCRD in terms of our annual pursuit. So, it might be '22-'23 actually, so maybe a little more than a year to set the stage for what we actually work on in this upcoming year. And so, I'm very excited to hear the reports and your recommendations so that we can jointly determine how we work and move forward. We had a really great year in terms of the success of our getting our one item through the legislature and I think it served to rally us and gave us something that we can have sort of support from all of our entities, all of our bodies, supported our movement. So that was quite encouraging because it really provided us an opportunity to reach out to each of them and gave them an opportunity to see how we can provide a path forward for our region. So just really grateful and appreciative to the board for all you did, for our consultant that we have and came through Director Owen, and everybody's pitching in on making sure that we were successful in that. So, I think it gives us a great sort of foundation to spring forward and sort of an energy that will kind of thrust us into this upcoming year. So, with that, our first report is going to be from

Bylaws, Director Muller, would you take it and share with us your committee's conversations on what they're recommending to us?

Director Muller: Yes, so the one, big issue that we had was the discussion of with the new legislation that was passed, what additional approvals we needed from the entities that created us. I looked at the law, and in my opinion, we do need to get those entities to approve the expansion of our powers by amending the documents that created us, effectively. And we discussed whether to do that now or do that later and I think that's really kind of the discussion for today is do we want to try to go do that now or do we want to wait until we have a specific project and ask for approval to expand our powers. I think you can go either way on that.

My personal opinion is we might be better served to wait until we have a specific project that we want to undertake. I know that Dr. Lewis has got a different view on that, and we talked about that a little bit before the meeting. She started to persuade me so that might be the topic of the discussion. Do we want to go to all of our members, so to speak, and say, "Hey, look. We got authority this last legislative session to expand two things like bus rapid transit, etc." And with the infrastructure bill that's imminently going to be passed—and Director Ross and I talked about this a little bit before the meeting—there are going to be opportunities for us to do something. There's going to be money for—I say us—for somebody to do something, and maybe that's the catalyst for having the discussions. But anyway, I think it's certainly, from a legal perspective, something we need to do. Everybody here is appointed by our member institutions and they may have a better insight as to how those member institutions would react to the request to expand our powers, so to speak.

So maybe that might be the starting point for the discussion is how would our member organizations view it. The concern I've had is what's METRO going to say, but that was part of our discussion in our committee and Director Robinson seems to think that METRO's going to be just fine with it. So anyway. I think from the Fort Bend County perspective, which is really the only perspective I can offer to the group, the cities in Fort Bend County in particular are going to say, "Well, what exactly are you planning on?" I know they will ask me that question. And so, I think that I need to be able to respond to them with, "Well, let me tell you where we're going to start," because I do think that you might get some pushback of, "We don't want to give you a blank check to do anything that you want to do. Give us some specifics." So that's my input from the Fort Bend County side, and I'd be interested to hear what everybody else thinks their appointing bodies would do in response to a request to expand our authority to include some other technologies, like the bus rapid transit stuff.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I think if I'm correct, Director Robinson may have his mic on and be ready to speak from METRO, just since you happened to mention them specifically.

Director Muller: Yes, right.

Chairperson Lewis: Director Robinson?

Director Robinson: Yes, I've got... Dr. Lewis, are you all hearing me okay?

Chairperson Lewis: Can you hear him, Jeff?

Director Ross: Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, great. Yes, yes, we can hear you.

Director Robinson: Okay. Well, the status with METRO is METRO is very supportive of what the Gulf Coast Rail District is doing. You'll recall that the METRO board passed a resolution during the session endorsing the bill and that continues to be our position. We know that it was not going to be possible for us to operate over in Fort Bend County unless those jurisdictions join and that's not that, but we also know that probably is not going to happen. So, what we see as the role of Gulf Coast Rail District is facilitating development of a system, if funding can be worked out, to operate in that area that METRO can't serve but sharing our right-of-way and our operational ability to come up with a system that will serve the entire region.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you for that. I really appreciate that. And the thing that I would sort of do a piggyback on is that I had a conversation with President Lambert, President/CEO Tom Lambert, and METRO has—I guess a couple months ago, Director Robinson. METRO approved the contract for the University Corridor which goes out Westpark to Hillcroft. I'm pretty sure that's correct, right? And so, when I talked to...

Director Robinson: That's right.

Chairperson Lewis: ...Chief Lambert about is that if somehow continuing from Hillcroft to the Harris County Line, that BRT Corridor—and it is BRT... so that BRT Corridor into Fort Bend out to Fulshear might be an early sort of low-hanging fruit opportunity. Now, of course, conversations have to happen across the board because there have been none so far, I don't think, with anybody in Fort Bend of late. So, all of that would have to happen, but there were no conversations because there was nothing to talk about prior to this. But now there's at least one potential corridor that we could discuss, that we've already along with Harris County... Let me mention those two that is a side bar but matters, is that Harris County actually paid for the West Park study that we did that came out with the BRT finding. So, I think we've got some sort of things under the surface that could be springboards for us to continue to have conversation, although there would be much. Others?

Director Owen: Madam chairman, this is Director Owen. The Fort Bend Mayor Council meet once a month and if we have an opportunity at some point in time, I have told them that since I'm their representative, I will come before them and make any kind of presentation to get their approval. So, at any time we're ready to do that, let me know and I'll make that presentation to them. So that's all the mayors in Fort Bend County including Fulshear, Katy, and all the areas that would be involved in that if we need to do that. So, yes, just let me know.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. I think that sounds great. Director Ross?

Director Ross: This is Director Ross. Which government entities are actually part of this group that created the Gulf Coast Rail District? Because I wasn't here then, I don't remember. So, are we talking about Montgomery County, Harris County, METRO?

Chairperson Lewis: Hold on, hold on, I'm writing them down so that I can see who you don't call. Alright. So, Montgomery, Harris, METRO.

Director Ross: City of Houston.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Ross: Fort Bend County.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Ross: Galveston County.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Ross: And Waller County.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Muller: Did you say Montgomery?

Director Ross: Pardon me?

Director Muller: Did you say Montgomery?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. That's why I needed to write it, because I would not be able to remember. I'd need to write it.

Director Ross: So those are all the entities that we need consent from?

Chairperson Lewis: No, you're missing two. There's the Fort Bend Mayors and then there's the Harris County Mayors. So, Director Owen represents the Fort Bend Mayors. Dennis Winkler represents the City of Houston Mayors. And we have not talked to them. They right now are probably who we would say is the pot of the unknowns because the last time we went to them was when Maureen was still here. So, it's been a while since we've talked with them.

Director Ross: And that's Harris County Mayors excluding Houston?

Chairperson Lewis: Exactly.

Director Ross: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Harris County Mayors excluding Houston.

Director Ross: So, in response to what Rich is saying, we're trying to do planning stage right now. Ultimately, every one of these entities gets on or off if they put up money. So, I really hate to get into a discussion right now trying to placate them on the shape and the look of the car. That's like saying, "What color concrete do you want on the highway?" and giving everybody a choice about what color concrete they want on the highway. That's not what we're trying to do right now. I mean, that's a problem that's tiny and emotional as opposed to how do you provide service. And for folks to say the shape of the vehicle is more important to me than the destruction of the inner city neighborhoods. That's not even on the same ballot in my opinion.

And I say the destruction of the inner city neighborhoods. If we don't build this, people are going to want to widen and double-deck freeways, which leads to the destruction of their city neighborhoods.

Chairperson Lewis: So, your advocacy is later, not now?

Director Ross: No, my advocacy is now because right now, they don't...

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, okay, got you, okay.

Director Ross: If we wait until we have a project, then that empowers the people who want to vote... leverage us.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Ross: So, I think we go in now, but we just have to say, "We don't know yet what the vehicle looks like or any of those other things. We're trying to do planning studies to solve a problem, to create alternatives to freeway widenings because every freeway widening is destroying this region." Okay? Because it's pitting inner city against suburban interests. And instead of doing that, let's have another option, and we can work all the details of what color the car is or how it's powered and all these other things, that in my book, are really—they're just incidental. They're just things that people choose to gripe about because they think they can. But the fact is destroying inner city neighborhoods in order to let suburban people get to Houston better is not a winning proposition any longer. And we're seeing that on I-45 right now.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. But you realize Montgomery and Galveston may not embrace your argument, right?

Director Ross: I realize that. They need to understand that the alternative is there may be no freeway expansions, either.

Director Owen: That brings up an interesting point. This is Member Owen. Where are we on the Galveston issue of releasing them from the organization that we talked about?

Chairperson Lewis: So, my colloquial self wants to say we are nowhere. So...

Director Owen: But we did find out that all that takes is a letter, right?

Chairperson Lewis: I have no... I don't know, I don't know. So let me say I know nothing about this conversation. Was that something you all talked about in Bylaws?

Director Muller: No.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, Director Muller is saying no so...

Director Robinson: We talked about it in Legislative?

Director Ross: We talked about this...

Director Owen: Yes, we talked about it in the Legislative deal.

Director Ross: No, in the Passenger Rail, we talked about it.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, Passenger Rail talked about it. So let me do this, Director Owen. Let me ask you to hold that point until Passenger Rail makes its presentation.

Director Owen: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Because it's news to me and that would be another discussion item. Okay. So, does anyone else have an opinion about now or later? I'm holding mine until last.

Director Dyll: Can we, again, describe now versus later? What's now and what's later?

Chairperson Lewis: So, the conversation is whether we would begin to talk with all our member entities now about doing their resolution, I guess it would be resolution creating the Bylaws change, so that we can do the BRT and other technologies that we just got through the legislative session. The contrast to that would be to wait until we had a specific project that we were pursuing before we go and try to get that approval.

Director Dyll: I think, in my talks with the judge's office—and Director Beeson might add to this or take away, but it would probably be now. We talked about big things and nothing in specific, but things like separating freight traffic from retail traffic. So that's awfully ambitious, and my recollection of the conversation was, "Well, it's great. We want to be ambitious." So, we don't need to get down to the color of the car, etc., etc., that minutiae. They're just for the GCRD doing more now. Now Ron... Director Beeson, is that your recollection?

Director Beeson: That is consistent with my recollection.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, okay. Alright. Anybody who's on the...

Director Ross: I'd also say—this is Director Ross again. It's going to take some time to cultivate some of these relationships. I mean, if we know the county judge of either county is not interested, well, that tells us, in passenger rail, well that tells us we need to get another avenue to these people. Maybe working through a commissioner, maybe working through a community leader, and maybe working through our freight side instead of our passenger side because I don't like the idea of reducing the scope of a regional entity. That's just not something... It's hard enough to get a regional entity and then to start reducing the scope for half of our mission and not the other half of our mission seems like we're cutting off our nose to spite our face. But it may take some time to say, "Who knows the commissioner in Montgomery County who has most of the freight rail activity?" And let's go talk to him about why it's important they be a part of Gulf Coast Rail District, an active part, and let that commissioner then go work with the county judge and the other commissioners instead of us trying to solve something and they're wondering, well, who we are and why we're selling it.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright. Makes sense. Anybody on BlueJeans that hasn't spoken and would like to weigh in on this conversation?

