



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – December 14, 2021

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at Houston TranStar and via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Ronald A. Beeson, Trey Duhon, Michael Dyll, Abigail M. Gonzalez, Carol Abel Lewis, Bruce Mann, Richard L. Muller, Jr., Allen Owen, Tina Arias Peterman, Jim Robinson, Jeff E. Ross, and Dennis Winkler. Absent was Director Christopher Lane. Written notices of the meeting including the date, hour, place and agenda for the meeting were posted with Harris County, with the Secretary of State, and at the Gulf Coast Rail District office located at Houston TranStar in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. The inaudible portions of the recording were removed from these minutes.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thanks everyone. We're going to call our meeting to order today, Gulf Coast Rail District. We'll conduct today's Gulf Coast Rail District meeting with options to participate in person or by video conference due to health and safety concerns related to COVID-19. Meeting is open to the public, but restrictions regarding mask, allowable room capacity, and seating arrangements are in place. The public meeting location is TranStar, 6922 Katy Road, Houston, Texas, Briefing Room 216. I'm Dr. Carol Lewis, the presiding officer of Gulf Coast Rail District, and confirm the following board members of physically present myself and then ex-officio board member Jim Robinson is here in the room. Other members participating by video conference in accordance with the provisions Section 551.127 of the Texas Government Code applicable to governmental body that extends into three or more counties include the following. Please audibly respond when I call your name.

Chairperson Lewis: Ron Beeson?

Director Beeson: I'm on.

Chairperson Lewis: Michael Dyll? (Note: Joined after name being called.)

Chairperson Lewis: Abigail Gonzalez?

Director Gonzalez: Here.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you. Jeff Ross?

Director Ross: I'm here.

Chairperson Lewis: Tina Peterman?

Director Peterman: Here.

Chairperson Lewis: Dennis Winkler?

Director Winkler: Present.

Chairperson Lewis: Bruce Mann?

Director Mann: Present.

Chairperson Lewis: Richard Muller? (Note: Joined after name being called.)

Chairperson Lewis: Allen Owen?

Director Owen: Here.

Chairperson Lewis: Judge Duhon

Director Duhon: Present.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Christopher Lane?

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Alright, thank you. That takes us through our list, and we do have a quorum. The video conference is conducted with software known as MS Teams. Individual panelists, invitees, and links were sent to GCRD board members to participate in the meeting. Other attendees or public can join the meeting by clicking on a link provided on the agenda, which is on our website to join the meeting on your computer or your tablet or your cell phone. If your computer has both audio and video camera capabilities, you will be able to speak and be seen during the video conference. Based upon the Open Meetings Act requirements, the GCRD board members participating in the MS Teams videoconference will need to be seen and heard throughout the meeting for attendance and to record voting. Therefore, members calling in via telephone will not count toward a quorum or voting. Alright, thank you for your participation and for recognizing the confines under which we operate over in this.

Ms. Lisa Patke: We have Rich Muller joining.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, perfect. Thank you Mr. Muller. Glad you're here.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, we've just called the names and I would ask Director Winkler, would you certify our quorum? We do have more than seven people in attendance.

Director Winkler: Yes, we do have a quorum.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, good. Thank you so much. A discussion and possible action on the Minutes for November 9th, Director Winkler, please.

Director Winkler: Yes, I would like to ask if anybody has any changes to the to the minutes. Please let us know. If not, I'll take a motion to approve.

Director Owen: So moved. Director Owen, so moved.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, did you get both names, Ms. Patke?

Ms. Lisa Patke: I did not.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay, a motion was made by who please?

Director Owen: Director Owen.

Chairperson Lewis: Second by who please?

Director Owen: I heard somebody.

Chairperson Lewis: I thought I did too.

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

Chairperson Lewis: Alright.

Director Owen: Bruce Mann.

Chairperson Lewis: Bruce Mann, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposition?

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Report from the treasurer, item 5, Director Owen please.

Director Owen: Director Owen is asking Cory Burton to give us our financial report.

