

Date:

January 24, 2019

Case:

TxDOT PTAC Meeting

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TRANSCRIPTION OF
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2019
9:30 A.M
200 EAST RIVERSIDE DRIVE, ROOM 1A.1
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78704

REPORTED BY: BARBARA GRIFFIN, TEXAS CSR NO. 2494

A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING:

John McBeth, Chair

Jim Cline, Vice-Chair

Ken Fickes

J. R. Salazar

Marc Whyte

Dietrich Von Biedenfeld

TxDOT PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING:

Eric Gleason, PTN Director

Kelly Kirkland, PTN Business Operations Manager

Josh Ribakove, PTN Communications Manager

Mark Sprick, Section Director

OTHER SPEAKERS:

James Cardenas, TTI

MEETING AGENDA

ITEM

1. Call to Order.
2. Safety Briefing.
3. Approval of minutes from September 18, 2018 meeting.
(Action)
4. TxDOT's Public Transportation Division Director's report to the Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) regarding public transportation matters.
5. Presentation on Intercity Bus Program. (Action)
6. Discussion of Texas Administrative Code rule changes for public transportation agency safety plans. (Action)
7. Discussion of options and priorities for potential additional public transportation funding requested in TxDOT's current Legislative Appropriation Request letter. (Action)
8. Public Comment - Public comment will only be accepted in person. The public is invited to attend the meeting in person or listen by phone at a listen-in toll-free number: 1-855-437-3563 [US] with attendee access code: 598 304 40. The meeting transcript will be placed on the Internet following the meeting.
9. Propose and discuss agenda items for next meeting; confirm date of next meeting. (Action)
10. Adjourn. (Action)

1 MR. MCBETH: Good morning, everybody. A
2 little housekeeping thing. Please put your phones on silent
3 or you can turn them off, either way.

4 My name is John McBeth. I'm the chairman of
5 the Public Transportation Advisory Committee, and in that
6 capacity I will convene the PTAC committee meeting of
7 January the 24th, 2019. It's 9:30.

8 And the first order of business is a safety
9 briefing by Josh, who, in addition to doing our safety
10 briefing, is also the official mandoline player of the
11 Public Transportation Advisory Committee.

12 MR. RIBAKOVE: Well, that's true. Now, I've
13 heard somebody else was going to do the safety briefing this
14 morning, but I'll be happy to go ahead and do it. No
15 problem.

16 Welcome to 200 East Riverside Drive. We're in
17 Austin, Texas. If we should be -- boy, I haven't done one
18 of these in a little while.

19 MR. GLEASON: We suck. If there is a fire --

20 MR. RIBAKOVE: If there is a fire, we proceed
21 out of these main doors and out the building doors just
22 beyond. We'll turn to the left, and we will meet up over at
23 Riverside Drive on the side door.

24 MR. GLEASON: If we have inclement weather --

25 MR. RIBAKOVE: Should we need shelter in place

1 because of inclement weather, which we're not expecting,
2 this room is the best place to do that. There are no
3 outside windows here and we will stay here. Should there be
4 a shooter event, we will listen to instructions coming over
5 the PA.

6 In addition, there is a sign-in sheet by the
7 front door. Please -- if you're coming to attend the
8 meeting, sign in. If you'd like to speak during the meeting
9 and make a comment, there are some comment cards over there
10 too. Just fill one out and hand it to me and will make sure
11 that you get to have your say.

12 MR. McBETH: Thank you very much.

13 MR. RIBAKOVE: Restrooms are out in the lobby.

14 MR. McBETH: Move on to item number three, the
15 approval of minutes from September the 18th, 2018. Do I
16 have a motion?

17 MR. WHYTE: Motion.

18 MR. FICKES: Second.

19 MR. McBETH: I have a motion, have a second.
20 Any discussion? Any corrections? Hearing none I'll call a
21 vote. All in favor signify by saying "aye."

22 (Aye.)

23 MR. McBETH: All opposed by nay. Being all
24 ayes and no nays, the minutes are approved, and we move on
25 to agenda item number four, the TxDOT Public Transportation

1 Division Director's report to the PTAC. Eric.

2 MR. GLEASON: All right. Good morning. For
3 the record, I'm Eric Gleason, division director for Public
4 Transportation at TxDOT. I want to mention a few things in
5 my report to the committee. In your packet -- not for
6 discussion today but in your packet for your information is
7 a fairly lengthy presentation that was made to transit
8 providers yesterday at your January semiannual meeting on an
9 effort to update the department's long range plan. And we
10 can certainly schedule this as an agenda item later on in
11 the year for the committee. I would encourage you to look
12 through this presentation. It is developed to the extent
13 that it can be sort of with a transit focus to it as opposed
14 to just being the generic overview of the plan. Our intent
15 is to reflect in it the needs assessment work that's been
16 done and shared with the committee and resulted in your
17 recommendation of an additional \$41 million worth of
18 resources for the program. So our intent is to get that
19 into the plan.

20 There are a number of public meetings
21 scheduled for around the state and a number of different
22 ways that the public can become involved in the plan and
23 express their views. So I would encourage everyone to take
24 a look through that, and we'll get this on in an upcoming
25 agenda. Perhaps after the completion of the first outreach

1 effort, then we'll be able to share with the committee.

2 What we've learned with that -- I will also
3 point out to the committee the cover page on this particular
4 presentation is unique. And if you look at the -- look
5 across the top and you look at the traffic safety sign,
6 you'll see it has a message -- a public transportation
7 message associated with it.

8 MR. McBETH: Yeah, "Be safe. Drive smart.
9 Ride the bus."

10 MR. GLEASON: Ride the bus. All right. So I
11 did that for you all folks. Anyways -- enough on that. A
12 couple other items that I went over with everyone yesterday
13 as well. Obviously federal program status funding is on
14 most people's minds. Just a couple of notes on that, the
15 department is in a position to continue to reimburse transit
16 agencies and transit sub-recipients for their expenses in
17 this time frame as long as they have a current and active
18 grant agreement with us with a remaining balance. So, you
19 know, while we can't get reimbursed for that from the
20 federal system at this point in time, we are able to
21 continue our own reimbursement for sub-recipients.