Director Robinson: Well, Carol, let me weigh in. We talked about this extensively in the Legislative and I've run this by several attorneys associated with the county. Basically, the formation of the Gulf Coast Rail District, once the enabling statute was originally passed, it started with a resolution adopted by Harris County Commissioners Court and the Houston City Council, setting out who the desired members were. Then those entities all separately passed resolutions joining, and basically, that established the structure. Logically, if we're going to go ahead and move forward with redesignating to then incorporate the new legislative mandate, to me the logical starting place is to go back to Houston City Council, Harris County Commissioners Court, have them adopt your resolutions inviting the same entities to join. If Galveston and Montgomery choose not to join, then they just won't be members of the reconstituted Gulf Coast Rail District organization. Now, I also had an extensive conversation with Tom Lambert. METRO, we're certainly willing to be a full participating member and pay the membership fee, but that would need to be included in the adopting resolution from Houston City Council and Harris County Commissioners Court. If that were to occur, METRO would be certainly willing to become a full participating member, not just an ex-officio member.

Chairperson Lewis: I think that's all very fascinating. And so, I think we would love to figure out how we talk about that and explore it a little more in depth. I think that's a very interesting background history and presentation of the sequence of events. So, anybody else who's on the BlueJeans have any comments? Alright. So, I think that basically, as we've talked about this, the sort of ball is sort of leaning toward now. The thing that I would add to that as a point of reference, and I always talk about this a lot... I recognize that I'm appointed by the Mayor of the City of Houston. He has essentially another year-and-a-halfie on his term. The next mayor may not appoint me. And so, we're talking about if we don't do it now, we don't know who will follow and if they can describe the "why" and the "why" is important. And so, I think that in addition to all that's been said, the energy that we have... We have a lot of energy having come off of a successful item in the legislature. I mean, that was no small feat. It was a big deal. And so, it's sort of like we should ride that horse, because the horse is still running, right? So don't let the horse slow down and get tied up in the barn and then be taken out and try to start all over again. The other piece is that— with the exception of the Harris County Mayors and Galveston and Montgomery, we have representative support that went into the legislative session from each of those bodies. Now we did not have Fort Bend as a county, but I think we had conversations, Mayor Owen, with commissioners in Fort Bend County. So, I think that from a sort of a head-nod perspective, the only folks that were not with us when we went to the legislature would have been Montgomery, Galveston, and the City of Houston Mayors. And I would say the City of Houston Mayors, just because we didn't go and talk to them. I feel like we probably actually could have gotten support there, we just never reached out to them.

So, I think to sum that all up, not doing anything formal, but I think if we just sort of agree to head-nod that we would probably pursue now. And I think the pieces that marry to that, Rich, to what you were saying, which is hugely important, is that when Director Gonzalez makes her report, you'll see that she's got on the plate for us going to each of our entities with something in hand that describes where we've been and where we're going. Not in specifics, right? Not the color of concrete, but sort of the vision. So, appreciate that. I think that kind of gets us to a place where we've got a marching order from our Bylaws Committee.

Director Muller: I do think though, to Director Ross's point earlier... This is Rich Miller speaking. I do think that when we go to these entities, it's not enough to talk about the new powers that we've got. I do think we need to go to them with the freight rail study and make sure

they understand that while the BRT is something that we want to do and want to pursue, the freight rail issues that were addressed in the study are also things that we want to do. And I think that Director Ross's comment about maybe that's how we get Galveston and Montgomery County involved in our organization is to focus on that. I'm happy to have those conversations since I'm, "Hey, look. I'm the representative of one of the surrounding counties, this is why you need to be there." Get Judge Duhon maybe to come along with that. Because the freight rail piece is just as important of a piece, in my mind, as the commuter BRT-type stuff. And so, we don't want them to think that we're kind of switching to being a super METRO, I don't think, my opinion. And I know we don't have Judge Duhon on today, but Mayor Owen, do you agree with that? We lost him?

Chairperson Lewis: We knew he had another engagement that he was going to be in and out.

Director Muller: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: But I will say this...

Director Owen: I'm still here. I was muted, but yes, I agree with you, Rich. Yes, I do.

Director Muller: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: And I will say that obviously Judge Duhon is not here, but he already volunteered and offered to do exactly what you were saying with particularly Montgomery.

Director Ross: And I would also include our private partners in this. And we have them, we have the railroads. They could certainly talk to what their value is in Galveston, Montgomery counties better than any of us probably.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Ross: And I would also not say we're looking at BRT. I would say what 1990 does is allows us to look at things other than commuter rail. That's actually what that bill says. It could be BRT or five years from now there could be an autonomous bus system or an autonomous vehicle system—that none of us have pictured yet, that's running down a dedicated track and we just don't know. Well, right now, we're limited to even considering it.

Director Muller: Yes.

Director Ross: So, I think the issue about, "Well, what's it going to look like?" and stuff like that—well, you tell me. What's your phone going to do five years from now? Can you tell me? No, but it's going to maybe still be a phone.

Chairperson Lewis: Well, and I will tell you, and again, Director Robinson knows that METRO is looking at exactly the kind of thing you talked about. They're doing... It's a consortium of metros and I think Southwest Research Association or something that's doing exactly what you're saying and looking at those kinds of things.

Director Ross: I read an article yesterday about a... I think it's in Germany or someplace, where they put electrical lines over highway.

Chairperson Lewis: I saw that too.

Director Ross: And the trucks come by and when they get to that system, they raise a bus off the top of their truck that hooks up to the electrical system and their diesel engines shut off and they become a non-polluting vehicle at that point. Well, who knows? We just don't know what it's going to look like 5 or 10 years from now or 15 years from now. And so, we need to keep that flexibility open for ourselves, which is what 1990 does.

Chairperson Lewis: So true. Alright. Director Muller, anything else from Bylaws?

Director Muller: No, ma'am.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, perfect. Thank you. Great discussion. Yes, Bruce Mann. I'm just saying this is Director Mann. Go ahead.

Director Mann: I pulled up the Texas Transportation Code really quick and was just looking at it. And it covers adding people to the District. It actually doesn't cover taking someone off.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Mann: So, we might need to look at that.

Director Muller: We've actually looked at that or we talked about it, and the concern I've got with all this discussion is the way I read it, since there's no way to make somebody leave us, that you have to have a unanimous approval of all the entities that created us to add this power. Now, we can do the, "Okay, we dissolve and reconstitute," might be the way to do it. But I think at this point, you got to get everybody to sign off on a new resolution that gives us the power.

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Mann: Yes, I think so too.

Director Muller: So, I agree with you, Bruce. I think that's my reading too.

Director Ross: And again, Director Ross, I think asking entities to leave is the worst idea of all the ones we've talked about.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Alright, thank you. So, the next presentation's going to be Legislative and Funding Committee. Director Robinson, please?

Director Robinson: Alright. Can you hear me okay?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, we can hear you.

Director Robinson: Alright. Basically, I've already covered in my comments of what we've talked about. We met on July 21st with myself, Director Muller, Director Beeson, and Executive Director Parker participating in the call. We had a lot of discussion about the history of how Gulf Coast Rail District came to be founded, and we also talked about that we don't want to forget our traditional responsibilities in dealing with improving grade separations because that has such a

tremendous impact on the movement of traffic, freight, and people in the entire Greater Houston Area. And then also we fear that freight traffic may increase even more with the upcoming merger between Canadian Northern and Kansas City Southern. At least Canadian Northern has indicated they intend to send a lot more traffic directly south to Houston. So, things are going to get worse before they get better in that grade crossing area.

But again, our primary discussion was about how do we go about... what's the best way to approach getting a new legislative mandate ratified by the member jurisdictions and getting Montgomery and Galveston either to participate or drop out. Interestingly, my understanding is that there has been discussion with the county judge in Montgomery County and he's indicated he has no interest at all. So, they might just say... So, if you ask them, they might write a letter to say we no longer participate. That would end that problem if such were the case. I just don't know now if anybody has talked to the Galveston County judge, so I have no answers in that regard. But basically, that covers what we discussed.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, thank you. I want to just mention that I did reach out to the Galveston County judge when I first became chair—let's just say his office, I never spoke to him. There was... I don't want to say... We didn't actually talk about interests. That's the way I should say it—that we didn't talk about interests. We talked about them appointing someone to serve on the board and there was pushback about that. That's the good way for me to describe that—there was pushback about naming someone, and then the conversation, we didn't have anymore.

So, I do think that what Director Ross said should be our starting point. I think we should probably make entree to Montgomery and Galveston with conversation about our wholeness—about what we are. We're not just about passenger services. We are indeed about multimodal and paying attention to the freight side of things—and maybe pulling in our UP and BN partners in those conversations. And then if in fact there really is continued indication of lack of interest, then we would maybe investigate the step two, that if they really don't want to be a part, then they should have the option to withdraw. And so that makes sense to me as an approach, is to start with trying to interest them in what we're doing and see where we can get. And again, calling on all of those who might assist in that pursuit. Do you have any contacts there?

Director Dyll: I do not.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Just thought I'd ask if Director Dyll had any contacts in Galveston. I was really thinking Galveston in specific, being on that kind of east side freight kind of leaning. Alright.

Director Ross: This is Director Ross. From my engineering career, I know that Ken Clark was really active in transportation issues. He's still a county commissioner in Galveston County. He's the northernmost commissioner, so he's closest to the Houston port. There's a commissioner down there who's representing the Port of Galveston which undoubtedly has train service. And so, we ought to be, I think, looking at it that way and not going to a county judge who this is not necessarily on his horizon at all.

Chairperson Lewis: Well, Ken Clark is the Chair of TPC right now.

Director Ross: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: So that's a good person to begin conversation with.

Director Ross: Yes. Another thing is the Mayor of Houston doesn't change for two-and-a-half years; it's January of 2024 is when they take the oath.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. I forgot we don't have two-year terms. I just forgot it just that quickly. I forgot that we no longer have two-year terms.

Director Ross: And unless this organization becomes the focus of the election, which I doubt, it's unlikely they're going to replace the chairman in the first week or six months of a new mayor.

Chairperson Lewis: That's true. That's true, it usually takes a while.

Director Ross: Particularly if the county judge gets reelected because that's who you're appointed... you're appointed by two of them to be the chairman. So, you're not off the hook yet.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright. Well, I appreciate that lookup, but I still recognize that I serve at the pleasure of someone and realize that at any point in time, I may not be sitting in this chair. It's sort of like anything we need to do, we need to...

