Minutes of the Planning & Projects Committee Meeting - Gulf Coast Freight Rail District
March 3, 2009

A meeting of the Planning & Projects Committee of the Gulf Coast Freight Rail District was held at Houston TranStar on Tuesday, March 3, 2009 commencing at 1:42 p.m. Written notices of the meeting including the date, hour, place and agenda for the meeting were posted in Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. The following directors participated in the meeting: Co-Chairman Ron Beeson, Co-Chairman Bill Jameson and Ms. Tina Araujo. The following Advisors attended the meeting: Mr. Billy Cooke, Mr. Charles Dean, Mr. Joe Adams, Mr. Steve Calles, Mr. Tony Sartori, Ms. Patricia Knudson Joiner, and Mr. Marvin Wells.

1. Certification of Quorum
   Co-Chairman Beeson called the meeting to order at 1:42 p.m. certifying a quorum with 3 of the 5 members present.

2. Discussion and Possible on Minutes for the December 19, 2007 Meeting
   Co-Chairman Beeson stated as a reminder that Chairman Ellis tasked this Committee to create a list of short term projects that could be ready to go by the end of March 2008. There is a renewed interest in formulating projects that are ready to move. He asked if anyone had any comments or questions.

   Director Araujo stated that she would like to see the Benefits Chart that was referenced in the Minutes, and inquired if it was used as a basis to form the project list. Ms. Crocker stated the intent of the chart was to layout a matrix to evaluate individual projects. The list has been approved by the Board, but individual projects within the list have not been approved in terms of priority.

   Director Araujo stated that Director Muhammad made a motion to conditionally recommend the project list pending review and comment. She inquired to whom the list would be conditionally recommended. Ms. Crocker stated it was for Board approval. She added that it was based on comments particularly from the City of Houston regarding which streets could most likely be closed and which could not. The City used the Major Thoroughfare Plan as the basis for its recommendations/suggested changes. The City’s recommendations were incorporated into the final list approved by the Board.

   Director Araujo stated that Director Robinson made a motion that the Interim Executive Director would contact TTI, H-GAC and the railroads to determine how a cost-benefit analysis should be coordinated. She inquired if that report was. Ms. Crocker stated all
entities were contacted and initial efforts were made to prioritize projects. That not having been completed, the Committee is now meeting to move that forward.

**Motion**: Co-Chairman Jameson made a motion to approve the December 17, 2007 meeting minutes.

**Second**: Director Araujo

**Vote**: Unanimous

3. Discussion and Possible Action on Recommended Improvements from TxDOT Planning Case 1 and Planning Case 2 as Phase One GCFRD Projects

Ms. Crocker stated that when the Committee first met the purpose was to look at previous studies completed by various entities and determine which projects were most needed and most feasible in the short term. Keeping in mind the original project list, the GCFRD is approaching not only the annual appropriations process at the federal level, but also the existence of the new Stimulus and the reauthorization process beginning some time this year. The GCFRD would like to have a broader list and a broader vision to propose. Planning Case 1 and Planning Case 2 are proposed as a fairly comprehensive list of short term projects needed on the regional rail network in addition to the original project list. Ms. Crocker stated that the question before the Committee is whether the Board should affirm that the projects proposed in the Planning Cases be the basis for regional rail improvements and funding for them pursued at the federal level. If not Planning Cases 1 and 2, then what projects shall serve as the basis for GCFRD regional planning?

Director Araujo inquired if the projects on the list already approved by GCFRD are included in Planning Cases 1 and 2. Co-Chairman Jameson stated yes and that these projects were discussed with the railroads and the Committee. Co-Chairman Jameson stated that he would like to look at the project list and make sure there is a consensus that the original list is still the right approach.

Charles Dean referred to the second page of the GCFRD project list and stated that there has been discussion of a grade separation at Harrisburg for METRO’s LRT. He indicated that the East End Chamber would like to see an underpass at that location rather than an overpass. Ms. Crocker stated that most of the discussion about feasibility has focused on cost. The next item on the agenda is intended to address cost questions by working with HNTB to update the cost estimates and also review individual projects to determine prioritization.