Mr. Cory Burton: Good afternoon everyone, Cory Burton with Municipal Accounts. You should each have a copy or a PDF of our report there. If you go past the cover page, you see your old BBVA checking account. Everything is cleared off that, so you see \$1,000 wire going out of that to Central Bank and that zeros out that account. If you go to the top of the next page, you see that \$1,000 wire coming into your new Central Bank checking account. Requesting approval for the checks listed their end totaling just over \$6,500. You have one membership fee to the Transportation Advocacy Group. Other than that, everything else was pretty typical in your check stack this month leaving you with an ending balance of \$13,538 in your checking account. Next page is the detail of your investments. No new CDs since you last met, so pretty quiet there. That takes you to your budget on the next couple of pages. Things ran just as usual; much lighter than expected on the expense side, so it's always good to see. Starting on Page 7 is your grant status report. No changes there in quite a long time. Moving on to pages 11 and 12. So this is the time of year when you need to set your operating budget for next year. You are actually a calendar year, fiscal year end December 31st, so we've been working with Ms. Parker and some others on putting this together. That far right column is our best guess looking into the crystal ball for next year and it mirrors very similar to what your budget was set at this year, so no material changes in that regard. And then the last couple pages of our report is your quarterly investment report for the quarter ending September 30th for your review. And that's all we have for you today. I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Director Owen: Very good. Are there any questions of anyone? If not, I would ask that Resolution 21-16 ratifying the payments be approved.

Director Duhon: Judge Duhon, I'll move.

Director Beeson: Director Beeson will second.

Chairperson Lewis: We've got a motion and a second. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Ms. Lisa Patke: Tina Peterman has a question.

Chairperson Lewis: I'm sorry...

Director Duhon: There were hands up.

Chairperson Lewis: I'm sorry there's a question. We didn't see it. Go ahead, Ms. Peterman.

Director Peterman: Sorry, I was trying to figure out how to get myself off mute. I apologize. Hi Cory. Yes I do have a question. Can you just give a little more color on what the income item carryover? What is that?

Mr. Cory Burton: Sure, this is Cory. That's basically your savings that you have right now in the bank that we're carrying over into the next fiscal year. Basically, the totals that you have in your operating fund that you'll find on the account balance page.

Chairperson Lewis: Good, thank you. Thank you for that. Any other questions?

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, seeing none. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposed? Alright, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Onto item number seven, public comments. We do have with us today one of our public observers who would like to comment before Gulf Coast Rail District. Please state your name for the record and want to do two minutes, Ms. Lisa, if you can help us with timing.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Name here is Dominic Mazoch. I represent myself. I am transportation geek. I go to METRO board meetings and other transportation meetings in the area. I have a

concern about a proposed merger. I don't know yet what... I don't think you can do anything about it. I think you need to know what's coming down the pipe possible is that... Last Friday, KCS—Kansas City Southern approved a possible merger with Canadian Pacific Railroad. That in itself, I don't have a problem with. The problem is a massive amount of freight could be moving into the Houston area. To get to a lot of freight that we might be going to Laredo via Union Pacific down the I-35 or BNSF coming through Flatonia, some of that traffic could be diverted with a merger of with Union Pacific owning everything on a straight line all the way from the Canadian into Canada all the way into Mexico. Their line through Houston... this line basically comes through the Houston UP, Houston terminal subdivision. Basically, this track out here. I know you may not be able to say anything to the Surf (Surface Transportation Board), but I think this board is going to have to watch very carefully and the other entities like METRO about possible increase of rail traffic through this terminal. I'm beginning to question if this terminal can handle. This terminal right now has a problem handling traffic—what it's got now, but it's got now. With this merger, we could go into a terminal meltdown like in 1996, 1977. So, I'm just bringing this up for your consideration to be careful.

Chairperson Lewis: Thank you. Appreciate that comment, Mr. Mazoch, and we indeed are really considerate of and paying attention to freight into the region. We know that the freight volume is going to increase regardless, so anything that would be sort of a turn up or quantum movement up on that, that would be something that we would be talking about. So, thank you. Thank you for coming today and for commenting. Is there anyone else in the public who would like to make a comment? Anybody on the phone? Do I see a hand?