Director Ross: Do it now.

Chairperson Lewis: ... strike while the iron is hot. Isn't that the saying? So, as Jeff just let us know, it might be hot a little longer than I was thinking.

Director Ross: Madam Chair, this is Director Ross again. As we've had this conversation, it seems to me we need to figure out where we want to sort of focus our ownership of this effort—whether it's in one of our existing committees or whether we want to set up an ad hoc committee to try and move this through because this is a highly political effort and it's not so much the nuts and bolts as it is a political effort. And you might want to consider how we want to do this.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Let's talk about that. Ideas? Thoughts?

Director Mann: I just want to comment really quick. It's for the board and Tyson. It's Director Mann.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, this is Mann, go ahead Mann.

Director Mann: So just when I look at the Houston Beaumont freight rail study, Montgomery County surely has projects that are on that list. Tyson, just FYI, I didn't see anything from Galveston, so you may want to talk about that at you guys' next meeting, because there ought to be a project in Galveston County somewhere. But it's a freight rail district, it's not just a commuter rail district, so I would be hesitant to start to try to take people off, realizing that it's also a freight rail district and it crosses all of these counties.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I think if I could say, I agree with your statement, but you do, I guess, sort of embrace or fully see that the only reason there's discussion about allowing them to opt out is because they're choosing not to opt in.

Director Mann: Right. And I think that's why I'm saying that they have projects that are on the rail study, the Houston Beaumont Rail Study, so if they have an interest in those projects advancing, they need to be part of the conversation.

Chairperson Lewis: So, has anybody from Montgomery County participated in the study as everything has progressed because there's a big team?

Director Mann: Tyson, have you guys worked within anybody from Montgomery County as you put that study together?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Not specifically. I'm not sure if HNTB would have reached out directly. Any of those projects that may have come up would have come from public data that they would have mined and then I think they applied a list of about 100 of the at-grade, the top at-grade crossings, right, for improvements. They narrowed that down to the top 50. And then out of the top 50, picked 20 that they felt that they could come up with realistic engineering design and solutions. There were some within that top 50 that were too complicated in order to consider within this study. And so, what they did for those that are more complicated because of right-of-way, utilities, or whatever that might be, they'd still have the recommendation to maybe have a future study, right, through like H-GAC or potentially run by TxDOT or other agencies then. But I don't have the insight per say, Bruce, as far as who all HNTB then reached out to directly there. At the end of the day, their proposals or concepts that they're trying to introduce and give some merit and benefit-cost analysis to them.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright.

Director Ross: Madam Director. This is Director Ross. Looking at that study on page three, they show a map.

Chairperson Lewis: Let me do it this way, because one of the things that I do is I try to keep us focused on where we are. So, what I was actually thinking as Tyson was talking is what if we go ahead and move Roadway/Railway discussion to now? Director Robinson, did you have anything else from Legislative and Funding?

Director Robinson: No, ma'am.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So, because we're starting to talk about that and we're into it and Director Ross is pulling out his graphic, I'm thinking let's just go to that section. And then that way, that conversation will come up in sort of the sequence that I'm thinking would be sort of planning to talk about it, as opposed to use then kind of jumping around a little bit. So, if no objection to that, we'll... Okay, let's roll you all because we're not scheduled for lunch until 12:00. They haven't brought it. So, we've got time to do this. We might end up ending early. Railway/Roadway, Director Mann, can you take it and then just continue from where you and Tyson are talking? And then Director Ross, does that allow you to hold your point or do you want to make your point?

Director Ross: Yes, I'm fine.

Chairperson Lewis: Alrighty, okay. Alright. So, Director Mann, are you kind of ready to take it from here?

Director Mann: I don't know if it was me or Michael.

Chairperson Lewis: No, it was you. Oh! Oh! Your name is on the agenda, but do you want to do it? Do you want to lead the conversation?

Director Dyll: I do not. It was so long ago when we talked about it.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright.

Director Dyll: There were so many topics discussed.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So...

Director Dyll: Bruce, do you remember our takeaways from the conversation or synthesize them? I felt like we went over a lot.

Director Mann: No, I was deferring to you because I thought maybe you remember them. I think there were two things that I kind of remember. The first one was, in large part, we were really going to look at, for rail, we were really looking to this Houston Beaumont freight rail study to kind of provide a roadmap for rail projects. They're looking at aggregating rail crossings, railroad improvement projects. And Tyson said this, I think, they were really looking at projects that had public benefits to really try to give them a path forward to get stuff done. And I think when that's in a final form—and it's getting close, I think that's something we can just pick up and start to try to advocate for.

And then the second thing was the roadway projects and I think most of you are aware... I think I presented this to the board, there's some new people now, I don't know, maybe a year ago. About five years ago, there was a group of us that got together. We got together Harris County, Precinct 2, the mayors in the port region, EHCMA, Economic Reliance, and others—I'm forgetting now, but we sat down and said, "Hey, what are the critical projects for freight movement in the port region?" We came up with a list of 32 projects. Unlike most lists, this one actually had priorities on it—high, medium, low, short-term, medium-term, long-term. So that was done about five years ago. We just started the process to update that list because there's some of the projects that have been done on it, there's been a lot of movement on almost all of the TxDOT projects that were on that list.

And just so you guys were aware, before we kind of created this list, there wasn't really a repository of, "Hey, here's the port and freight projects that need to get done." There was no real conversation about it, they were one-offs. We put together this list. Out of this list came the PEL. The Planning and Environmental Linkage Study for State Highway 225 came out of this, putting together this list. The 330 connectivity between 146 and I-10, that project got elevated as an outcome of putting together this list and some other projects also. So, we're actually starting to refresh the list and I think that will also kind of serve as a guide for, "Hey, here's the important roadway projects in the region." So, at the end of this, you'll have grade separations, rail projects, and road projects for the region. The road projects are primarily freight-related since we're a freight district. But I think at the end of it, you'll have three really good lists and a path forward.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. So, for me, I don't know... Director Ross, do you still have a point you want to make?

Director Ross: Yes, my point is on this TxDOT study, which I didn't know HNTB did it. It really doesn't matter, but on page three—the map, they don't even show Montgomery County being part of the study.

Chairperson Lewis: You're right, they don't.

Director Ross: And then in their list, they have some Montgomery County projects, which is the middle of the three columns that identify places. The right one is city and the left one is the railroad subdivision, I guess. And they show none in Galveston County itself. They show several in the Galveston subdivision, which is a railroad designation, I believe. So just to let everybody know that even TxDOT hasn't presented themselves as looking at Montgomery County interests, but they've identified projects in Montgomery County.

Director Mann: I think that was an oversight because if you go to page 20, they certainly show Montgomery County on the map. So, there's just some disalignment in the regions that they're covering in the maps. Tyson, if you could take that back to them too.

Director Ross: Yes, I think that's a good point, Director Mann. And they should change the map on page three to reflect that, I think.

Director Muller: This is Director Muller. This looks like kind of a summary of the study. Do we have the full study at this point or is that still in process?

Chairperson Lewis: Did you hear the question, Director Mann?

Director Mann: It's not a final study. It's still in draft.

Chairperson Lewis: It's not a final study, it's still in draft.

Director Muller: Is that available to us or not available yet?

Chairperson Lewis: So, would we be able to get the draft?

Director Mann: I think Director Ross probably has the same thing I have which is a 23-page PowerPoint presentation.

Chairperson Lewis: No. The question...

Director Ross: We all have that.

Chairperson Lewis: The question from Director Muller is could Gulf Coast Rail District get the version of the entire report in draft form? Is it H-GAC or TxDOT that's got sort of the say-so on release?

Director Mann: H-GAC funded this, right, Tyson?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: No. So, on this one, TxDOT has funding this one. And Dr. Lewis, we can have you or Bruce send a request to Chad Coburn for the draft version there. I think HNTB should be either to Chad and/or Brent Kyler with HNTB. HNTB is doing this study here. I think it should be to a point with you guys as a major stakeholder to have a draft form, but not for any kind of public distribution. Right? Until TxDOT then publishes, because it is sensitive, before it gets to the final version so that there aren't different versions floating out within the public on that. I think it's to a point that that's reasonable. You guys have the stakeholder there.

Chairperson Lewis: So, Katherine would be the one who would look at it, Director Muller. Would there be something... And, of course, Director Mann and Dyll, is there something you'd specifically like them to be examining?

Director Muller: Well, I mean just to the point that Director Ross made earlier, how this is presented. Keep in mind that this document... And Tyson, when were they planning to finalize the report? Because at the end of the day when we're going... Go ahead, I'm sorry.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. It's taking them a little bit longer to just kind of do some of the final edits. And when I say final edits, it should be pretty close to being done but then if there's additional input from Rail District and other stakeholders, then there might be minor modifications that still need to be done, like you're referencing with the counties there. And you may have some additional questions, right?

Director Muller: Yes. So, to Director Ross's point earlier, I mean, when we go to the other stakeholders—Galveston County, Montgomery County, this is the document we're going to be handing them to say, "This is why you need to be a part of our organization." Right? We don't want a document to have something like we just discovered that would potentially alienate Montgomery County or Galveston County. I mean, if I'm Montgomery County and Galveston County, I'm looking at this and saying, "There's nothing in this for me. Why am I here?"

Chairperson Lewis: Right

Director Ross: Right.

Director Muller: And that may or may not be true.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, got it.

Director Mann: Tyson, you might be the best person to get this feedback to them. There really ought to be a Galveston County Project on the list, somewhere.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. Like I said, that was all numbers-driven and by the profiles that they pulled there. I think when you go to Galveston County, actually some of the proposed rail projects would probably actually improve some of the blocked crossings that they might encounter. But there's less density of those at-grade crossings. And that, I don't know if you have any opportunities because of the relative proximity of I-45 and the main line that goes down through there as well.

Director Mann: Right.

Director Muller: Well, and the other thing...

Mr. Tyson Moeller: What I'll do is I'll send a note to Chad and Brent after this discussion here and I'll copy you in, Bruce, just for good measure so you know it's been sent. Then kind of see where they're at and try to get a more official timeline, because if they do need to pull all the stakeholders back together—all of us back into the same room, right, and kind of talk through the study and kind of what some of their findings are. Like you said, if there's some additional modifications that need to be made before it's finally published.

Director Muller: Yes, the one thing that—I don't know who mentioned this earlier... that concerns me is you had grade-separated crossings that were considered and then dismissed because of some funding criteria or scoring criteria. If you haven't gone to the counties and said, "Would you participate in those costs?" then you might have dropped a project off the list that was a high, important project to say Montgomery County that they would be prepared to help fund. Anyway, that's why I wanted to see the whole report was I'm really more interested in the ones that they didn't consider and why as opposed to the ones that made the top 20.