22 We are watching bringing balances that
23 sub-recipients have particularly on the rural program side.
24 Most folks are in pretty good shape it seems from an overall
25 balance standpoint. Most folks have a fair amount of their

1 state money remaining to expand during this time frame, and
2 virtually everyone with the exception of two or three
3 systems have a pretty healthy share of their FY18 federal
4 money as well available. So we are in a position to make
5 some sort of gap type awards, if necessary. So we do have a
6 small pod of prior year 5311 program funding available to us
7 that we can, if necessary, go to the commission with and
8 make -- at this point, the plan would be agency specific
9 awards of those funds. What we will do and what we have
10 done in the past in those situations, though, is when the
11 FY19 federal money becomes available, we will calculate that
12 agency's amount, and we will subtract out of that award
13 amount money we've already given them. So this is not a
14 windfall for any individual agency. It's just kind of a gap
15 funding. So that's how we'll be able to approach it on the
16 rural side. The urban district side is a little more
17 difficult for us to address. We don't manage the federal
18 funding. That's managed directly with FTA. There are no --
19 there is not reimbursement capacity for that program right
20 now through FTA. So our assumption is that rural district
21 -- or that urban districts are going to be moving through
22 their state money more quickly than they might otherwise
23 have thought in their budgets. Again, most systems seems to
24 have a pretty healthy balance of FY19 state funds. We don't
25 really have the same kind of flexibility with the urban side

1 that we do on the rural side. We don't have a contingency
2 fund of state funds that we could award in the event that an
3 urban district begins to approach that point in time. So I
4 don't really have a good answer for the committee or a good
5 story for the committee on that one at this point in time.

6 I have briefed my boss, the deputy executive
7 director of the department on it, and I have been asked to
8 prepare a short briefing for commission members probably in
9 the mid to late February time frame on the situation. So
10 we'll keep you apprised of that.

11 You know, just a quick update on some recent
12 commission activity. In December, the commission awarded
13 \$20 million of combination of funds, federal discretionary
14 funds, flex funding that the department each year flexes
15 over from the highway side to the transit side for fleet
16 replacement purposes and some remaining balances again in
17 the rural program. We assemble those into a \$20 million
18 award for rural program fleet replacement that the
19 commission did to improve in December. We're all set to go
20 with program -- projects for it, but, of course, we can't go
21 anywhere with it until we execute a grant in the federal
22 system, and there is nobody home to execute that grant for
23 us. So, again, that's on hold.

24 And what I will close with is just a certain
25 amount of uncertainty associated with when the government

1 does reopen. We've never -- this is not an -- this is not
2 unfamiliar ground for us in terms of when during a federal
3 fiscal year we actually end up getting funding. I mean if
4 you look back over the last several years, this has been the
5 story. The difference this time, of course, is, you know,
6 we don't know what kind of backlog is going to be there at
7 FTA as they come back in and try and catch up having been
8 out for however long it is that they've been out.

9 And so looking down the road, I don't -- we
10 don't necessarily see the possibility of FY19 grant
11 agreements -- I just don't see them springing loose much
12 before June or July of the year, and even though it's
13 only late January. So, you know, we'll keep everyone up to
14 speed on it, but it's going to be -- it's going to be
15 difficult this year because of it.

16 The other thing that's out there for the
17 community is that there's been a lapse at the state
18 comptroller's office and the SmartBuy program contract for
19 transit. The previous contract for that ended. They don't
20 have a new one in place. We've had conversations with them,
21 and it doesn't appear to us that they're going to have a new
22 one in place before the end of August, first part of
23 September. And so the capacity of agencies in the state to
24 go to a comptroller and buy off the cooperative site is not
25 there right now.

1 So we are exploring the extent to which folks
2 can reach out to other stake cooperatives and use those
3 cooperatives during this time frame. There is no -- you
4 know, FTA guidance is fine with that. Our administrative
5 code is fine with that. The comptroller has raised an issue
6 we have to work through with them. We're doing that. We
7 hope to have resolution of that in two weeks. And once we
8 get that, we'll -- we'll work with folks to move ahead on
9 that option. So anyways that concludes my report.

10 MR. McBETH: Great. Thank you. We'll move on
11 to item number five, the presentation on Intercity Bus
12 Program. This is something that has caused me indigestion
13 for a long time.

14 MR. GLEASON: I'm sorry. I didn't know that.

15 MR. McBETH: And so I ask Eric if there's a
16 possibility we could address this, and I'll turn it over to
17 Eric because it looks like we're going to address it.

18 MR. GLEASON: All right. Thank you. So to
19 build on John's introduction a bit, this is a program we do
20 administer. We've not really comprehensively looked at it.
21 Our objective with bringing it to the committee is to engage
22 the committee in a deliberate -- a deliberate sort of
23 discussion of policy and practices to see if at the end of
24 that we don't conclude that we should make some changes to
25 the program and how we approach it.

1 What we have for you today is a review of the
2 current program, how we approach it, some background for you
3 on the federal guidance associated with it. We have -- if
4 you've had a chance to look at the packet, we have some
5 performance information in it, some current investment. And
6 then where we want to conclude the conversation today is
7 with an overview of how other states approached the program,
8 not to reach a conclusion with the committee today as much
9 as to leave with a whole bunch of questions you may all have
10 that we will proceed then to answer and then reformat into a
11 presentation at a future meeting and oriented toward getting
12 some -- getting some recommendations coming from the
13 committee on how to move forward. So I will work through
14 this relatively quickly. I don't intend to read everything
15 that's on the slides.