Ms. Lisa Patke: No.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you. Alright, we will go on to item number 8, discussion and possible action on Resolution 21-17, ratifying committees of GCRD Board of Directors for our upcoming year 2022. In your packet, you will see the list of names and the committee positions that we're talking about for 2022. Each of our committees has a charge going into 2022. It is going to be a very active year for us, and we're looking forward to it. You know we're springing off of our success in the State Legislature this past spring and so that's opening some doors for us that we're really looking forward to. Combined with that, the passage of the Infrastructure Bill, we heard today at an earlier meeting that that money is not going to be flowing quickly, which is not necessarily great for the region, but quite frankly gives us time to get some of our projects in queue by the time that money starts coming down. So, we want to really do our best to position ourselves with the projects that we have to be considered for some of those funds.

So, the resolution reads that section six of our bylaws allows me to designate one or more ad hoc standing committees, and so here we have the proposed list. I will read to you what we are proposing. For Bylaws, Richard Muller—asking him to chair along with Judge Trey Duhon and Director Michael Dyll on the Bylaws Committee. On Legislative and Funding, Tina Peterman as cochair and Jim Robinson as cochair along with Director Beeson, Director Mann, Director Muller, and Director Owen. On Marketing and Outreach Committee, Director Gonzalez—asking her to chair along with myself, Ms. Peterman, Director Winkler, and Andrea French from TAG. For Passenger Rail, Judge Duhon as cochair along with Jeff Ross as cochair, Director Gonzalez, Director Owen, Director Robinson, and Director Winkler. On Railroad and Roadway Projects, Director Dyll as cochair and Director Mann as cochair along with Director Beeson, Judge Duhon, Tyson Moeller from UP and Megan Shea from being BNSF. So those are the proposed committee structures. I will remind you that the committees can be populated by members of the

community who are not a board member but who bring a particular stakeholder interest to the table. So, with that, I open it for questions or comments or thoughts. If there are none, we would entertain a motion.

Director Muller: Yes, I had a question real quick.

Chairperson Lewis: Oh good, that's fine.

Director Muller: I thought one of the committees... I'm sorry this is Rich Muller.

Chairperson Lewis: Yes, absolutely. So that's fine. I'm going to ask... I can't see you because there's a chair at the end of the table that is total 100 cent blocking you. Thank you, Ms. Patke.

Director Duhon: That's not a good thing, by the way.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, go ahead. I'm sorry.

Director Muller: So, I thought on one of the committees... I couldn't tell from the list if you had more people on the committee than a quorum of the board. Do we want to have a committee that's got more people on it than a quorum, so then that committee would have to post notice and all that?

Chairperson Lewis: Great question. The Passenger Rail Committee has six and that's the largest one. I think Roadway/Railway also has six, but none of them have seven. So, our quorum is seven and none of the committees have seven. We were sensitive to that.

Director Robinson: Actually, METRO started last year posting all the committees, just in abundance of caution.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, and that's not a bad idea. We've done that before. We've had some of our committee meetings posted just to make sure that that we weren't violating anything. Should an additional board member decide they're interested enough in a committee to come, then that's a good thing to do. Any other questions?

Chairperson Lewis: Again, we would entertain a motion, if there's someone would like to advance that for us.

Director Peterman: So moved.

Chairperson Lewis: I heard Peterman motion.

Director Duhon: Duhon second.

Chairperson Lewis: Duhon second. Okay perfect, thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Chairperson Lewis: Any opposition? Okay, great. Thank you will be looking forward to work that the committee will do. You will recall that we're not going to have a meeting of the GCRD board in January, but we're asking each of our committees to meet and have a very targeted set of actions for 2022. I'm moving on to number nine, report from Executive Director Ms. Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Good afternoon everyone. Good to see you all. I missed the last meeting but glad to be here on today. Just a few notes on my pad here. We have been starting with our meetings to each of the member entities and started with the City of Houston. We met with Mayor Turner and with all of our appointees from the City of Houston to discuss SB 1990 and

getting acknowledgement of that legislation for our board. They are working that through their system for Council action. Also, we met with Fort Bend Judge George as well. Same conversation of course, but a different set of issues for Fort Bend than the City of Houston. We're also working with Harris County Mayors Council with help from Mr Winkler and also Fort Bend Director Owen will give us a date for January when that board will meet and present there as well.

I have been in on a number of meetings talking about the infrastructure bill. We are working really to be poised to be able to benefit in some type of way, whether it's a specifically or as a partnership with some other group. So, our committee meetings are crucial for next month to review the study and come up with our list. If it's something outside of the Houston-Beaumont study that we want to consider that we would kind of go through and list those things and make it clear as possible so that we are able to move those ideas and issues forward.