Chairperson Lewis: I think that's a very interesting point in terms of how the scoring happened. And I'll mention this both for Tyson and Director Mann, just sort of an FYI. Director Beeson, Katherine, and I decided that we wanted to talk to Judge Emmett because he's sort of a freight guru of our region. And so, we just wanted to get some guidance and thought from him and talked about this. The top 50 sites were presented to—I don't remember who, I can't remember exactly what group it was as we were on Zoom, and we got to see the preliminary report that we were talking about. And so, for me—Ms. Gulf Coast Rail District, the first thing I noticed was that the Mykawa grade separation... you know the Mykawa/Long, that to me is huge and that I don't know in 2012 was listed by TxDOT as the number one grade crossing in the state fell to number 9. So, we were talking to Judge Emmett about this, because this is bothering me, and I mentioned it on the call. What was the criteria that made this grade separation drop from 1 to 9? So, they go through the criteria and Judge Emmett immediately says, "Well, was one of the criteria the traffic volume?" and the answer is, "Yes." Well, what happens? When you have a grade separation...

Director Muller: It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Chairperson Lewis: Exactly. When you have a grade separation that's got all of these stops for traffic, people are not...

Director Muller: They don't use it.

Chairperson Lewis: I'm thinking they go another way. So, across the number of years, what's happened is that people don't go that way anymore.

Director Muller: But they would if it was...

Chairperson Lewis: But they would.

Director Muller: That's interesting. Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: So, the reason what you're saying is so important is that... and then I'll tell you the other thing because I also work with H-GAC on a bunch of stuff. They used to include matching as part of the project ranking but they don't anymore, because it made projects that were well-worth it but in entities that didn't have money, it made them fall off the list. And so, the projects that are getting done were the ones that the city had money and the counties had money. And so, if Chambers had a really good project but couldn't come to the table with match, their project that was well-needed was get... If it was high in the ranking but then it gets a drop because it doesn't have a match, so they don't do that anymore, but it still is in the list that you can kind of consider that.

So, the point is, the point you're making is that we probably really want to go back and take a look at that list and see if some of the projects, whether Montgomery or if there was anything... I'm hearing you, Tyson, that it's hard to get a grade separation in Galveston—that's how I'm going to sum up what you just said, but that may not be true of projects in Montgomery or some of the others in Harris, like Mykawa falling from 1 to 9. So, I think it is going to be important for us to take a look at that.

And then I guess my question to you all as a committee would be... we're hearing what you're giving as the top two, so I wrote down that you've got the two things that you all talked about. So, the real question that I'm asking is from September 1, 2021 to August 2022, when we're sitting here again a year from now, what is it that you want us to have worked on? What is that across this year we should be doing to advance the cause of freight on GCRD's agenda?

Director Mann: Yes, I'm sorry as I forgot a third thing. While you were talking, I remembered it, so the third thing was... And it really starts to answer your question, is the Rail District potentially being the... alternative freight movement, like freight shuttle...

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Mann: ...which takes freight off of the road and reduces congestion, improves air quality, extends the life of TxDOT assets because you're not pounding the bridges with trucks. So that was another thing, especially when you look at the Federal Infrastructure Bill and they're really driving towards some of the issues that freight shuttle helps solve. That's another thing, getting the Rail District behind that and trying to help push that along from a policy and public perspective.

Chairperson Lewis: So, that is awesome. Let me say that from my other hat at TSU, I learned that apparently, FRA may have a research opportunity to look at automated trains somewhere in the United States. So, mind click-click-clicks, starts wondering is there a way we could do that in a sort of a demonstration for a freight shuttle? Maybe from the port to, I don't know, Eureka? I don't know. Obviously, I just pulled that out of my head but...

Director Muller: It runs on regular roads or it...

Chairperson Lewis: Runs on the freight tracks...

Director Muller: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: It's automated, so it doesn't have a driver, a conductor.

Director Mann: So, here's the challenge with that. In the last Infrastructure Bill, they actually defined freight shuttle as a highway project.

Chairperson Lewis: Right. Right, I hear you. And I like what you're saying, so I do want to talk about the freight shuttle. But I just wanted to bring that up in that vein, because when you say freight shuttle that opens my mind to what Jeff was kind of talking about in terms of what could GCRD be doing that's outside the box of normal, and so freight shuttle is one of those things. Potentially, automated freight could be one of those things. So, consider that a side bar, to my attorney. And so go back to talking about the freight shuttle on highway, Director Mann. How could we do that? Should we hire a consultant and start looking at that? What should we do?

Director Mann: We, the port, are having conversations with them again. Probably four years ago, we did a MOU/MOA with them.

Chairperson Lewis: Who is them? Clarification on who is them?

Director Mann: Freight Shuttle... Freight Shuttle.

Chairperson Lewis: So, Freight Shuttle is an organization?

Director Mann: Yes, I think it's called FSX now. They've come a little bit further along in their technology and found a way to get some of the costs down. So, it's becoming more of a viable technology. I think probably the first step is maybe having them come back again to the Rail District, because we've got new people on the board now, and just presenting again what freight shuttle is, what their technology is, what their value proposition is, why we should support it—we, the Rail District. That's probably the first place to start and I'm sure that conversation will generate a good discussion on the board about what we could or might want to do.

Chairperson Lewis: Questions from anybody else because I don't want to sort of dominate right now? Anybody else? Anybody on...

Director Beeson: This is Director Beeson. I think it'd be a great idea for a refresh presentation on technology capabilities, even where they've had success before, and maybe that'll align with the opportunity that you mentioned for an FRA-funded pilot.

Director Ross: This is Director Ross. I concur with that, and I'd also be interested in what the impacts of freight shuttle would be on the rail system as they go through Montgomery, potentially Montgomery and Galveston Counties, so that we have another piece to put in front of those elected officials.

Chairperson Lewis: And that really does begin to ring, because if the railroad opportunities are not that big in Galveston, the same is not true of the freight. The freight opportunities are still big. So, Bruce, just remind us right quick. On the freight shuttle, did they build a separate roadway structure for trucks or for the conveyance? Because it's not a truck necessarily that's on it, right? It's an automated conveyance?

Director Mann: Right. I think we've probably all been to Disney, whatever it is, Disneyland/Disneyworld where they have the monorail elevated highway. So, it's kind of like monorail for containers.

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Mann: But for this to really work, it's got to be high-density, low-distance.

Chairperson Lewis: It's got to be? Say it again, I'm sorry. High density, low distance, right? A combination of high density, low distance. So, you don't want it to be far, is that it?

Director Mann: Yes, you're not going to build this all the way to Dallas.

Chairperson Lewis: So, the port to Eureka... Well, you wouldn't do it to... Maybe you would do it to Eureka.

Director Ross: Some freight yard.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, but something kind of short, right?

Director Mann: Yes. So, the thought process today is really connecting the two container terminals and getting over to Chambers County where you have Walmart, Red Bull, and KTN. There's this high density in truck movement... Exxon up at Mount Belvieu.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright. So that would be an I-10 reliever, not an I-45 reliever, right?

Director Mann: I-10, yes. And really, the reason you want to start thinking about something like this is not just what volume are we moving today but what volume potential there is in the future because...

Chairperson Lewis: Absolutely.

Director Mann: ...when you complete segments at H&I and Grand Parkway, that's going to lead to more industrial development, warehousing, distribution. So, if you've got freight shuttle headed that way already, it's not a big leap to extend it to those other warehouses and distribution facilities.

Director Ross: And those pieces of the Grand Parkway go into and through Montgomery County...

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Director Muller?

Director Muller: I'm going to ask a question. It will probably open a can of worms, but is there a reason why Brazoria County is not a member of this organization?

Chairperson Lewis: So, I cannot answer that question. It's an interesting one. I cannot answer why they're not. That would be a Maureen Crocker question/answer.

Director Muller: Anybody know?

Chairperson Lewis: But what I can tell you with fair surety is that they're not interested in coming in.

Director Muller: Why do you say that?

Chairperson Lewis: Because I know Judge Sebesta fairly well. We've talked to him about—not the Gulf Coast Rail District, but we've talked to him about passenger things coming into the urbans. Let me just say it so that it's clear. Conversations are from the perspective of the Transportation Advocacy Group, which I was co-chair of last year, and he just wasn't... I mean, he's really into transportation but there's no interest in linking in with the METRO in any way.

Director Muller: Well, yes and I...

Chairperson Lewis: From that standpoint. They just started transit from Brazoria down to... They've got their own transit entity now that's doing Brazoria and Galveston, but...

Director Muller: The only reason I ask is I don't know how you can have a conversation about freight in this region without Brazoria County and Port Freeport being part of the conversation.

Chairperson Lewis: That's a very interesting statement.

Director Muller: And what made me think about it was the automated freight shuttle or the most logical... I won't say the most logical, but they have been trying to figure out how to get freight from the port up to Spur 10 in Fort Bend County for years. I mean that has been a huge, huge topic, because right now, they're just on the roads and they're destroying the roads and all that. So, I mean, if there's an easy place to do it and I say easy in the sense of it's undeveloped or fairly rural still—that would be the place I would look at is how do you get from Port Freeport up to Spur 10 using something other than a traditional railroad because they've tried to do a spur... and Mayor Owen may have some better background on that than me. And maybe that's a conflict with Port of Houston and that's why they're not part of it. So, I'm just trying not to step on a land mine here, but I would ask is that a conversation we should have? Not on the passenger side but on the freight side?

Chairperson Lewis: I can't answer that by any stretch of the imagination. What I can say is that Port Freeport and Brazoria are very active in H-GAC. And so, they may feel that their needs are met through Houston-Galveston Area Council and that they... I'm making this up. That they've put... let me not make... Let me say what I know for sure. I know that they participate in full in H-GAC. Now this part I'm making up, so they may not feel that they have a void.

Director Muller: The other question you had asked was what would you hope we accomplish in the next year.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Muller: And I will give you my concrete answer.

Chairperson Lewis: Love that.

Director Muller: There's 59 projects identified in this study. I just want us to find one and go get it started—just one.

Chairperson Lewis: Find one, okay.

Director Muller: And by that I mean figure out how this organization can advance one of these projects with our partners financially... We've got the power to sell bonds. We've got entities that have money that want to spend on... I mean, find a project that is near and dear to somebody's heart. We got 59 of them. There's got to be one that we can show as a proof of concept. This is how this entity can help get these projects done.

Chairperson Lewis: I love that idea. And the thing that I would add, and I've always thought this, Director Mann, as we listen to what's going on with the freight rail study, is that some of these projects are going to be taken on by TxDOT. Some by whomever. And so, what may make sense for us, GCRD, is something that would be what Director Muller is talking about, that's important but it didn't get picked up by somebody else. So that's kind of always been in my head as we've looked at this. H-GAC's whole reason for doing this is so that they can figure out what TxDOT will pick up and do.