16 So, you know, the basic -- basic pitch behind
17 the Intercity Bus Program at the federal level -- it is
18 nested within the Federal Rural Program. And so the general
19 philosophy behind it is that intercity services are an
20 important part of rural area connectivity, and it is
21 generally designed to, you know, preserve or enhance rural
22 area access into the national intercity bus system, and
23 that's the fundamental driver behind it, and it's available
24 to be used in an operating investment, a capital investment,
25 planning and marketing a system. So it's fairly broad in

1 its scope on how it can be used.

2 So the way it has worked and continues to work
3 under current authorization is that 15 percent of the total
4 5311 program apportionment coming to each state in the
5 country -- 15 percent is a -- it comes as an automatic set
6 aside for Intercity Bus Program investments. And so what
7 that means for Texas is that at this point in time that's
8 about \$6.2 to \$6.3 million a year.

9 MR. CLINE: Say it again. How much is that?

10 MR. GLEASON: 6.2 to 6.3, somewhere in there.
11 So as the program grows nationally at the federal level, so
12 does this amount of money.

13 So the way we work with that here in Texas is
14 the intercity bus funds are part of the every other year
15 call for projects that we have -- the coordinated call. It
16 is one of the potential funding streams available or project
17 proposals in that call, and it is available for a
18 combination of operating and capital and eligible program
19 activities. And we've funded, you know, a complete scope of
20 eligible type funding associated with the program.

21 We ask folks if you're asking for operating
22 money, we do ask them to provide us some additional
23 information, some history, if it's something we've invested
24 in historically and some additional information. The
25 operating assistance is converted then into 12-month grant

1 agreements that we have with the private carriers. And so
2 we do -- we do tend to move on a pretty tight schedule with
3 the operating awards to make sure that we can have new
4 contracts in place with new funding on September 1st of
5 every fiscal year -- every state fiscal year.

6 So here are a combination of federal and TxDOT
7 program objectives. We basically assume the federal program
8 objectives here in Texas. And you can read for yourself the
9 kinds of things that it is intended to do. I think that a
10 large focus of our investment has been on the first bullet.
11 It's the connectivity issue.

12 History -- historically -- so we look back
13 over the last three years of grant awards, and we combined
14 amounts into the five categories of expenditure you see on
15 the right, just to give you a sense of how the current
16 funding breaks down between operating capital and other
17 kinds of projects.

18 Now, historically I think if you were to go
19 back ten years, you would see a larger share of this program
20 being invested in capital. And over the -- over the last
21 five years or so, there's been a shift away from capital
22 investment and more into operating. I think it -- one of
23 the characteristics of the historical capital investment was
24 sort of an ongoing investment in metropolitan area locations
25 for the intercity industry, the Houston terminal, the Dallas

1 terminal, the San Antonio terminal, and with the notion
2 being that the rural area service has come into those
3 terminals and it made sense to us to assist those operators
4 with renovating or upgrading those terminals. But I think
5 we kind of -- at some point it felt like there was no end to
6 that investment on our part, and so we have sort of made a
7 conscious decision to back away from that to refocus our
8 capital investments on the development of passenger
9 terminals, particularly in the context of rural program
10 facilities. So if you are building a new operating center
11 that has a place in it for transit service connections to be
12 made and that includes an intercity bus service connection,
13 then a proportional share of that investment can be funded
14 from this program. And so we do make those kinds of
15 investments still on an ongoing basis from the capital
16 standpoint. But this -- the operating investment at about
17 75 percent is -- you know, it is a relatively new emphasis
18 for us.

19 So with that -- this is a -- well, I skipped
20 over one. Let's go back. So we currently work with six
21 different entities that receive funding from the program.
22 You see them here. You know, there are two private
23 carriers, All Aboard America! and Greyhound, and then four
24 rural area program providers. And it's -- you know, the All
25 Aboard America! and Greyhound tend to address the large --

1 just the long distance connections between cities in the
2 state. Ark-Tex and CARTS are more focused on sort of the
3 development of a more regional intercity bus connection.

4 El Paso County is actually -- that's who we
5 give the funding to, that is actually -- we actually have a
6 partnership with the State of New Mexico on two routes, one
7 of them from El Paso to Las Cruces has been in place for
8 some time now. We started that with JARC funding -- Job
9 Access Reverse Commute funding back in probably 2007 or
10 2008. And we actually -- the way we work with those --
11 those routes with the State of New Mexico is there's a
12 proportional split on operating expenses based on mileage
13 within each state. So we don't fund operating these
14 services in the State of New Mexico. We share that. And El
15 Paso County in that instance manages our share of the
16 funding for that.

17 So that's who we work with. The next page is
18 a map. Some of you are already there, showing you the
19 various connections that are made with the current
20 investment, with the regional service connections from CARTS
21 and Ark-Tex being shown with a shaded area. And if you look
22 really closely within that, you'll see some thin lines that
23 represent the routes in the area. Then the more long
24 distance services shown mostly -- as you'll note, mostly
25 sort of in the north and western portions of the state.

1 So, you know, a lot of our focus for the
2 service investment that we make are going to be -- it's
3 going to be in the lower density areas where -- historically
4 the intercity industry has been going through a fairly
5 lengthy time frame of contraction and consolidation around a
6 smaller set of more profitable service connections for them.
7 And as you might suspect, in Texas those kinds of
8 investments are more likely to be in the more densely
9 developed, more heavily populated areas of the state
10 generally, the eastern half. So our focus has been on
11 trying to preserve connections that they might otherwise
12 choose not to operate. And that's why you see the heavy
13 emphasis on the western half of the state. It also is in
14 part the explanation for the relatively low ridership
15 numbers you see. And this is -- you know, one of the
16 questions for the committee is the extent to which the
17 investment should focus on ridership versus connectivity.
18 J. R.

19 MR. SALAZAR: The routes around the
20 Dallas/Forth Worth area and Houston area and San Antonio
21 area -- are those not shown because those are privatized?

22 MR. GLEASON: Correct. We are only showing
23 the ones that we spend money on.

24 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

25 MR. GLEASON: If you were to look at the

1 network in the state, the map of the network shows a lot of
2 lines. What's not communicated well in the map is the level
3 of service associated with each of those lines. And even in
4 the instance of our investment, we're typically talking
5 about one, maybe two round trips a day. And so even with
6 all of that coverage, the level of service is really --
7 really pretty sparse.