Housekeeping wise, we sent out letters to each of our member entities about our payment request and we've heard from Harris County heard from Galveston County. And Fort Bend as well. So, I think that's a success for us and hopefully going forward we will continue with the conversation, especially Galveston County. I was to meet with the economic developer... economic development program director this week, but he had a conflict. So, we're scheduling again so will hopefully be able to open that a conversation up about their representation on our board. I think that's it. That's all I have for you all today.

Chairperson Lewis: Any questions from Ms. Parker?

Director Robinson: Is there any movement on getting Montgomery County to participate again or are they still not interested?

Ms. Katherine Parker: We had asked. I think Judge Duhon is working on that. I haven't heard anything specifically, but it's in the works. I think there's conversation.

Director Duhon: Yes, I'm still working on that. Let me... I did put in a message, and I have not heard back. Let me follow up on that.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright, thank you. Any other questions? Alright, so on to item 10.

Ms. Parker talked about the activities that we've had underway thus far, and we look forward to continuing that series of meetings so that we can, you know, put a check mark in that box of having all of our stakeholder entities confirm SB 1990. The other thing that we were talking about with our meetings that we're having is really getting our stakeholder groups focused on Proposition 2 that just passed and getting the transportation reinvestment zones established so that we can anticipate some revenue from those. So, our first conversations have been very positive in terms of pursuing that line of conversation. I will talk with our committees, particularly, Legislative and Funding about next steps to do at least level one job of identifying properties, parcels, corridors that we would be talking about to see if we could take a step to some projected revenues that we might be able to consider from the TRZs. So, we'll want to chat with each committee chair and co-chair about items that you'll have on your agenda for the January meetings. So, I think the things that we're going to be looking for movement on 90A, whatever that means, movement on West Park. I'm going to say for each of them whatever that means, but I will say that inside conversations every response has been positive about continuing METRO's high-capacity BRT from wherever the end is. At first, we thought it was Hillcroft, but

we heard today that it's actually Beltway 8, so extending that from Beltway 8 or whatever its METRO terminus into Fort Bend County. So, we're starting those conversations as well to make sure that that's going to be something that those folks in Fulshear and that area in Fort Bend would be actually happy or delighted to talk about and receive. So that's going to be on our 2022 list. The freight shuttle is going to be on our 2022 list and then grade separations. So those are going to be the sort of the four big ticket items that we're going to want to see real progress on by the time we're sitting here in December 2022. So, that's all I have. Are there any other closing comments? I think we have a hand? Yes.

Director Owen: Madam Chair, I was with the Mayor Bechtel and some of the other mayors from the Harris County Mayor and Council Association, and they mentioned to me that they're going to have to find a new representative for this board. Is that true?

Chairperson Lewis: I do not know that.

Director Owen: Is Dennis getting off?

Chairperson Lewis: Director Winkler, I'll baton hand that question to you.

Director Winkler: Yes, thank you. I have mentioned to Mayor Bechtel that I have been very impressed with how we have improved the expertise of this commission and that I think it's time that the Harris County Mayors and Councils Association appoint someone with a transportation background to continue to keep in mind their focus on freight transportation so that is that is active. I am not ready to step down now, but I did tell him to please start looking for someone with that type of a background so that they can have a more competent experienced representative.

Director Owen: And I think he understands that Director Winkler and Commissioner Ramsey was there along with some of the other guys. And I expressed to them that they may want to try to find somebody that is somewhere close to our meeting facility as well so that they can attend the meetings in person. So, you know, they've got all those up village mayors out there on Tom's end of the spectrum that they probably could find somebody. But you know, having somebody from El Lago or ports... you know one of those may be a little difficult to make the meeting, so I just I kind of stressed to them that that might be important for them to look for somebody that might be closer to TranStar that can attend the meetings in person. So, they're going to find somebody to do that.

Director Winkler: Great, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: Well, we thank you and I appreciate the statements that you made, Director Winkler. I do want to make it known though that the board isn't only comprised of transportation expertise, so we've got all kinds of areas that we need. We need people who understand finance, people who understand law, people who understand property management, as well as transportation. So, it's not... We need people who understand marketing and public relations. So, it's not just, you know, unidimensional in terms of the expertise that we want seated here, but so thank you. Thank you for that comment, and we appreciate really your time and will continue to appreciate your time as we move forward. Anything else? Anyone else?