Director Muller: Yes. And you had asked me when I came onboard, my background is in putting together funding for these types of projects. What I would ask all of the members of the board to do is figure out from your appointing body's perspective, whether you're talking to the elected officials or however you want to figure it out, what would be their top priority. Because one of the things I think would be interesting in talking with TxDOT about is... And we've seen this work very well on the road side of things with TxDOT, is if the county will pay for the design and if the county will get the right-of-way acquired, which is something counties are really good at doing... and I say counties, maybe cities as well, right? And so, they hand TxDOT a shovel-ready project—it's designed, it's approved, the right-of-way is acquired. TxDOT just needs to go build it. That's a good way of getting projects done and it's a good way of forcing the counties to have a little skin in the game.

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Muller: And with the Rail District being able to be the financial vehicle, and depending on what comes out of the infrastructure... I mean, I just think there's an opportunity here. So again, I would just say let's just find one and let's come up with a model that works, that we can then replicate 58 more times. That's what I would hope we would accomplish.

Chairperson Lewis: I love that idea.

Director Mann: I think to that point when you look at the road freight projects, TxDOT has a lot of money. We point out a project is important. TxDOT starts to do something on it, right? I think the struggle has been really the county projects because in the end, freight doesn't vote, right? So, if I've got a freight project and a commuter project, the commuter project is going to get pushed by the county, and they should—they're responsive to the voters. But what happens is that development of those freight projects doesn't happen and then they can't go compete for grants because the development of the projects hasn't been done. So, if we did nothing else but provided funding for the development of some county freight projects—counties, not just Harris County—but county projects, I think that would go a long way towards helping get some of the county freight projects funded because there's a vehicle to get that done. The legislature created a rider program that funds port connectivity and it's only for road projects primarily. So, if we could find a way to help the counties in some of these freight projects, that would be huge.

Director Muller: Just in terms of is it a freight project or is it a commuter project or is it a road project, I mean, if you do a freight project that saves the voters' drive time, they don't care that you helped out the railroad because they perceive it as you helped out them, right?

Director Mann: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Mann: Yes, I think the challenge has really traditionally been most of the freight projects are on roads that aren't as commuter-heavy. An example is Sheldon Road between Jacintoport and Market Street just off of I-10. Sheldon runs north-south and it connects kind of Jacintoport area which is just north of the ship channel by the Beltway. They want to widen Sheldon Road from Jacintoport all the way up to Market to four lanes. Well, there's no commuters on there. It's primarily a freight road and it's probably a \$18 million project because you've got pipelines to move. That's where they struggle, right? It's not going to get funded by H-GAC, so they struggle to fund the development of it because they don't have a funding source for it outside of the county paying for it.

Director Ross: This is Director Ross. I think this discussion reinforces the interest to go visit with whoever produced this report and go through these kinds of things. Because as Bruce just talked about Sheldon Road, that's similar to what you're talking about on Mykawa. If there were a grade separation, would there be more vehicle traffic?

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Ross: Right above that on this list is Richmond Avenue at the UP Railroad. Well, I don't know who's not paying attention, but Afton Oaks killed that project at least three times now, a METRO project, city projects. Somebody's got to pull something out of the hat to make it be viable on this list or it's just not going to work, because the people in Afton Oaks don't want that grade separation.

Chairperson Lewis: Well, from what I understand and I'm going to let Tyson click in here. One grade separation for that doesn't really do you. You've got, what is it—San Felipe, Westheimer, and Richmond? And so, the three of them. You do one, well, why? I guess at that point, everybody could leave... If you do Richmond, everybody could get off at Westheimer and just go to Richmond because they knew they'd never get stopped on the train. So, you've created another issue.

Director Ross: Exactly right. Which is why Afton Oaks doesn't want it.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, right. No, they actually don't want the structure, period. Alright. Alright, perfect. Anything else? Any other discussion on Roadway/Railway? Anything else Director Dyll, Director Mann?

Director Dyll: Yes, no, that was the last part of Bruce's summarization was my big takeaway from what we're trying to do, it's just move freight in and out of Houston as easily as possible. It's a mistake to pit freight and people against each other because moving freight in and out of Houston and on its own tracks, for example, improves safety, air quality, everything—it's for the people, naturally. That was my big takeaway on that. Freight centers off-site, the railroads

helping out more or providing more traffic up to Dallas. I'm sure they'd love more business, right, Tyson?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes.

Director Dyll: Yes.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: We're in the business of growing volume. Yes, sir.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, here's what I've recorded as our three takeaways from Roadway/Railway. Because I like the idea of the proof of concept—for us to get the one project that we all kind of work independently with our appointing bodies, kind of talk through that, that'll be on our list when we go out and spread ourselves really thin as we go talk to everyone, but to get that one sort of proof of concept project. We want a presentation from the freight rail study folks, HNTB or somebody from TxDOT. I don't know if I said that correctly, I think I did—from the freight rail study. And then we want a presentation from the Freight Rail Shuttle people. And potentially, about this automated train. Tyson, are you all into that FRA automated vehicle thing? I know I just kind of probably did a pivot as I was trying to summarize what our takeaways were.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: We try to have some folks in the automated discussion.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright. Let me go back and be clear about what our takeaways are. The proof of concept, the freight rail study presentation—and those are kind of together and they're real things, the freight shuttle—we want a presentation on that also. So, I guess I've kind of married the things that are visionary. So, the freight rail shuttle is one thing that we clearly want a presentation on. Then I was also marrying that to information on this automated freight idea that FRA, I understand, will be funding as a research project. So now, Tyson, I was going to ask you about that. Do you all have your eyes on that at all or any care about that?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes, we do. Just because if you think about our infrastructure, our signal systems that we have to do diagnostics and preemption with local agencies for timing of lights and everything else, that we're left out of a lot of those conversations. If you're involved in those conversations, you want to try to have BNSF, UP, KSF involved or at the table, if we're not there, especially within the region.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright.

Director Ross: Madam Chair, this is Director Ross.

Director Mann: Tyson, we can go ahead and just you know... an automated train between Port Houston and Dallas, you can just go ahead and write that one down.

Director Ross: Run it through Waller County while you're doing it.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, goodness.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: ... wish list. I think what your group stated here as far as getting some proofs of concepts, I think it seems very logical. I think also if it's in and around... if there's

additional studies that we think they're of value, from Rail District, counties, or cities that we think we want to further explore, I have been successful working with the TxDOT Rail Division to get additional funding to move concepts further along that have public interest and benefits, that also have benefits to the railroad. And so, as we progress and look at the studies, then if there's more in depth studies or proofs of concepts that we want to go into, I have been successful in other parts of the state in talking to that. So, I'll be interested in working with you guys on that as we build our list of projects here.

Chairperson Lewis: Sounds great, thank you.

Director Ross: Madam Chair?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes?

Director Ross: This is Director Ross. I would suggest we start out with this review with TxDOT and HNTB on the freight rail study, because some of these may be pretty close to the finish line and just need a nudge to accomplish what Rich is talking about. Some of them may be held up by something we can specifically bring to the table, and that nudge accelerates them. And I wouldn't want to go out and talk to a bunch of other political leadership in the community about 59 projects without knowing first which ones are closest, which ones could we actually help happen best. And which ones have the greatest impact either on the freight side or on the driver's side, the surface user's side, because of the impending grade separation. So, we can have a reason why we're focused on these particular projects to go push them forward. And I think you've got to start there in order to be able to sell this to anybody.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, Alright, I hear that.

Director Mann: And I'm sorry, there was one other thing I forgot. My joke to Tyson made me remember it and that was do we, the Rail District, want to wade in and gage political pressure—sorry, Tyson—on UP to run train service from Port of Houston to Dallas to move containers to get those containers off of 45?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: You'd have to apply pressure to both UP and BNSF.

Director Mann: Yes.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: And we're a private entity, so I don't know what that political pressure really does. I mean, at the end of the day, we're facilitating markets. I don't know that that does as much good as direct conversations with the port and the railroads as well as the steamship lines and getting validation on the volumes.

Director Mann: And the reason I bring that up is because a lot of those benefits are public. It's reduced wear and tear on 45, it's air quality, it's congestion. There's huge public benefit for our region if UP runs that train service or BNSF.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Sure, I think I would turn that into political pressure into political incentives for the railroads then.

Director Mann: Yes. Yes, however, we want to engage it. Yes.

Chairperson Lewis: So, let me say from my standpoint that we'll put that on the think list, Bruce. Because I think it does bring up a lot of questions that we may not be fully ready to talk through today. The big one being what does it mean. Because the first one to me is, well, who do you pressure? What is the political—I'm sort of like Tyson... what is the political pressure to UP? And then does it actually work? How do you politically pressure a private entity to do something that they feel doesn't make them money? So, let's put that on our think list. Yes, put that on the think list for now. But clearly, it would benefit the region—and Jeff, Montgomery County—if we got more trucks off of I-45. So that would be nice. Alright, it is... I think we are ready to close out, if everybody agrees with me, our Roadway/Railway group. And it is 11:48. Ms. Patke, is our lunch here?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Yes, it is.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I would say it's a great time for us to take a break. Those of you who are on the BlueJeans, probably give us 15-20 minutes or so. And then you'll be able to hear us. I might want to turn the mic off so nobody can hear me chomping on a chip. But other than that, we'll be back in about 20 minutes. We won't take 30 but we'll take a little while and we'll get back in about 20 minutes.

Director Ross: Madam Chair?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes?

Director Ross: I've asked Lisa to distribute the list of six items for the Passenger Transportation Committee so everybody should be alert that she's going to try and send that out before we start after lunch.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, good. So, you're going to send it to them electronically, so they'll get it in email?

Ms. Lisa Patke: I'm going to try. If nothing else, I'll take a picture of it on my phone and send it out.

Director Ross: Yes, that'll work.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, alright. Alright, so you all who are on, look for something from Lisa. It's going to be six item list that Passenger Rail is going to speak from.

Director Ross: Yes, the photo is probably best, Lisa.

Chairperson Lewis: It's 12:15, so we're ready to flip back on. I think for those of you who are on BlueJeans, we're probably five minutes beyond our verbal time I said we'd start, but we're not too off here. So, we're going to pick up with item 13. Director Gonzalez, are you on?

Director Gonzalez: Yes, I am.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect. Can you do the report, please, for the Marketing and Outreach Committee?

Director Gonzalez: Yes, thank you. So, the Marketing and Outreach Committee met last month, and we actually discussed quite a few things—the largest of those being our outreach to some of the more inactive counties. So that would include, for example, Galveston, and I know we've brought up this subject already. So, we do want to put together a strategy to reach out to these different inactive counties to give them—and of course, this is something we can discuss—whether we want to give them a final opportunity. Maybe they don't know exactly what we are doing, because there has been a turnover in their organizations, a new reintroduction to the board and what we are doing to connect with them. So that is something we can discuss.