8 So the next several pages are there to give
9 you a sense of the performance of the investment. And, you
10 know, we do not -- you know, I do not have and my staff do
11 not have any ownership in these results. They are not
12 impressive results. They are more oriented toward, you
13 know, preserving a connection that otherwise would not be
14 there. But we have not -- we don't approach this program
15 from a -- at this point anyways from managing it based on
16 performance. And you will see in a little bit that other
17 states take different approaches when it comes to that.

18 Again, so you can kind of look through here
19 and get a sense for level of investment, daily trips, annual
20 trips. In the case of CARTS and Ark-Tex, we didn't show all
21 of their routes. We just showed one of the handful that
22 they each operate, so just to give you a sense for that.

23 If I can kind of click through these, I wasn't
24 going to necessarily just go into a lengthy recitation of
25 what's on each of the pages.

1 MR. MCBETH: Well, if you do the math, it sure
2 is a high cost per trip.

3 MR. GLEASON: It is; isn't it?

4 MR. MCBETH: Golly.

5 MR. GLEASON: It is. It is. So one of the
6 questions obviously is is there a better way to do it.

7 MR. MCBETH: There's got to be.

8 MR. GLEASON: So if we skip ahead through this
9 -- and I apologize. If I'm going too quickly, just stop me.
10 I didn't know how deep into this y'all want to go.

11 So there are -- in our view, we've tried to
12 sort of identify some overarching policy considerations that
13 we think it would be helpful for us to hear from the
14 committee over the next several meetings some feedback on.
15 And there may be more that the committee is interested in
16 adding to this list either today or over time as we get into
17 it. But, you know, one way to think about this is the
18 general split between an operating subsidy focus resulting
19 in service connections versus a capital facility focus
20 resulting in, you know, a better environment for passengers
21 accessing the system.

22 You know, the program objective of Texas
23 specific versus overall federal and that is just looking at
24 -- if you went back to that slide I showed at the beginning
25 that listed the program objectives, those are the federal

1 program objectives that we simply bring into Texas and adopt
2 as our own. Now, we are able to have our own objectives.
3 We'll have to be able to make the case that they nest within
4 one of the federal program objectives, but do we want to say
5 something more specific about the program for here in Texas
6 than is covered in the federal -- the federal list.

7 We just sort of touched on performance and how
8 do we introduce in a consistent standard way some
9 accountability of performance and how does that possibly
10 drive our decisions on where the money goes.

11 And then the program delivery options, which
12 is really -- it's interesting when you -- you know, when you
13 look at the next page, this is actually some work that we
14 had done way back in 2015 when we had a consultant go out
15 and kind of at some other states to try and give you a sense
16 of the range of different approaches that were out there.
17 And generally speaking from left to right on this slide,
18 Texas is the sort of, you know, least proscriptive, if you
19 will, about what we want done with the funding. We let the
20 market, if you will, come to us with proposals.

21 All the way over on the right, Washington is
22 probably the most proscriptive where, you know, they have
23 specific routes that they go out and procure -- literally
24 procure a service provider for and everyone else is sort of
25 somewhere in between. And they generally distinguish

1 themselves by these -- down the left-hand column of the page
2 here, those are sort of the way that we've tried to
3 distinguish the differences between the way different states
4 approach the program for you.

5 So, you know, we're over in the least
6 proscriptive just tell us what you think you need and we'll
7 evaluate it based on eligibility without any grand plan for
8 how we want the money focused. You know, Florida is not too
9 much different than that. You know, it's really -- you
10 know, if you read across the top on the characteristic,
11 whether it's applicant driven for a grant or led, and that
12 is perhaps the most significant of the rows in terms of our
13 approach to it. You know, some folks -- performance
14 measures really don't seem to be a large part of the program
15 nationally with the exception of Colorado. You know, you
16 can see the mix of different subgrantees. So Washington,
17 you know, may be the most proscriptive with contracts, but
18 it's subgrantees are only the privatized. So there is
19 really a range of things. And minimum service levels -- you
20 know, kind of a mix. But clearly over on the right-hand
21 side you're going to see a lot more that looks like, you
22 know, sort of the traditional transit approach to providing
23 service.

24 MR. McBETH: Have these routes pretty much
25 remained the same, the routes that you showed and --

1 MR. GLEASON: There is a core group of them
2 that have. Some -- a couple of them are newer than others.
3 There's a relatively new connection from Amarillo down into
4 New Mexico. But the Greyhound services in particular have
5 remained pretty stable over the years.

6 MR. McBETH: So basically just providing a
7 route that they would not be able to do if they didn't have
8 this other --

9 MR. GLEASON: Well, that's what they tell us.

10 MR. McBETH: That's what they tell me too.

11 MR. GLEASON: And, you know, one of the
12 challenges of this program with the private provider, of
13 course, is the -- is, you know, some of their information is
14 proprietary information. So we don't have as much of an
15 insight into how their overall operation works as we do with
16 public agencies. So it's a little transparent to us.

17 The other thing I'll mention and it goes to --
18 it's a capital area -- it's an area of capital investment
19 when it comes to fleet. We've not traditionally here in
20 Texas funded the traditional over-the-road intercity carrier
21 bus. When you see us making a fleet investment, it's more
22 in a -- one of our rural districts like CARTS is purchasing
23 a unique vehicle for intercity services. Historically
24 there's been some angst over if we fund a -- if we buy a bus
25 for Greyhound, you know, that somehow, some way it's going

1 to end up in Minnesota.

