



Minutes of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board Meeting – February 11, 2025

A meeting of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at Houston TranStar and-via video conference. In attendance at the meeting were Directors Angelique Bartholomew, Ronald A. Beeson, Kendric Jones, Jon Keeney, Robert Maldonado, Jr., Bruce Mann, Jean Mann, Allen Owen, and Jeff E. Ross. Absent were Directors Robert A. Fry, Jr., Stephen Gilbreath, and Veronica Chapa Gorczynski. 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.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay, I believe we're waiting for Director Mann to call back in, but I believe we have quorum without her connecting, so we'll go ahead and proceed. I'm Ron Beeson, presiding officer of the Gulf Coast Rail District. I'll call the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. on February 11th, 2025. The meeting is held in person at Houston TranStar, 6922 Katy Road, Conference Center Room 120A, and via video conference on Microsoft Teams with the link provided in the meeting invites, agenda, and public postings. The meeting is open to the public. During public comments, each speaker has three minutes to address the board. Please approach the podium or raise your hand online. Board members may participate via video conference as per Section 551.127 of the Texas Government Code. Members must be visible and audible for attendance and voting. Telephone-only participants do not count for quorum or voting. I'm present for the meeting and ask the secretary to conduct the roll call. Please respond when your name is called.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you very much. Mr. Beeson?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: I am present.

Director Jon Keeney: Maldonado? Steven Gilbreath?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Real quick, Maldonado is online, but he's muted.

Director Jon Keeney: Okay, alright. Steven Gilbreath?

Director Robert Maldonado, Jr: Maldonado's here.

Director Jon Keeney: Jeff Ross?

Director Jeff Ross: Here virtual.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Veronica Chapa Gorczynski? Nope. Me. Bruce Mann?

Director Bruce Mann: Yes, sir.

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

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you. Allen Owen?
Director Allen Owen: On virtually.

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

Director Jon Keeney: Jean Mann.
Ms. Lisa Patke: She's online.
Director Jon Keeney: She's online.
Ms. Lisa Patke: Just audio.
Director Jean Mann: Here.

Director Jon Keeney: Robert Fry? Mr. Chair, we do, in fact, have a quorum.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Thank you. Okay. Next, agenda item number three, confirm meeting posting compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Lisa Patke: That was completed.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay. That is complete. Okay. Item number four is discussion and possible action on Resolution 25-03 recognizing the Harris County Commissioners Court and City of Houston Mayor joint appointment of Veronica Chapa Gorczynski to position number seven, which is chairperson of the Gulf Coast Rail District Board of Directors. I will open it up for discussion.

Director Jon Keeney: I move we accept.

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay. Any discussion? If not, I will accept the motion to approve that resolution. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Any opposed?

Director Jon Keeney: It's unanimous.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay, unanimous approval. Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay, number five on the agenda, discussion and possible action on minutes from the January 14th meeting. Mayor Keeney?

Director Jon Keeney: I move we approve.

Director Bruce Mann: Second.

Director Jon Keeney: Have a motion and a second.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay. We have a motion and a second. The minutes are approved.

Director Jon Keeney: Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay. Agenda item number six is a report from the treasurer.

Director Owen, I will turn it to you.

Director Allen Owen: Yes, Chairman, Arleste is on the phone. I see her there. She's going to give us our report.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Good afternoon, everyone. Can you hear me okay?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Yes, we can.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Okay, great. We'll get started in your meeting packet on page 20. Can you still hear me?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Yes.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Are you guys still able to hear me?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Yes, we are.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Okay, great. I'm having issues with my microphone, I'm so sorry. Okay, on page 20, this is your cash flow report for your checking account, and under receipts, we have the annual contribution for the Port of Houston Authority for \$15,000. And then under disbursements, we've got checks 2736 through 2739 for your approval today, leaving \$109,360.73 in your account. Turning then on to page 21, this is your cash flow from your time deposits, showing the wire paid out to Texas A&M Transportation Institute. That takes us to your account balances on page 22, and you can see CDs listed there, your money market funds, and your checking account for a total in all funds of \$1,697,306.07. Continuing on to pages 23 to 24, this is your actual versus budget for January. You can see total revenue for the month of \$90,434, and then total expenses of \$2,585. Page 26 shows your in-kind and pro-bono expenses and leaving a net contribution of \$87,849. The next few pages, 25 through 28, are the grant status report with no changes since last month. And finally, that takes us to your fourth quarter quarterly investment report for the period ending 12/31, and if you turn to page 30, you will see there the interest earned on Texas Class of \$12,280.54. And then on the final page, you see the complete accrued interest totaling \$20,186.97 for the fourth quarter. And that concludes the bookkeeper report and the quarterly investment report unless you have any questions for me.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Are there any questions?