We also talked about the outreach strategy in general. And what we're going to be working on is putting a list of stakeholders together, so that list would kind of be segmented to two different groups of stakeholders and that includes the entities that already know about us—like some of these counties that we know are already familiar with us, and then entities that we want to introduce ourselves to or that we can possibly get funding from. Obviously, we can talk about what we would want from certain agencies. But would like input from everyone once we start putting that list together of entities that we could reach out to and engage with and let them know who we are and what we're doing.

And then following that, we discussed having an annual report put together. And we're not talking any 10K, 20-page report or anything we would do. Probably a one-page front-and-back annual report to give an overview of what we've been doing throughout the year. For example, this year would include SB 1990, the H-GAC study, any updates on projects or updates from the committees, new board members, and a prospectus for 2022 to give an idea of what we're going to be working on moving forward.

So, our goal here is that by the September meeting, Katherine will be putting together a plan or a budget also for the updates to the website—just to modernize it a bit and make it a little more user-friendly and include more information that would give people an overview of what we do so that they're more easily able to understand that.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright. Questions, comments from other directors?

Director Ross: This is Director Ross. I think it's a good skeleton for a plan. Again, I would attach it to some specific things we're trying to do with the other committees as opposed to a generic about the organization. I'm not saying that's what Abby's applying. I'm just reinforcing we're going to go into this sort of lobbying effort to try and build some momentum for some programs—grade separations for freight rail, the authorization on Senate Bill 1990, and all this marketing/outreach needs to be focused on those avenues, those missions.

Director Gonzalez: Absolutely.

Director Dyll: This is Director Dyll, just following up on that. So, the website, we're looking at would be, I take it, very dynamic and have a news section and all of that?

Director Gonzalez: For the website?

Director Dyll: Right.

Director Gonzalez: Yes, and so if we're all able to look at the website and if you have any input, feel free to send that over to us. As mentioned, Katherine, by the September meeting, would be giving us an overview of what we're working with in terms of budget and what we can do. And we can go over everyone's input and recommendations to make sure that the website has everything that we feel is important as we go to talk to these different groups about who we are, that they can go and see this information on there too.

Director Dyll: Right. I can just weigh in on most of that right now, like Director Ross is talking about. What we have now is sort of a... I don't know, what would you call it? Like a brochure website, very static, there's no updates to it. If we had some more updates about what we're looking at and the different things we're doing, I think that'd be not just helpful but necessary.

Director Gonzalez: Yes, I think that would be good. Yes, I think if we had a tab even for upcoming projects or the projects that we're working on, I think that would be a lot better than what we currently have.

Director Dyll: Right, right.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I don't know if you all are kind of reading between what Director Gonzalez is saying but we're actually talking about hiring somebody to help with that, because I "think TTI actually did and is responsible for"... and this is in quotation marks for the transcript, but "responsible for the website." And so, we're looking at probably doing a little more with that. And we'll see what Katherine kind of finds out, but we do want it to be a little more dynamic and we need to update it more. And so, updating it, what does "updating it" mean? Updating? Well, it means somebody's got to do that. When you say it's going to be done, somebody has to do that and it's not necessarily free. So, I think she'll come back to us. Is it September, Director Gonzalez, that she's going to come with that presentation?

Director Gonzalez: Yes. Our goal is to, by the September meeting, have that information presented.

Chairperson Lewis: So that you all can look at it and see what our options are going forward. My other suggestion and we have to see what this actually means, because right now, we're .net and I really want us to modulate to .org. So, there's some things that have to be done. We have to find out does anybody have... I actually looked up gcrd.org one time and I do think it comes up with somebody, but I can't remember 100%. But anyway, we'd have to figure that out. So that too is going to be a part of what we're talking about doing over time.

So, did anybody have any other questions or comments for Director Gonzalez? You all obviously will see this annual report before anything formal happens to it. You'll get to see it in the draft and process stages to see what kind of comments you all may have for that. And I think we were thinking about... So let me just kind of mention too that in addition to Director Gonzalez, Katherine, myself, and then Andrea French from TAG is also a member of the Marketing Committee. So, she forwarded an annual report that TAG does, which is just a one-pager. And so, it's real fast, doesn't make any elected official have to read a lot. You can kind of flash through it and see what we've done and where we're going to TAG as an organization. Ours doesn't have to look exactly like that but that was just something, I think, that Abby might have been looking at when we had the meeting to sort of talk through this concept. So, it's easy

to talk from and as Director Ross is saying, if we have supplemental materials depending upon who we're talking with to put with it, this is just sort of an overview piece.

And so, I ask you all to think too. You know who our member entities are, but when we talk about this bigger outreach, who is that? I'm really just throwing this out right now. Maybe it's Amtrak, maybe it's EHCMA for sure, right? So other than that, who else would we put in our stakeholder list? So, folks that we would want to be able to talk to about what we do.

Director Gonzalez: Something to keep in mind and we'll be sure to share. Katherine had mentioned that she had a list of stakeholders that she sent to our new brochure to, so we'll just piggyback off of that and add to her existing list. So as soon as she shares that, if everyone could just keep that in mind and share other entities that we could make sure to reach out to, we can add them as well.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect.

Director Mann: Yes, I think if we're going to reach out and try to do something like freight shuttle or freight alternatives, your stakeholder list grows exponentially, right? Because now it's EHCMA, Economic Alliance, Shell, DuPont, Exxon, Dow, Lyondell, all of the chemical companies, all of the resin manufacturers, Walmart, that list got big quick.

Chairperson Lewis: So, Director Mann, if you can help with that list, that would be great.

Director Mann: Okay.

Chairperson Lewis: Awesome. Alright, so our takeaways from Marketing and Outreach are the annual report, the outreach stakeholders' list, and updating the website. Alright. Thank you so much, Director Gonzalez.

Director Gonzalez: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, we are now to Passenger Rail. Director Ross?

Director Ross: Okay, thank you. You all should have this agenda for our July 13th meeting, which is Judge Duhon, Abby—I had you on the list, but I don't have a check mark, so I don't remember whether you were in attendance or not, actually, Allen Owen, Jim Robinson, and I were all in attendance. And so, this is the list that we used to sort of structure our conversation. And the first item is define the next steps to fully implement the terms of adopted Senate Bill 1990. A little clever in that the legislature gave us this opportunity but then put a hurdle in front of us in order to actually use it. I'm curious as to how that happened but as Rich has told me, what does it matter? It's happened, let's move on and figure out how we deal with it. So that's the discussion we had earlier about visiting with all the different entities that organized us to get them to sign off on the expanded technologies that Senate Bill 1990 would grant us. So, I won't go into that further at this point.

The second item was to secure H-GAC funds for the Southwest Cities Update Study, and Carol, it's been a while since we had that meeting, I haven't heard anything back. Have you all heard anything from H-GAC?

Chairperson Lewis: They have not presented the list yet, but I feel confident it's going to be on... I don't think there's anything that's going to bump it off, but they have not yet done their list of UPWP projects for the upcoming year. It might be August that it happens. I'm thinking that it is August.

Director Ross: Maybe we ought to just call and sort of test them to see what they can tell us.

Chairperson Lewis: I mean, we can. I don't think that's anything to be on the worry list.

Director Ross: Okay. What this study would do is update the prior study on service to the southwest cities. And in addition, we talked about seeing if they could look at some of the CenterPoint easement and see if that would actually provide benefits to serving the southwest cities. And if so, then it gives us a better package to go to CenterPoint and work out a resolution before the next legislative session. And if it says, "No, there is no benefit to it," then we really don't have to worry about pushing that necessarily, at least in terms of serving the southwest cities.

Chairperson Lewis: Let me do a point of clarification here too, Jeff. Our language says secure H-GAC funds. H-GAC won't give us the money; they'll actually do the study.

Director Ross: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: So just, yes, just point of clarification. We won't get money to hire a consultant to do it ourselves.

Director Ross: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: As we did like with Harris County when we did Westpark. Harris County gave us the money, and we hired the consultant who did the study. This time H-GAC will do the study.

Director Ross: Right. The funds still need to be secured to pay their people; they're just not running through us.

Chairperson Lewis: Right. Whomever, yes. They'll probably hire a consultant, honestly.

Director Ross: Third item was the Transportation Reinvestment Zone Bill passed that was being promoted by TAG. And it passed with the need for a public vote, like a constitutional amendment, in November. And so, we need to just stay in touch with Andrea French at TAG to find out if there's some campaign that's going to go on in support of this item, whether it would be of benefit to have our organization name associated with it, benefit to them and benefit to us. And then if that's the case, we would need to bring it to this board at the September or October meeting in order for it to be usable in an election that's in November.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I have a sort of a sidebar question. I tell people all the time, you know, I used to want to go to law school before I got a Ph.D. So, I've got this little frustrated attorney in me. But Director Muller?

Director Muller: You picked a better path, just so we're clear.

Director Ross: You know when you retire, you can go to law school.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you, but probably no thanks. I question what can we as a public entity do to support an upcoming sort of legislative piece? I know at METRO, they can't actually support anything. I don't...

Director Muller: Yes, so you're not allowed to spend any public dollars to support or oppose a ballot measure like the one we're talking about. You can spend public dollars on education, right? And this is the same thing that cities, counties, METRO, and school districts face, right? They can't spend money that says, "Vote for the HISD bonds," but they can say, "Your HISD bonds, if approved by you, would go to fund da-da-da-da-da." So, you can do stuff that's educational. You should not ever use vote for or against, we support—the words that indicate how this body would feel about whether it should pass or fail.

Chairperson Lewis: So, we would probably need to couch everything we do in, "If you should vote for this, this is what it would enable"?

Director Muller: I think what we would say on this one is something like, the TRZs are... the Transportation Reinvestment Zones are a tool that could help facilitate grade-separated crossings and funding of grade-separated crossings or whatever we wanted it to say... in the future, and these are desperately needed public infrastructure improvements, and this gives us another tool in the toolbox if you were to vote for it. Something like that, just that kind of stuff.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Thank you.

Director Ross: The fourth item we had was to work with area cities and counties to create these TRZ entities, obviously, after an election. And what this legislation does, it allows these counties—cities can create these things already... it allows counties to create them. So, it would give us a point of discussion with Waller, Fort Bend County primarily, to serve those lines that we've been talking about. But any of the counties, actually, that we might be going through. And if that passes in November, that could affect what we put into our marketing language, because now we have another tool. And so that will make that marketing package need to stay up with the times.

The fifth item was to just stay engaged with TxDOT and Texas Central about the ability to accommodate Bus Rapid Transit in the 290 or Hempstead Corridors. And then the sixth one was to work with the relevant counties and METRO about the extension of the University Line, BRT, from Hillcroft further west.