2 MR. McBETH: It's going to come with Minnesota
3 plates.

4 MR. GLEASON: And they have their own -- and I
5 believe at the federal level they have another source of
6 funding for fleet as well. So that -- you don't see us
7 giving someone, you know, three quarters of a million
8 dollars, whatever those things cost --

9 MR. McBETH: 500 grand a day. Yeah.

10 MR. GLEASON: -- for those purposes for fleet.
11 Jim.

12 MR. CLINE: Just a couple of things that kind
13 of strike me is that if we're starting with the -- we've got
14 15 percent. How are we going to divvy it up versus what are
15 the needs? You know, these people -- when you look at, you
16 know, whether it's forty something a day or two a day or
17 whatever the number might be, what problem are we trying to
18 solve? And then say, okay, and this is the best way to
19 address that problem rather than here we've got a solution
20 that's almost seeking the problem. I mean that sounds
21 harsh, but --

22 MR. GLEASON: No.

23 MR. CLINE: -- I think that if we -- that may
24 be a different approach. Right? I mean it is an Intercity
25 Bus Program, so there would need to be a bus or a rubber

1 tire component of some note in there as the solution set.
2 But kind of sat back and thought about it, you know, in an
3 extreme end what if we -- what if the operating funds were
4 used to purchase tickets or something like that and then
5 basically let it be driven that way, because just knowing
6 that -- a little bit about -- I mean just the -- I mean I
7 don't know much about it but the Greyhound model having a
8 lot of interconnection with package service as well as
9 people service.

10 MR. GLEASON: Right.

11 MR. CLINE: My suspicion is that at \$6 million
12 a year divvied up a bunch of different ways that's a small
13 fraction of what it costs to run those routes. That would
14 be my suspicion. And so either, you know, should we be
15 looking at another delivery model on how to move the funds
16 to actually serve the needs of the people that are needing
17 it the most. And I -- I don't know what our typical rider
18 profile is, you know. I mean is it mainly disabled folks?
19 Is it people going to jobs? Because if it's two trips a
20 day, probably not to work. That would be my guess.

21 So I just -- I throw that out as an idea. I
22 mean is there a better way to do that? It may be through
23 Greyhound through all these same folks, but is there a
24 better way to answer that question? And actually, you know,
25 from the public perspective, how do you actually solve the

1 problem that they're faced with?

2 MR. McBETH: Well -- this is John. I know at
3 Brazos Transit we have Greyhound coming into two separate
4 terminals that we own, one in deep East Texas in Lufkin and
5 another one in Bryan/College Station. And our approach to
6 this issue -- and I've been at Brazos Transit since
7 1982 back when you had to have a certificate of deed to even
8 go compete against the private sector. It has always been
9 to serve the bus stations that existed, make sure that our
10 rural people at least had access to the bus stations that
11 existed, not to subsidize a route. It's up to Greyhound or
12 Continental Trailways or Arrow or whatever name they're
13 operating under today -- it's up to them to decide their
14 routes. But we -- we bring people into our Lufkin terminal
15 -- we bring people in from five different East Texas
16 counties every day that then get on -- they catch one of the
17 three buses that come through Lufkin, and they get on that
18 bus, and where they go we don't know unless we write a
19 ticket. They can call us -- they can call our dispatch
20 operation, and we can write them a ticket. We will issue
21 tickets for Greyhound.

22 MR. GLEASON: So you have an arrangement --

23 MR. McBETH: We have an arrangement with
24 Greyhound, and Greyhound pays us to write their tickets.
25 They pay us to do their package delivery service. But we

1 rely on them to set up the routes. Now, I know some of
2 these routes like -- you know, I would imagine from Del Rio
3 to San Antonio I bet you that's -- I bet you that's not a
4 real well-used route, but I don't know. It might be. But
5 that's the delivery model we've always looked at. And I've
6 always thought that if there was a way to take some of that
7 intercity bus money and invest it in the rural programs that
8 we have out there so that as a contingency we say for you to
9 get this money you have to serve a national bus carrier
10 somewhere in your area, you've got to -- you've got to make
11 service available so people can get there. But we write
12 tickets in the Bryan/College Station program -- we have
13 people call us all the time. We write tickets all the way
14 to Chicago. Now, I don't know how many bus changes they've
15 got to make. I know one bus comes through early in the
16 morning and goes to Dallas and one comes through late in the
17 evening and goes to San Antonio. But I think that's
18 certainly a delivery model, and let the private sector
19 decide, you know, where they're going to run their bus
20 routes. Of course, sometimes they'll just simply say we're
21 not. But we've seen -- we've seen a resurgence -- in our
22 Bryan terminal, we've seen an increase in ridership of buses
23 -- of over-the-road buses. We've actually -- over the last
24 five years, we've seen an increase by probably 50 percent.
25 More people are riding buses. I mean it's -- to ride a bus

1 from Bryan to Chicago has got to be a four or five-day
2 process. But if they're going to do it -- I mean it's
3 cheap. The tickets are cheap. Cheaper than airline. But I
4 would think that would be a model that we could look at to
5 see what we could do to spur having our rural providers
6 because we cover the whole state. We cover every place.

7 MR. GLEASON: This is Eric. So that would be
8 a -- to actually -- the concept behind the investment in the
9 Texarkana area, that area -- our Council of Governments
10 area, is more in line with that in terms of subsidizing
11 feeder routes into an intercity terminal. And so that is --
12 it's a different focus for the investment.

13 MR. McBETH: Right.

14 MR. GLEASON: And it could likely -- you know,
15 it would likely need to be also packaged up with the package
16 delivery because I think, you know, the trend from the
17 intercity carrier is to try and consolidate, reduce stops in
18 the rural area, and the model would basically in this
19 instance say that as they do that, these funds would be used
20 to backfill behind that decision with a rural investment
21 service and package that would perhaps be of benefit to
22 both.

23 MR. McBETH: Right. Yeah. We do -- we do and
24 have done for quite some time the last mile delivery. They
25 bring the packages into our terminals, and then we will put

1 them on a rural bus and deliver them that last mile, but we
2 don't do it just for that package. We've got to be going
3 there in order to take that package in. We will tell them
4 that.