Alright. Well, I promised that this would be a short meeting, and such would be the case. We are ready to adjourn. It's 2:30 and so we've gotten through our agenda. If they're no parting comments, I will look forward to speaking with each of our committee chairs along with Ms. Parker as we poise ourselves up for January. We wish everyone a wonderful Christmas. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy New Year, or whatever you celebrate. We're looking for you to have a great time with family and friends, and then we will rejoin again in January. Well, actually February, but... We'll see each other again. Yes, in February. I think in February, though, we'll still be in this room because the space is not scheduled to be finished downstairs until March from what I understand. Right?

Ms. Katherine Parker: I'll let you know if there is a change. And all our committee chairs will reach out... maybe Lisa will do a Doodle poll or something to see you know what day works well. In the past, we had the committee meetings on the actual board meeting day just because people were open that day, but whatever works for the committees to meet, and we can do that virtually or in person—whatever your preferences. If you want to meet at TranStar, just let me know and I can get a room for us.

Chairperson Lewis: Perfect.

Director Owen: Judge Duhon, we missed you.

Director Peterman: Katherine, sorry quick question.

Director Owen: We missed you at the pond, judge.

Director Duhon: What's that?

Director Owen: We missed you at the pond last week.

Director Duhon: Oh, I know. Trust me, I missed it. I missed it. I wish I would have been there.

Director Owen: Yes. Well, we didn't catch any fish, so you didn't miss anything.

Director Duhon: Oh well, lots of people.

Chairperson Lewis: No fish. Alright, so is there anything?

Director Peterman: Yes, I had a quick question. Can the committee meetings be done virtually or do those need to be in person as well?

Director Ross: Virtual.

Ms. Katherine Parker: No, they can be virtual—virtual or in person. If we post, then we just make sure that we have everything in order as far as the time requirements for posting.

Director Peterman: Great, thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: So, this is... I always tell people and so Director Muller click in if you think I'm incorrect. So, I always tell people when I think I don't really know what I'm talking about.

So, I'm going to start off with saying I may or may not know what I'm talking about here. That said, H GAC's Policy Council has started in person again, just like we have with the chair and the seat in the room. TAC has not. I don't think

Ms. Katherine Parker: No, they haven't.

Chairperson Lewis: So that being the portion of H-GAC that's not the representative body is still doing the virtual and their other committees are still doing fully virtual. So, since the committees are not the full functioning board, I don't think you have that in person requirement like for me to be here as exist in that first tier. If we call the meeting of the board this first tier, I think the other meetings and we call them you know another tier, they don't have the same requirement. They do have open meetings, but they do not have the in-person requirement for the chairs is the point I'm making. So, Director Muller you would not say that I misspoke, would you?

Director Muller: Yes, our committees don't have to. Our committees can meet as long as there is less than a quorum, which is why I asked the question earlier. They can meet however they want to meet.

Chairperson Lewis: Right. Okay, perfect.

Ms. Katherine Parker: The quorum is the issue for the committee. The actual board is a different set of rules.

Chairperson Lewis: Right, exactly.

Director Muller: Right, and there's a nuance. If we ever have committees that we just rubber stamp that the whole board just rubber stamps with the committees because... then that's a different issue. That's not the kind of committees that we have here, so I'm not worried about that one.

Chairperson Lewis: Okay alright.

Director Winkler: Does that requirement... If you post it as a public meeting, do you then have to have an in-person individual?

Chairperson Lewis: I think as long as we do not have a quorum, we do not... We're not under a requirement to post.

Director Winkler: Thank you.

Chairperson Lewis: You're welcome.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. So, I think that's it. If there's nothing else, then we are ready for an adjournment. Sometimes I ask if there's a motion. We haven't been really forthcoming with motions today, so...

Director Duhon: This is Judge Duhon, and I will so move, and I wish everybody a Merry Christmas.

Chairperson Lewis: Alright. Great, thank you. Alright, we are adjourned (2:33 p.m.). Thank you all.

ATTEST:

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

Transcription services provided by Transcription Panda.
The disruption of normal business due to the COVID-19 prompted the use of electronic signatures.