And those were the items that we talked about. I daresay in the conversation, we quickly got off into the issue of Senate Bill 1990, how do we get it approved by all our partners, do we try and narrow the field of partners, all those other discussions, do we do it now, do we do it later, so we had all those discussions in that meeting. And as we talked earlier today, the idea is to go do it now before we're over the barrel, because when you're over the barrel, you've got the least negotiating room. So those are the things that we put down as our list of things to try and do this upcoming year.

Chairperson Lewis: And so, I guess our low-hanging activities would be to develop an approach with Montgomery and Galveston, figure out what we're going to do and who are the sort of lead actors to do the outreach.

Director Ross: I'd say on the broad picture, that's probably our most important long-term issue. The lowest-hanging fruit might be helping to get those H-GAC funds to do the updated study on southwest.

Chairperson Lewis: So, the difference is... I don't have any doubt that's going to happen. It's going to happen, I will say. And if it doesn't, I would be 100% stunned. That won't happen, it's just a matter of when because it's in the long package of UPWP projects. So, it's just a matter of it going forward and going to... I mean, nobody on the TAG or TPC is going to take it out, it's already been presented. So, it's in the list, it's already been presented to everybody, it's just a matter of when they actually vote to move it. and it will happen before October 1st, which will be their fiscal year.

Director Ross: Right. And then we want to push them to get it done within six months instead of five years.

Chairperson Lewis: Now therein is some energy that will be needed, is the time in which they will get it done. But yes, exactly.

Director Ross: But I think the first item on trying to get the 1990 bill fully operational for us is probably our biggest effort in terms of the long term.

Chairperson Lewis: But a step in that direction is what happens with Montgomery and Galveston, right?

Director Ross: Right. Let's not surprise ourselves, we've got to go to Harris County too, right?

Chairperson Lewis: The answer, of course, is yes, right? And something can always come out of left field and shock you, but the judge was onboard. We talked to at least... I think we touched base with all the commissioners. So yes, something could come out of left field and shock us but again that would be a surprise.

Director Ross: I come from the school it's not a done deal until it's a done deal.

Chairperson Lewis: Well, and I'd agree with you. I agree with you it's not a done deal.

Director Ross: Well, I worry until long after it's signed off finally.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. I guess I don't worry as much as you do about some things. That doesn't worry me a lot. I worry about the people we know we don't have right now.

Director Muller: I'm going to volunteer Judge Duhon, since he's not on the call, to be part of that effort. And I'm happy to volunteer to help with Montgomery County and Galveston County. I think that as the two representatives from the surrounding counties, we might have the best option to convince them.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. I will absolutely...

Director Ross: You mentioned Brazoria County. If you think back to 2005 when we were created, Brazoria County was really more of a rural county back then. Shadow Creek Ranch was just starting up around that timeframe and their leadership—Sebesta wasn't yet the county judge, he was actually Mayor of Angleton and running for county commissioner. So, their leadership was still lagging.

Director Muller: Well, I think you got to go in order of priority. I think you got to get Montgomery County and Galveston County to either commit to be part of it or withdraw. And I want to just clarify for the group that there's no way, I don't think, that we can unilaterally make them leave but they can always leave the organization voluntarily—that's what's in the statute. And so maybe we kind of say, "Hey, look. Come be part of the group or why don't you just go ahead and withdraw? It messes up our quorum, and all that kind of stuff, right?" And then I think you do go have—depending on the reaction we get from those two... then you go have a separate conversation with Brazoria County, right? If you want to try to recruit them to the fold and if you think that that's even doable, again, I don't want to step on land mines here. The concern I've always heard about is the dueling ports and how do they work together and all that kind of stuff, and I don't know if that's a concern we need to be worried about.

Chairperson Lewis: So, let me start with I feel confident that Judge Duhon is in on this because he already said he would.

Director Muller: Okay, great.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I've recorded that you and Judge Duhon have the lead on working with Montgomery and Galveston and just...

Director Muller: We'll do the best we can.

Chairperson Lewis: ...use your judgment and then let us know how it's going and what happens.

Director Muller: On it.

Chairperson Lewis: Great, thank you. Now, with Brazoria, I would be happy if Brazoria wanted to come in. I don't think we need to go and seek them because I think we've got enough to do on our plate with what we know we have. The question for me would be which energy do we take away from as we expend energy to get Brazoria? Now somebody goes to a dinner and folks from Brazoria County are sitting there and it comes up in conversation and say, "Hey, we talked about this, are you all interested in coming in?" and they come to us and say they want to come in, I'm good. But I would kind of suggest that the things we've got on our list are the things that...

Director Muller: Fair enough.

Director Ross: I would put off Brazoria County until after we got Senate Bill 1990 approved by all the others.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, right.

Director Ross: And then when we ask them in, we ask them in and that's already a condition of the organization. So, we don't have to lobby them to do it. And I think if we have 1990, then we have a different way to approach them anyway. And again, as that county has become more and more suburban, their focus on issues like this, I mean, they've been trying to extend a rail line down Kirby to Pearland. That's a Brazoria County-related project. I don't know if it's still in the conversation, but it certainly was 10 years ago. So, they're going to evolve, and we just need to approach them when we have something that we can talk to them about. So, I would agree. I wouldn't focus any attention on Brazoria County right now at all. Let's go talk to our own members first and get them all onboard on 1990.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Anybody on BlueJeans have anything to add about anything we've been talking about? Alright. Well, I've always got something out there that I want to throw on the table for consideration. So, here's my now what I want to throw on the table for consideration. I saw in something that came across my desk that Amtrak has indicated interest in the corridor that's 290, from Houston to Austin, they didn't call it that. Amtrak is interested in Houston to Austin corridor. So that made me start wondering, "Hmm, should we reach out to Amtrak as a partner in looking at the 290 corridor?" And the thing that we bring to the table is that we already have an interlocal agreement with Texas Central to be under them between 610 and Beltway 8 and the potential to work on the TRZs, hopefully. So, we've got something we can bring to the table and that might be an interesting partner. So, what do you all think about that?

Director Ross: My gut reaction is we've got a lot on our plate in the Gulf Coast Rail District and that's a 10-year battle or wrestling match or whatever it might be over the course of time or longer, and I wouldn't put much of the limited energy we've got on that. I don't mind having a meeting with them to talk to them about it to just let them know we're a player but right now, I wouldn't focus our attention on it. We've got a commuter rail problem here in this region, or a transportation problem in this region we need to solve.

Chairperson Lewis: The first part of it is in the same footprint. And so, the way I see it they wouldn't do the whole thing at once anyway. So, if the first segment was Houston to College Station, Highway 6, how lovely.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Dr. Lewis, this is Tyson with Union Pacific. When I looked at Amtrak's in-depth, what they published there. I think it was like 75 pages. I think what they had published was really more of the Texas triangle. And so, it did show a route that went from Houston to Dallas. They already have a route going from Houston to San Antonio. They also have a route going from San Antonio up through Austin and up through Fort Worth as well. But that was what was, I think, was more outlined versus a new rail route there.

Chairperson Lewis: A new rail route, okay.

Director Ross: When you're talking about the shuttle that Bruce brought up, I've done a fair amount of long-distance driving during COVID because it's the only way I can travel, and I want to travel. And we take as little of the interstate system as we can because there's too many semi-trucks and it just doesn't feel safe anymore. And it's amazing what you can see on state highways, which have close to 70 and 75-mile speed limits until you get to the little towns, but it's actually a lot more enjoyable a drive than it is on the interstate. Just like you were talking

about Mykawa, no traffic goes through there anymore, well, more people behaving like me, there's going to be less and less traffic on those interstates because they're truck routes.

Chairperson Lewis: Right. Well, the other thing about that, Tyson, that surprises me is that I don't know how they'd get from Houston... How do they get to Houston from San Antonio since the tracks along Katy have been taken up and they're not there?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: From Houston to San Antonio, they utilize... They come in on our Houston sub from New Orleans, if they're heading west, and then they continue on through our Houston sub that connects to our Glidden sub and heads straight west to San Antonio.

Chairperson Lewis: That's not... that's kind of circuitous, huh?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Yes. And then their service that goes from New Orleans continues out west through San Antonio with a stop, right, and then goes on to LA. They then have... I think it's the Texas Eagle then that goes from San Antonio with a stop there at Austin. And then I believe their next stop is at Fort Worth. And so that combination of routes north there that is explained is a combo between the UP franchise and the BNSF franchise there.

Chairperson Lewis: So, this is just me but that sounds like the route you would only take if you had no other option.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: They don't have another option.

Chairperson Lewis: No, I mean as opposed to if one could do something that paralleled sort of 290, in a new way. So, everything you're talking about is 100% using existing track though too, right?

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Correct, yes.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. Okay, so my head is another place. My head is in potentially laying some new track.

Mr. Tyson Moeller: Sure, yes. I don't know if they've contemplated that because anything they've contemplated to this point would occupy current freight tracks.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, perfect. So that would make me say perfect. Alright. Anything else from anyone? BlueJeans? In the room? So, if not, we are close to finishing an hour early. So, our summary and next steps.

Ms. Lisa Patke: I think someone needs to mute on BlueJeans.

Director Muller: Somebody's got a friendly dog.

Director Dyll: A cute little dog.

Chairperson Lewis: Can you see it?

Director Dyll: No, I can hear it.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh, alright. So here we are. Summary... From what I have from Legislative and Funding between Ms. Patke, Ms. Parker and myself, we'll go through this and see if I've left anything out, but you all will help me if I have. So, from Legislative and Funding, the key was getting our mandate ratified, which Directors Muller and Duhon are going to take lead on finding out what's going to happen with those two counties. And then we'll, in a stepwise fashion when the time is right, go to each of our entities with conversation about what we've done, where we're going, and get them to do their own ratification of our SB 1990. Anything that I missed from Legislative and Funding. Alright. So, to Roadway/Railway, our takeaways are the one project proof of concept, our freight rail study, and then our future options starting with the freight shuttle and then finding out what FRA might have on their research agenda for an automated vehicle, automated freight train study. And it's a research initiative, that they're looking for a demonstration project. So, we'll find out about that. Did I leave anything out on Railway/Roadway?

Director Beeson: Developing a proof of concept, was that specific to...

Chairperson Lewis: Right.

Director Beeson: ...that was one of the items on the rail study.

Chairperson Lewis: Exactly. Alright, then from Marketing and Outreach, we have the annual report, the contributions that you will make to our stakeholder entity list, and the web page update. And from Passenger Rail, I don't know if we were clear on our takeaways.

Director Ross: All six of those items that I shared.

Chairperson Lewis: So, six items on the takeaways. I did not say that nor did I necessarily have that as my takeaway. I thought these were all the things we were talking about. Alright, so if we look at our list of six. So, I guess part of me wants to put them in some kind of priority.