5 MR. GLEASON: I see.

6 MR. McBETH: If we're going there, we will
7 take that package for you, and we'll deliver it the last
8 mile. We'll save you the time and effort. And we don't
9 make a lot of money off of that, but we make money off of
10 it. The bus is going there anyway.

11 MR. GLEASON: It can't be the reason for the
12 service.

13 MR. McBETH: No, it's not the reason for the
14 service. It's never -- you know, we've actually had that
15 discussion with the Federal Transit Administration. Now,
16 that's never the reason for the service. There has always
17 got to be a human being. We're either going out there to
18 pick them up, and while we're there we're going to drop it
19 off. The number of bumpers that we deliver to body shops is
20 incredible to me. You would think that they would figure
21 out a better way to ship bumpers, but over-the-road coaches
22 we probably do ten bumpers a week, slide them in the back of
23 the bus under the seats and --

24 MR. GLEASON: I was going to ask you where you
25 put them all.

1 MR. MCBETH: Yeah, underneath -- underneath
2 the seats in the back.

3 MR. CLINE: One other thing. I'm sorry. This
4 is Jim. I had -- you know, having spent a lot of time
5 driving the highways, there's a lot more buses -- there's a
6 lot more intercity buses than are shown on this list.

7 MR. GLEASON: Absolutely.

8 MR. MCBETH: Oh, yeah.

9 MR. GLEASON: There's a boatload of carriers
10 out there.

11 MR. CLINE: And so my question would be what
12 -- and I don't know how hard it would, and it would probably
13 be really hard. But if it was to overlay that and say this
14 is the service that's provided, so either there's two things
15 that are missing. One is there's a piece of a route that is
16 -- it's much like our discussion of the rural transit.
17 Right? We're talking about how much scope and coverage we
18 have, do we have the right coverage of the area. So if it's
19 being served by the private sector, number one, I would say,
20 okay, do we really need to be subsidizing what is that which
21 is already being provided. And it may be more than just
22 ones that are out there. And the second part is if you're
23 in a rural area, how do you get access to that service, and
24 that's -- I think, John, that goes to your piece, which is
25 maybe that's -- you know, should we be subsidizing the long

1 term -- the long distance trip or should we be helping focus
2 effort on getting somebody from their home to tie into the
3 bus system. Now, it may take days, like you said, but at
4 least that gives them that connection that goes back and
5 forth. But I just think of the -- I guess it's tornado
6 lines. It's -- there's tons.

7 MR. GLEASON: Oh, there's -- yeah.

8 MR. CLINE: Particularly I think like Del Rio
9 to San Antonio I'd suspect there's several. They're
10 running --

11 MR. GLEASON: So here's the thing -- this is
12 Eric. Let me jump in a little on that, Jim. We do as a
13 part of our -- when we get a proposal, we do check with the
14 connection and check to make sure there is not some already
15 underlying service available. So we actually do that kind
16 of a check. And, you know, we actually -- we have some
17 experience with the importance of the Del Rio to San Antonio
18 line because a number of years ago we had a carrier out
19 there who just bailed on us with like -- I mean it was
20 almost like a day's notice. We're not going to run that
21 anymore. And without getting into why that happened and all
22 of that, there did -- there was a time then there where the
23 rural carrier in the area did, you know, incur a significant
24 additional operating expense to cover the demand associated
25 with not having that route there. One of the -- so when we

1 talk --

2 Jim, you mentioned a little bit markets and
3 maybe a better understanding of who needs it and how it
4 might get used, one of the -- one of the markets is actually
5 veterans who live in rural areas who are trying to get to
6 their VA, and the intercity carrier is often the way that
7 that trip is made. And so I have often thought that a
8 stronger tie-in or perhaps a more proscriptive tie-in on our
9 part with our intercity services would be to enhance those
10 kinds of connections as well. You know, if we can get
11 enough research and enough data that tells us that there are
12 certain markets, that there is a way for us to emphasize or
13 prescribe, because that's kind of where we choose to go on
14 this, then we should move in that direction as well.

15 So I think -- and, again, we can try and
16 capture visually for you what the -- what the lines on the
17 map look like for intercity carriers, but -- but it's -- you
18 know, it's a single trip at 2:00 a.m. in the morning that is
19 happening out there, you know, and they connect into San
20 Antonio, but there is nobody there for them to connect to
21 for four hours. That's the hard part of this conversation
22 to describe, and that's for some of the trips that we invest
23 in. If you have a single focus for the program on making
24 the connection to the National Bus Network -- National
25 Intercity Bus -- if you had that kind of single focus to it,

1 I'm not sure it's that difficult to figure out what to do
2 because you don't really care too much about making sure
3 there is a way into a major city terminal. It's when you
4 begin thinking about other kinds of -- also other kinds
5 connections being made by people, daily trip needs for
6 people, that's where it becomes more complicated in terms of
7 knowing what the right -- what investment is, what the focus
8 for it should be, those kinds of things.

9 MR. CLINE: I think just -- this is Jim. I
10 just think it's really important to understand what the real
11 -- what is the demand we're trying to solve. That's
12 typically what we would do in this type of business is, you
13 know, try to figure out what that demand is and then how to
14 meet it. So whether that's, again, with the connections
15 with the, you know, service -- and it may be a mix of both.
16 Right? If there is a gaping hole in the service, it might
17 make sense to say we want to extend this service to a town,
18 whatever town that might be. Even if it's got a fairly low
19 density of trips, that gives us that connection. And then,
20 you know, even the \$6 million a year isn't an enormous sum
21 of money to, you know, what, 100, 120 bucks an hour to run
22 those overload buses. That goes away pretty quick.

23 MR. GLEASON: I does. Yeah.

24 MR. CLINE: So it's -- how can you focus it?
25 How can you really make a difference with it? That would be

1 a question that I'd like to -- you know, that would be good
2 to be able to tell the result of what we're doing.