Director Jon Keeney: I move we approve.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay. We have a motion to approve from Mayor Keeney. Do I have a second?

Director Kendrick Jones: Second.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Alright. Second from Director Jones.

Ms. Arleste Pietrofeso: Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Thank you. All in favor?

Board: Aye.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Alright. Any opposed?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: It is approved unanimously. Okay.

Director Allen Owen: Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: You're welcome. Let's see. Item number seven, discussion and possible action on Resolution 25-04 ratifying payments.

Director Allen Owen: Mr. Chairman, that's the one I just asked for approval for.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Thank you very much. Okay, we are approved, and we will move on to item number eight, which is public comments. I will remind those that would like to comment that you are allowed three minutes. I believe we have at least one, would you like to come up?

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay. Where do you want me to speak?

Director Jon Keeney: There's a mic up front.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: Okay.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Although we know you, please announce your name just for our records. Thank you.

Mr. Dominic Mazoch: I'm Dominic Mazoch. I am in the TranStar Conference Center. I was expecting more people to show up today. When I read the minutes of the agenda, I was expecting to see Dr. Carol Lewis and Veronica because we're switching positions here. I was kind of shocked at the last TPC meeting that I saw Veronica there and I'm going, wait a minute, she's with the TAC, and then she said she's going to be the head of this. I was going to welcome her and give my thanks to Dr. Lewis, but it might be it's going to be next month. And I also want to say that last month I wasn't here because I was participating in the TPC Safety Subcommittee meeting. So, I was doing transportation. I also took the 56 and the Airline bus, 56 Airline/Montrose bus and the 85 over here.

One thing though, I think. You're going to be presenting stuff to legislative boards, particularly in Austin and Washington, DC. I think one thing that needs to be talked about is specifically with grade crossing separations is that, let's take like the York overpass that's going to be built in East End. That's going to be a lot of money to put in, but I think the thing that needs to be pushed is how much money is going to be saved by the public once that is in. There's going to be less time in traffic, there's going to be less congestion, there's going to be less air pollution. It's going to be easier for freight as far as trucks being able to get from one side of the East End to the other. I think the whole, I hate to say this, but it comes down to, I think what Houston City Council, what they call it is bottom line on top, there was a lot of things, one of their slides is they put what the cost, what the bottom line is on the top of the slide. And I think that is, I'm sorry, but I think that is as we are progressing or I should say degressing, as money is becoming more and more and more philosophical or theological lead, I think that is one thing we have to push is that, Yes, we're going to have to spend some money to put these crossings in, but in the long term, it's going to save everybody a lot of money. And also, too, because if METRO comes across there or any transit group that uses that particular overpass, is to indicate that that's going to save a lot of time for that agency and for their customer. But that was a number of comments. I'm going to send it back to you. Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Alright. Thank you. Are there any other public comments? I haven't seen any, but I just want to make sure.

Ms. Lisa Patke: No.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Okay. Alright. With that, no more comments, we will close that. Agenda item number nine is for the project manager update from Barbara Koslov. I'm not sure if she's on today or not.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: I'm here. I'm right here.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Oh, there you are. Welcome.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Okay. I'll just use this right here. Thanks. Good afternoon. I'll be honest, the last month wasn't a very active month for me, but I'll give you a quick update. I have been working again with TAG, the Transportation Advocacy Group, on a legislative agenda. The number one priority is talking about grade separations and safety—roadway, railroad, grade intersection improvements for safety purposes. I've been working very closely with TAG to schedule meetings with our legislators, and I will be traveling with them in late February as we push this agenda item and make it a top priority. I've also been involved with the US 90A study. We had a steering committee meeting today, and Director Ross and Director Owen and Executive Director Parker were all on call. It was a virtual meeting. I think between the three of them and Carol Lewis—Dr. Lewis, we had the most comments, and I think they heard us. We have talked quite a bit about the alignments they're proposing, and they're using data—the existing data and some of the projections, but we pointed out some other things to take into consideration. I do believe they heard us. The consultant and H-GAC will go back and review some of our comments. I'll work on some meeting notes because we highlighted quite a few things, but I think it was a very productive meeting, and we will see some changes in their priority evaluation as that study moves forward. They're hoping to have a stakeholder committee meeting in, I think, the beginning of March, and then they're going to have a public meeting. The location and date have not been determined, but I think we're moving in the right direction, and we got a good response from H-GAC and their consulting team. That's pretty much all I have to offer today. Thank you.

Director Allen Owen: Do you really think they listened?