Joe Adams stated that he has reviewed Planning Case 1 and 2 projects and UP has ranked them in terms of need. The first recommended improvement on Planning Case 1 to construct separate switching leads to Settegast Yard has already been undertaken by the Union Pacific (UP). The next recommended improvement to construct a second main track between Sinco Junction and Deer Park Junction has been approved with a combination of federal, railroads and Port of Houston funding. He informed the Committee that they expect TxDOT to let the contract in May. Mr. Adams stated the number one priority in Planning Case 2 is to extend
the second track on the West Belt Subdivision north from Freight Junction through Belt Junction to connect with the Palestine Subdivision. He informed the Committee that UP and BNSF use this track. The estimated cost is $4 million. The next recommended improvement is to add a second main track between Rosenberg and West Junction on the Glidden Subdivision. It is about a $6 million investment. This portion of the track is used by UP, BNSF, KCS and AMTRAK. Mr. Adams stated the UP has worked with Missouri City to get a street closed to enable construction. There is a customer who wants to bring rail service to the area. This would be a good project because you could bring trains closer to Houston and dispatch and plan movements through the City. Trains could be held at this location and there would be less delay by blocked crossings in the City.

The fourth recommended improvement is from Planning Case 1 to construct a second bridge across Buffalo Bayou on the East Belt. The fifth recommended improvement is from Planning Case 2 to extend the second main track east from Dawes to Fauna and upgrade the trackage connecting the East Belt with the Lafayette Subdivision at Dawes. The sixth is to construct a separate switching lead between the north end of North Yard and Hunting Bayou. The seventh is to construct a second main track between Galena Junction and Manchester Junction. Marvin Wells stated that it should be higher on the list and UP agreed. Mr. Adams stated that the eighth improvement is to expand Englewood East to Dawes.

Director Araujo stated that Planning Case 2 assumes that Planning Case 1 is done. She stated that Mr. Adams went between both planning cases and inquired if the basis of what needs to happen first has changed. Mr. Adams stated this is a fresh look at the projects in terms of priority. Mr. Adams stated that all these projects are good projects and UP is prioritizing them based on current needs which may differ from those during the study timeframe when the recommendations were originally made.

Co-Chairman Jameson asked Mr. Adams if these projects are in the recommended project list or if they are in addition to that list. Mr. Adams stated this is a reordering of the recommended list but does not include grade separations. Ms. Crocker noted that a central piece of Planning Case 2 is grade separations along the West Belt to improve train mobility and asked if UP would increase cost share on those projects because of the railroad benefit. He added that they only looked at freight mobility issues. Ms. Crocker stated that the grade separations on the Board approved list are on along the East Belt. The Planning Case 2 grade separations are on the West Belt.

Mr. Adams stated that the railroads would rather invest in projects like these before investing in grade separations. Ms. Crocker stated that to remove train stopping requirements on the West Belt crossings would have to be grade separated or closed, so that would be beneficial to railroads. Ms. Crocker stated that the Board approved project list is primarily recommended improvements from Planning Case 1 plus a few other projects from the Harris County Study. She informed the Committee that they need to determine if the project list should be expanded to include these projects in Planning Cases 1 and 2 that are not covered,
and if so, how the projects should be evaluated. Co-Chairman Jameson stated that the Committee needs to decide on a cost and then could prioritize Planning Case 1 and Planning Case 2 in addition to the Board approved list.

Co-Chairman Beeson inquired if the Committee should prioritize the current project list. Ms. Crocker stated that is what Co-Chairman Jameson suggested. Co-Chairman Jameson stated this list is still a good list and then we could incorporate other projects.

Ms. Crocker stated the concern about a broader list is that the cost estimate in the HNTB study was done several years before so the numbers are several years old. Ms. Crocker stated she has discussed updating the numbers with HNTB and that TxDOT’s Intermodal Section is willing to help. The Planning Cases are modeled in groups so benefits are based on the entire Planning Case. Assuming we will not get enough money to do an entire Planning Case we need to be able to determine benefits on an individual basis. Ms. Crocker stated that she has asked HNTB to break out projects individually since they have the data, model and agreements in place with the railroads. If the Committee agrees that Planning Cases 1 and 2 are worth considering, then HNTB can update cost and breakout projects on an individual basis to prioritize them.