3 MR. WHYTE: And this is Marc. Just from a
4 cost per trip perspective like John mentioned earlier, it's
5 got to make sense. The numbers we were looking at earlier
6 are crazy. I mean we're --

7 MR. McBETH: Just due to vision, it's --

8 MR. WHYTE: It's got to make sense.

9 MR. McBETH: -- scary.

10 MR. WHYTE: We can't be just throwing money
11 around.

12 MR. GLEASON: Right. So when -- we're going
13 to have to get our arms around what is a number that does
14 make sense and how do we know we're there.

15 MR. McBETH: Yeah.

16 MR. GLEASON: And I think part of it is just
17 basic information on what it costs to operate out there.
18 And then -- and then, you know, there is -- the tradeoff, of
19 course, is high ridership, so that number comes down versus
20 fundamental access, which doesn't quantify all that easily.
21 And we'll have to come up with some way to balance that.

22 There is some -- and I don't know how old it
23 is now, but there have been some -- there is some work that
24 I know about from the research standpoint in Texas, and it
25 may be a decade old, that looked at travel demand for

1 intercity services. So we will try and resurrect that.

2 Kelly, I think that was -- I know TTI did some
3 work way back when, and there may have been an update for
4 it, but we will try and dig some of that up as opposed to go
5 do something new with it and just see how current it is and
6 see how informative it is.

7 MR. CLINE: It seems -- this is Jim. It seems
8 that if we were -- if the focus is on the rural -- finding
9 access for the rural to the bus, how can we do that -- how
10 can we make the money make the most difference. Right?
11 Because if it's just like smearing peanut butter just a
12 little bit everywhere, you end up achieving very little
13 versus something that's got enough critical mass to actually
14 solve the problem.

15 MR. GLEASON: I will mention to the committee
16 there is -- there is an option in the program and some
17 states do exercise this option -- I'm not suggesting we're
18 in that position at all here in Texas -- where you can
19 certify that all intercity bus needs are met in your state.
20 And at that point, that 15 percent set aside goes away and
21 you can just put that money into your rural program
22 services. Now, some states have taken that step, and it's
23 -- you know, you just don't do it summarily. You have to
24 involve the industry in that decision. The governor
25 actually has to --

1 MR. MCBETH: Certify.

2 MR. GLEASON: -- make the certification. The
3 only time in the history of that program since -- I've been
4 here since 2005. We -- at one point in time we accumulated
5 a pretty significant de-obligation, meaning that a project
6 had been identified in a call for projects. It had been
7 funded, and then it had been de-obligated. And we had just
8 gone through another call where not all the funds had been
9 awarded. And so we made a point in time, single-case
10 argument to FTA and did -- and to the governor at the time
11 and did get certification. It was -- it was a very, very
12 controversial decision at the time. I think everyone
13 understood it. And I think it was a time during some pre --
14 I think it was during some really, really high fuel price
15 times, and we took the money and distributed it back out to
16 the rural program in a formula basis to help with their
17 budgets with some unanticipated increase in the price of
18 fuel.

19 MR. MCBETH: I think you can make that case as
20 long as you took the money and you distributed it to the
21 rural programs. We cover every county in the state with the
22 contingency that in order to get that money they have to
23 make sure that the people in their service area have access
24 to a common carrier bus station. And there is a lot of
25 common carrier bus stations out there. I mean some of them

1 -- before we built our terminal in Bryan, they were
2 operating in a convenience store. And the convenience store
3 would change hands every three months, and they'd get kicked
4 out and have to go find another convenience store. So I
5 think if you -- that's the approach we've taken. You know,
6 like looking at the route from Amarillo to San Antonio, I'm
7 surprised that the common carriers are not already doing
8 that route. That's -- that's a big route.

9 MR. GLEASON: It's not profitable for them.

10 MR. McBETH: Well, I'm sure it's not
11 profitable. That's always been my problem with the
12 intercity bus thing is -- you know, having lived through the
13 early '80s when they -- they came into our areas and just
14 started shutting down routes, and we couldn't do anything
15 because you had to have a certificate of conveyance from the
16 Railroad Commission in order to reestablish that route. And
17 so we were prohibited from doing that. So I've always had a
18 bad taste in my mouth about that. It just -- I know it's
19 not profitable to them, but that's the business they're in,
20 and sometimes you have non-profitable routes. You've got to
21 make your profit somewhere else. That route alone just
22 seems to me that that would be something that's already
23 being taken care of. But I don't know where you stop it.
24 They may be --

25 MR. GLEASON: Well, and that --

1 MR. McBETH: -- stopping in Post, Texas.

2 MR. GLEASON: So there may be a point-to-point
3 service --

4 MR. McBETH: Yeah.

5 MR. GLEASON: -- that is there between those
6 two relatively large destinations.

7 MR. McBETH: Those are large destinations.

8 MR. GLEASON: But it doesn't stop anywhere in
9 between.

10 MR. McBETH: Yeah, yeah.

11 MR. GLEASON: And that's what --

12 MR. McBETH: That could be.

13 MR. GLEASON: -- our investment in that route
14 that we invest in does, so --

15 MR. McBETH: Like I said, they could be
16 stopping in Post, Texas, which has got a population of about
17 115 people and nine liquor stores.

18 MR. GLEASON: I don't know if I want to end
19 the conversation on that note or not.

20 MR. CLINE: Let me not end it on that. An
21 approach to this might be is first answer the question is
22 the need being met today. And that's a binary -- you know,
23 that's -- it's way more than a yes or no, but it -- I mean
24 at the end of the day, that -- that may be the first
25 question that needs to be answered. And we can say pretty

1 quickly, no, it's not being met and it's not being met here,
2 that would then drive the equation, because the rest of it
3 would be if it's being met, we should use the money
4 elsewhere. But if -- you know, barring that it seems just
5 -- to me that's logical if we came back said, wow, there is
6 an issue. We need to solve it. And, okay, now there is a
7 bunch of different ways to do it. Marc said cost per rider,
8 how do we make it sufficient. Is it efficiency or is it
9 scope; right? I mean first span of coverage. And we did a
10 -- I thought we did a really good job of that when we
11 talked about the rural program in our funding request
12 through TTI -- that TTI prepared and was successfully
13 forwarded to the commission. I thought we did -- that
14 balance was struck. We've been -- we've got that -- we've
15 got a history with that. I think we -- you can grapple with
16 that. It's not easy, but I mean it could be grappled with.