Director Ross: Okay. I can do that for you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, number two is A?

Director Ross: Two and three are sort of incidental. I mean, we just have to monitor them and see what we can add to them to make them happen.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Ross: Number one is really the biggest priority, which is Senate Bill 1990. Item four is dependent on item three passing, so if three fails four drops off. And then five and six, I think, are a little further... Well, they can be going on, but they're sort of in the control of others and we're just trying to stay on top of them. So, the one that we really have to focus on with our energy is number one.

Chairperson Lewis: And five and six actually kind of tail on to A, because if we don't get the member entities to say yes to the BRT, then we have trouble having five and six.

Director Ross: Correct.

Director Muller: Can I ask, and I'm not sure who the person would be who would draft it, but when we go talk with these different entities about adopting a resolution or whatever it is to expand our powers, it'd be helpful to hand them the document for them to pass. Is that something you could draft?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes.

Director Muller: It'd look like the resolutions we do and that way we could say, and maybe for Montgomery County and Galveston County, either do this one or do the one to withdraw. Pick one. We don't care which one of these you pass, just pick one.

Director Ross: And the simplistic thing is to say that we adopt the resolution in accordance with Senate Bill 1990 to expand the authorization.

Director Muller: Yes, we don't even need that. We could make the words very generic if that's what we think is the most helpful. You do great resolutions.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, yes, yes. Ms. Parker will be happy to do that. She crafted all the ones that we used throughout the process.

Director Muller: Yes, great.

Chairperson Lewis: So that's an action for her.

Director Ross: What is that noise?

Director Muller: Hey, Mayor. Hey, Allen, will you mute your line real quick?

Director Ross: Or Carol, you mute them up on top.

Director Muller: Mute them all.

Chairperson Lewis: I was looking to see if I could.

Director Muller: He got it. Alright.

Chairperson Lewis: I keep saying this is not my computer. I don't know where anything is.

Director Ross: Again, I want to come back and revisit that my experience working in the political arena, we need to have this very well-focused, small group. Whether it's ad hoc or one of the existing committees, so that we don't end up running into each other with not necessarily aligned messages trying to accomplish the same thing. And that we can stand on top of any success or failure that we've had in one place and utilize that knowledge to try and help us in another place or to build another friend that will help us counter a negative. So, this can get really complicated very quickly and if we just have 14 members running off and talking to the 28 people they know, we're going to come back and have just a pile of junk. And I'm not volunteering.

Chairperson Lewis: I've known Jeff like a really long time, right? So, he knew what was about to come out of my...

Director Dyll: It sounded like a volunteer to me.

Chairperson Lewis: I know.

Director Dyll: Awfully like, I mean.

Chairperson Lewis: So, what I actually was going to... how I actually was going to word it is, so, Director Ross, who would you recommend to serve on this Ad Hoc Committee? I'm certain that you planned a volunteer.

Director Ross: I'd say anybody who volunteers from this group would be welcome to be involved in this committee, but you still need to have some leadership. This has got to be real definitive. I know when I did the Botanic Garden, I can't tell you how many hours I spent just walking around my office thinking about different scenarios that might come about and knowing what my responses would be to them. It's like being a chess player and knowing the moves well in advance of the countermoves. That's just the way I operated.

Chairperson Lewis: So, let's start by naming the folks who are going to be on the committee, and then we can go from there. Maybe after the first time that committee talks. One of Maslow's books on leadership was on one of the indigenous Native American tribes that always chose their leader by seeing who rose to the top. They never named the leader at the beginning. They always just waited to see who stepped up to that position. So, at this moment, let's just name the committee.

Director Ross: Well, Muller and Duhon. They're already onboard.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, so we've got Muller and Beeson.

Director Ross: And again, I think everybody on the Gulf Coast Rail District would have a role in this. I'm talking about who's the...

Chairperson Lewis: I know exactly what you're talking about. What you're talking about is the group that defines the strategy. And so, when an individual... Winkler is going to have the meeting with the Harris County Mayors, somebody is named to go along. There's basically a script that's developed that people use this script and they have the two documents... Well, the Harris County Mayors won't have the document to withdraw, but they'll have the resolution. So, it's the package that goes, it's who goes, and it's the schedule. I know exactly what you're...

Director Ross: Right. And because our two recalcitrant counties are suburban counties, I think it's important that we probably show more of a suburban face than a Houston face, a Houston-Harris County face. We still have to work with Houston and Harris County, and we just do that different with a separate group of people potentially or maybe overlapping group, but you don't go down to Galveston County with your Houston team because you just... or Montgomery County because you just won't be received well.

Chairperson Lewis: But the Ad Hoc group that pulls together the package and that sets the date and then decides who goes, that does need more than Muller and Beeson, I suggest.

Director Ross: Right, right.

Chairperson Lewis: So, I'm suggesting that there's another person.

Director Ross: And that's a...

Chairperson Lewis: Director Gonzalez, would you consent to do that?

Director Gonzalez: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. So, we're talking about this Ad Hoc Committee and what the Ad Hoc Committee has as their responsibility to essentially prepare the formatting for these individual meetings that are going to happen with our member entities. So that committee would make sure that the marketing piece is prepared, if there's some additional information that goes with the marketing piece, that's there. When the meeting happens, who represents GCRD at the meeting, and... I'm missing something.

Director Ross: But our focus here needs to be strategic not administrative, and as you're describing it, it's sounding administrative to me.

Chairperson Lewis: No, it's not administrative. No, it's not administrative, it's strategic. No, the Ad Hoc Committee isn't going to pull together any materials, but the Ad Hoc Committee says what materials it needs and then Ms. Parker has the lead in pulling the materials together, but the committee says what materials are needed, who goes, that's not administrative.

Director Ross: Right, right. And Marketing and Outreach is part of that.

Director Gonzalez: Yes, I can do that.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, thank you, thank you. Alright. And at that point, if there's anyone else who would like to volunteer, that'd be great. If not, I think Muller, Beeson, and Gonzalez are defined to do that task.

Director Ross: And Duhon.

Chairperson Lewis: Is there anyone else who would like to volunteer? You would be welcome. Okay, thank you. So, I guess I would also want to, sort of as a sidebar, ask the three of you to make sure you maybe bring something back to us for September, in terms of approach.

Director Beeson: Sounds good to me.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Alright, I said we'd let the leader emerge. But I think Ms. Parker will help coordinate for you all, so she'll help with the calendars and all that kind of thing. Alright. At that point, that takes us to where? I think we are at announcements. And our next meeting will be Tuesday, September 14th. We will again... I actually have this thought. Can you all weigh in here? Is if we have one of our presentations, I think we come back here. But if our agenda is only

the sort of traditional items of finance, report from Ms. Parker, and we don't have anything specifically to review, I think we could pretty much do the web-based. Do you think that's right?

Director Muller: I'm sorry, say that again.

Chairperson Lewis: We talked about presentations, we talked about having freight rail study, and all these presentations... If we have a presentation, I think we come back here. But if it's just sort of a seven-item agenda, which is basically the things we have every month—the report from Cory Burton, the report from Ms. Parker – if nothing specific has happened, I don't know that we all need to drive here for that.

Director Muller: Well, do we have a choice?

Director Ross: Yes, I'm on a MUD board and September 1st, the governor's permission to have these kind of meetings on Zoom and stuff goes away.

Chairperson Lewis: It expires?

Director Ross: At least for MUDs it does.

Director Muller: It's for everybody.

Director Ross: I assume it does for all public meetings.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay. Well, never mind.

Director Muller: Now, we can do a conference call, I think. No, I don't even know we can do that. You have to have a quorum physically present at your meeting place under the... Unless you aren't subject to the Open Meetings Act, but I thought we were.

Chairperson Lewis: No, we are subject to the Open Meetings Act. So, here's the thing that's interesting about that though. Is that that says there's no need to do hybrid. Because we had thought, Ms. Parker and I had talked about continuing to do hybrid so that people like you and Judge Duhon wouldn't have to drive down here. But if the quorum has to be in person, then...

Director Muller: I can just tell you what we're doing for our clients who are in a similar boat. We are giving them the option to continue the hybrid meeting. You still have to have a quorum physically present, and then you can let consultants like Mr. Burton or whoever. The problem is that for the board members to participate remotely, there's a whole lot of technical challenges and nothing got passed in this last legislative session. The laws on open meetings related to videoconferencing is from the late '90s, early 2000s. It didn't contemplate Zoom or BlueJeans or anything like that. So, it's very antiquated and it's kind of almost impossible to do. I wish there was a better answer, but I think you got to be here.

Chairperson Lewis: So honestly, what that says to me, there are not that many of us. There's only nine of us, and I might be wrong, but we don't have that many. But if seven of us have to be in this room, it really, to me, it just sort of dismantles the attempt to even do it.

Director Muller: Yes, so a lot of folks say then why would I need to keep doing this? You can make it open to the public and if you want to make it open to the public or you can have your consultants. We really only have a couple consultants. As much as I like doing it this way, I don't think you can continue that way.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes. If we could have the quorum both ways, if we had whatever, four on there and three here. Even like the first time, when nobody was here but me and everybody else was on. But if all seven of us have to be in the room, then I don't see the reason to continue doing the other.

Director Muller: Right.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay.

Director Muller: That's the answer a lot of people are coming to.

Director Ross: What we need to do is check to see what you're legally allowed to do.

Director Muller: Now with COVID resurgence, you may get another order. It may be that the governor allows us to continue for a few more months. But as of now, come September 1st, you got to go back to the old way.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. I won't keep anybody here with this conversation. That's going to be extremely interesting for H-GAC because there is no way to social distance in any of the rooms they have. There are 24 of us...

Director Muller: This is a great conference room. Bring them here.

Chairperson Lewis: ...on TPC.

Director Muller: Yes, I've been in that conference room. You can't, no.

Chairperson Lewis: It's not my call.

Director Muller: This is a great room. I didn't know this was here.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, this is a great room. But you couldn't get those people in here because so many of the public come. I mean, there are 24 TPC members and then...

Director Ross: And alternates if they show.

Chairperson Lewis: Alternates don't necessarily sit at the table, but they do sit in the audience. I mean, there are 50 to 100 people in the audience. I don't know how they're going to do it. But for everyone, thank you so much for your participation today. I think we've achieved what we set out to achieve.

Chairperson Lewis: Appreciate all your time last month in doing your committees and I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Director Ross: So moved.

Chairperson Lewis: Ross.

Director Beeson: Beeson will second.

Chairperson Lewis: Beeson. We are adjourned (1:08 p.m.). Thanks all.

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:
Dennis Winkler

74AA3473698F440...

Dennis Winkler, Secretary
Trey Duhon, Vice Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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