Co-Chairman Jameson inquired if HNTB would be able to come to some analysis on shovel ready projects and put a time line on the projects including environmental review. Ms. Crocker stated they could break out time frame and that the City could look at other obstacles at the local level.

Marvin Wells stated that he does not take exception to any of the projects on the original list and thinks they are all still good projects. Director Araujo stated that it is a matter of taking the approved list and adding projects from the Planning Cases. Mr. Adams stated that a high priority, inexpensive project that is not on the original list is to double track segments of Belt Junction.

Billy Cooke inquired if the grade separation projects would take the surface street over the rail. Ms. Crocker stated yes. Mr. Cooke asked if a grade separation could go under the railroad, and added that there is a lot of community support to grade separate Harrisburg that way. Mr. Adams stated that railroads prefer a grade separation to go over the rail. Ms. Crocker added that depending on the location there will be maintenance issues for either the City or County.

Ms. Patricia Joiner inquired if the closure at Lyons Avenue would be at grade so that the old Hardy Line would come through. Mr. Wells stated it is Lyons Ave. on the East Belt between Englewood and Northshore Junction.

Ms. Crocker stated that these projects are not final and would have to go through review and approval. Co-Chairman Jameson inquired if the City has looked at the list. Ms. Crocker
stated yes. Mr. Cooke asked who represents the City of Houston. Ms. Crocker stated it is
Dan Menendez who replaced Dan Krueger. Co-Chairman Jameson asked Mr. Adams if he
could rank these projects, including the original GCFRD list, by priority. Mr. Adams stated he would.

Co-Chairman Jameson stated that not all of the recommended improvements from Planning
Cases 1 and 2 are on the GCFRD project list. Ms. Crocker stated that the GCFRD project list
focuses on the Terminal and the question is whether the Committee wants to broaden the list
to include the West Belt. Co-Chairman Jameson stated that these projects should be
analyzed and ranked.

Mr. Wells suggested expanding the original project list to include the West Belt. Mr. Adams
stated that UP and BNSF will take both documents and provide a list of the most beneficial
projects. Co-Chairman Beeson inquired if the expenses should be validated. Ms. Crocker
stated yes. Director Araujo inquired if HNTB will update the entire list or just the cost. Ms.
Crocker stated that assuming that the Committee and Board agree they would update the
original list and Planning Cases 1 and 2.

Co-Chairman Beeson inquired if there needs to be a motion to make a recommendation to the
Board. Ms. Crocker stated yes and then the Committee will make a report to the Board. Co-
Chairman Jameson stated that we will compare the costs from the railroads as well as the
costs from HNTB and someone to pay for it. Ms. Crocker stated that TxDOT might be
willing to pay for it or the GCFRD could pay for it. Co-Chairman Jameson stated that it will
be hard to prioritize projects until we get an analysis.

**Motion:** Co-Chairman Jameson made a motion to recommend HNTB update and
prioritization of TxDOT Planning Case 1 and Planning Case 2 projects as well as the GCFRD
list to the Board.

**Second:** Director Araujo

**Vote:** Unanimous

4. **Discussion and Possible Action on Prioritization of Phase One GCFRD Projects**

Co-Chairman Beeson stated that this item was discussed with item 3.

5. **Adjourn**

Co-Chairman Jameson inquired about METRO activities. Director Araujo asked Ms.
Crocker if METRO will make a presentation at the March Board meeting. Ms. Crocker
stated that she is trying to schedule a presentation for the April Board meeting with someone
who can speak about the broader plan of the agency.

Co-Chairperson Jameson asked how long it will take HNTB to prioritize the project list. Ms.
Crocker stated a couple of weeks.
Motion: Co-Chairman Jameson made a motion to adjourn at 2:30 p.m.
Second: Director Araujo
Vote: Unanimous