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Well, I think...

Director Allen Owen: ...they really listened.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Well, I think they have a scope of work and an agenda, and so Thomas heard us. Whether he's going to be able to make some of the things that he said and Dr. Lewis said actually happen, I'm not sure. And I think the consultants have already done all their analysis, and I think they're at a point where they want to wrap things up. So, I don't know how much change you're going to see in some of their recommendations, but I think in their final report, they're going to list all these concerns we've addressed. So, it will be interesting to see. Katherine might have a different take on that. I think the other issue is HDR was the project manager on this, and they've got a new project manager. Scott Barker left, and he's working now for Harris County. So, Laura Grams, his project manager, needed to hear all this because she has not been as engaged. So, I think it was a good discussion. I will talk with Thomas separately because we communicate quite a bit, and I'll see kind of if he needs more input or if he needs some help in the direction that they're going. And I know Executive Director Parker will talk to

him, and I know Carol talks to him quite a bit also. So, we'll see. I think it's more of a scope and budget issue than it is they're not listening.

Director Allen Owen: Yes. Well, I was surprised. I talked to Tom Jasien yesterday, and I'm surprised that they didn't include him in this study. This blows me away that METRO's going to fund this deal, and they haven't been talking to Tom about it at all.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Well, when they first started putting their steering committee together, they went to METRO, and I think because it's a planning study, they sent it to Clint. And Clint Harper, who is the VP for Planning, he sent Vincent, who understands all the travel demand, as their representative. We asked for someone to also be a stakeholder, and I have to go through my notes, they might have sent someone else. Oh, I do think they sent back then Alma, who's also a planner, to sit on a stakeholder meeting. So, they sent representatives. Now, whether they're pushing this forward to Tom Jasien, I don't know, but METRO was asked early on to be an active participant, so it wasn't that they were excluded. It just might not have made it all the way to the president.

Director Allen Owen: Well, I had asked Tom yesterday. I gave him the link to be on the call if he wanted to because I just think he's the guy that's going to make the calls. They need him on it.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Well, I know when I reviewed both the list of the steering committee and the stakeholder committee, I gave them a variety of names at METRO that should be included. So, again, it might not have made its way all the way up to the president, but they have been approached and, you know, someone involved in the study.

Director Allen Owen: Okay. I just don't want it to get bogged down to a lower level and nobody knows what's going on. They tend to study things until they study it to death. Like I said this morning, I've been dealing with this for 30 years. Promises, promises, promises. Nothing's happened.

Ms. Barbara Koslov: Mayor Owen, I think we need to...

Director Allen Owen: Now we're at a point where we can make it happen. And everything is in place, Katherine. There's no right-of-way to acquire. Let's put the buses on and get it rolling.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Our conversation today and also the 922 comments will dictate it. I think that will help us to be able to make the case. So, I think it'll be one of the more interesting conversations when we get to the public piece. And I'm pretty sure that... and the communities will be very vocal, just as they have online, they will be in person. So, it's still an opportunity to talk about those alternatives and to make that claim as well, but I think that we're in a good space with having this much engagement, if you will. But we definitely will continue to work with METRO. And, of course, whatever findings will be, of course, pushed to the higher group, president and above. Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Thank you, Barbara. Okay. We're moving on to agenda item number 10, which will be a report from Executive Director Katherine Parker.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Thank you so much. Vice Chair Beeson, it sounds a little different. Everybody, we were talking about the changes here at the table. Next slide. I wanted to begin

first with congratulating our new chair, Director Veronica Chapa Gorczynski. She wasn't able to be with us on today. She will be here for the next meeting. But we're glad to have her join us as our new chair. She's no stranger to transportation and transportation efforts, and to rail specifically as the president of the East End District. So, this is near and dear, rail and transportation, to her heart. So, I think it's a great fit, and I want to thank Harris County and the City of Houston on the joint appointment for this position. Next slide.

So, a number of meetings this past month. TAC, we are transitioning as far as our representation there. Also TPC. As you heard earlier, our representative will be Director Gorczynski, and our alternate will be Mayor Keeney, and they will be able to attend TPC and were introduced as well there. I also attended the Greater Houston Freight Committee meeting, where we talked about regional goods movement, project selection, autonomous trucking technology, East End rail crossing improvement, with Jack Hanagriff presenting there. And also the Railroad Corridor Collaborative, which we talked about before. And then the Buffalo Bayou East Design Concept first steering committee meeting. They are talking about improved connectivity in that area, enhancing safety and mobility, supporting cultural and economic vitality, and integrating nature and recreation, and how the rail crossings, our pieces, how the rail crossings are a part of this design concept. It was held at the Buffalo Bayou building about two weeks now. So, we'll continue to be a part of those conversations. The East End Rail Safety Stakeholder meeting was hosted by Senator Carol Alvarado two Fridays ago. There was a large contingent of elected officials, East End representatives, HISD, TxDOT, City of Houston, HGAC were all there to talk about some of the issues in the East End and coming up with a list, if you will, of critical crossings. The Rail District, through THE HART, has already been working on that list. So, we're able to pull out those critical crossings. There's a lot of overlap between what the East End work has been doing as well as what we have been doing with the Rail District. So, we are working with Senator Alvarado to hone in on East End, but we will continue our work to include the region as a whole. So, our next meeting with her and her office will be late April, but THE HART will meet before that time to solidify that list. She has asked that her list be prioritized. THE HART's list of crossings, we have not prioritized, but they are spelled out as priority or listed as urgent or likely to be funded by the member entities that submitted them. So, we'll probably begin that exercise after and work with the East End on their specific set of crossings. And this is all in anticipation of the LAR or any monies that will be put forward in this legislative session.

And lastly, we've had information about 90A. So, I'm pretty sure that you've heard about that and you're moving forward. They did say that we were, as far as public engagement, we were second only to Pearland's planning study. So, I think that that's a big plus. And we know that through social media, people have no qualms about speaking and saying and speaking their mind. So, this hopefully will be a positive for us to be able to get this out there. And so that's the last piece that I have. And I'll turn it over to Vice Chair Beeson.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Thank you, Katherine. Okay. We're on to agenda item number 11, which is announcement by myself. First item, and there's been considerable discussion from Barbara and Katherine about the legislative efforts. First item to highlight is we will continue to seek funding for additional grade separations. Barbara talked about that, and also Katherine. I will discuss her new assignment and the priorities of that. Number two, we continue to support TxDOT legislative appropriation request. We will continue to develop low-cost, short-term improvements—Katherine highlighted a few of those, seeking traveler information for train blockage and locations appropriate for pedestrian bridges. And the fourth item is I wanted to

highlight that Executive Director Parker will join TAG Greenlight Houston Delegation and the Gulf Coast Rail District has helped craft the first priority list, which is to support a funding bill to promote improved safety of roadway and railroad crossings. So, we will continue to work closely with TxDOT and regional stakeholders to have projects ready for the call for projects. The slide shown here is the number one item there is to support the funding bill to promote improved safety. That was drafted guided by Gulf Coast Rail District. So, we're all looking to see the fruit of that labor. So, thank you, Katherine.

Director Bruce Mann: Chair, if I can?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Yes, please.

Director Bruce Mann: Thanks. So, I'm not sure if everybody is aware, but the grade separation funding is in both the House- and Senate-based budget bill, SB 1 and HB 1. It's in the text on both of them. So, there's a pretty good chance that since it's in both and it's a base bill, that it's going to pass, so \$350 million.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Excellent. Well, that's great news. Do we have another slide? Alright. I would like to note that our next board meeting date was moved to accommodate spring break and to allow for recognition of Dr. Lewis. I'm sure all of us look forward to that event. I certainly do. She's done a phenomenal job in advancing many initiatives that we've discussed prior to her taking over as chair, but she's been a participant of the Gulf Coast Rail District almost as long as I have. So, I look forward to that opportunity to recognize her. So, Executive Director Parker will email all the board members with additional information concerning this meeting in the near future. So, with that, if there's no other comments, I will entertain a motion to disband today.

Director Bruce Mann: So moved.

Director Jon Keeney: I just wanted to know who's going to bring a vat full of... to pour over Carol?

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: We're going to have a Gatorade. Lisa?

Ms. Lisa Patke: Jean Mann has her hand raised.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Oh. Before we leave, Jean, Director Mann?

Director Jean Mann: Yes, a question. On the 4th, is that going to be the same time at 2 o'clock?

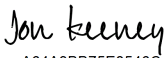
Ms. Katherine Parker: Yes. Yes, the board meeting will be still at 2 o'clock, and we're working on a small reception before, 1:00 or 1:30, and that's what I'll send out to the board members. So, it would be great if we could have everyone in person. That would be wonderful. If not, of course, we'll make sure that you're seen on camera if you're not able to come in person.

Director Jean Mann: I will move some things around to be there for Carol Lewis.

Ms. Katherine Parker: Appreciate it. Thank you.

Vice Chair Ronald Beeson: Thank you, Director Mann. Any other comments? Alright. We are adjourned. Thank you. (Adjourned at 2:31 p.m.)

ATTEST:

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Jon Keeney, Secretary
Gulf Coast Rail District

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