17 MR. GLEASON: Let me suggest this to the
18 committee. Been a good conversation. We didn't necessarily
19 need you to conclude anything today other than to ask a lot
20 of questions. There are kind of -- what if we were to go --
21 my suggestion would be that we would go away between now and
22 a future meeting and try to capture this notion of need and
23 how do we better understand the need for intercity bus
24 services, what that looks like, and do also at the same time
25 try and capture some sense of a reasonable set of

1 performance outcomes to begin to get our arms around with
2 making any investment. I'm not really sure what that's
3 going to look like when I say that. But I think those are
4 sort of the two -- sort of -- they're not two ends of a
5 spectrum, but they -- I think if we can have good notions of
6 both -- certainly better notions of both than we have today,
7 then maybe we can move forward to try and see what direction
8 might make sense.

9 MR. MCBETH: Sounds like a plan to me.

10 MR. SALAZAR: That sounds good to me. And I
11 know Ken and I were having a side conversation about the
12 accuracy of the data that's presented. I think that may be
13 an issue going forward. So I would recommend that maybe we
14 take another look at it and make sure that information is
15 correct.

16 MR. GLEASON: You bet.

17 MR. MCBETH: If you add up the numbers of the
18 daily riders, it's less than a thousand. For a state the
19 size of Texas, that's not many folks. That's not many folks
20 at all.

21 MR. GLEASON: Right.

22 MR. MCBETH: A thousand a year, that's small.

23 MR. GLEASON: So maybe we'll go ahead and get
24 some data from some of these other states and what
25 their ridership looks like. We'll have to make sure we know

1 what we're looking at. For all I know the Colorado ski
2 market is part of their intercity investment.

3 MR. McBETH: Washington has done the best job.
4 Being -- and this is John. Being on the board of Community
5 Transportation Association of America, Washington State has
6 done the best job. They literally went out and took control
7 of this program, and they run it like a -- they're
8 like Nazis. They run it. They run it like a -- it's got to
9 be efficient, and it's -- they've expanded their intercity
10 bus network even though their rurals are just really
11 onerous, but they took -- they took ownership of this
12 program and it's worked.

13 MR. GLEASON: We'll take a closer look at
14 Washington then. All right. Enough on that.

15 MR. McBETH: Enough on that. Next item is the
16 discussion of the Texas Administrative Code rule changes for
17 public transportation agency safety plans. Everybody's
18 favorite topic.

19 MR. GLEASON: And Mark Sprick down at the end
20 there is going to do this one for us. Mark is our section
21 director for administration and programs report, and he has
22 the task of implementing the new safety rule.

23 MR. SPRICK: Good morning, Committee. My name
24 is Mark Sprick, and this effort falls within my area within
25 our division. So I'm going to -- I'm going to walk through

1 a presentation we provided to the transit operators
2 yesterday. And I'll tell you that at the end of this we're
3 going to show you our concept for a timeline to getting to
4 some rule changes.

5 We currently have a set of rules drafted about
6 five years ago that we're going to need to amend. And
7 here's reason why. Last summer in July Federal
8 Transit Administration issued their final rules on who and
9 how and what and when bus agencies who receive some federal
10 funding have to produce an agency safety plan. And the
11 rules go into effect this coming July, and then we all have
12 to comply with those rules the following July. So by July
13 20th of 2020, we'll all be in good shape and compliant.

14 The bottom there shows, along that arrow, sort
15 of the history of this. It's been going on since MAP 21 was
16 passed by congress. These agency safety plans are written
17 in the statute from MAP 21 and were carried forward in the
18 FAST Act, which is our current authorizing legislation. And
19 we jumped on them right away when they came out with a set
20 of advanced rule making back in 2013, and then, of course,
21 since when they've changed it all.

22 So the bottom line is as of last summer FTA
23 says if you receive Section 5307 funds from us at FTA, you
24 have to do one of these agency safety plans. If you get
25 planning funds only or you fall under Federal Railroad

1 Administration for commuter rail service or the ferry
2 services, you don't have to do this with us. And contrary
3 to their initial advanced rule making they said if you get
4 5310 or 5311 only funds, we're going to defer the
5 requirement for you to do an agency safety plan. We think
6 that's FTA speak for it's coming later, to be determined.
7 So you're not entirely off the hook, but you are for now.
8 The wrinkle in this is if you're a 5307 agency and you also
9 do 5310 or 5311 service, that 5310 or 5311 service will have
10 to be included in your 5307 agency safety plan. So our
11 so-called joint providers have to cover their entire fleet
12 and service under the agency safety plan. So there you go.

13 So who has to do these that receive 5307 and
14 what is TxDOT's role in this? Under this rule -- and it's
15 specific to this rule -- the FTA divided up the designation
16 on who has to develop their own plans. And they said if
17 you're a 5307 and you have a rail system, you have to do
18 your own plan and FTA will approve it or certify it. If
19 you're a so-called large bus operator, FTA will review and
20 certify your plan. State DOTs, you get to do that function
21 for so-called small bus operators, and they define that in
22 this rule as an agency with 100 or fewer vehicles in peak
23 revenue service. So our approach here at TxDOT is we're
24 going to do this with the small operators. And we've
25 identified 41 potential small operators in Texas by this

1 definition. We're going to work with those agencies over
2 the next roughly year and a half to get those plans
3 developed. Now, we're bringing on a contractor with a lot
4 of experience in doing this in other states and is kind of
5 an expert, if you will, in these bus agency safety plans.
6 And we're working on getting that firm under contract right
7 now and hope to get launched here in the next few weeks, and
8 they will be part of the TxDOT effort to do that. And then,
9 of course, whether you develop your own or you develop yours
10 with TxDOT, every agency under the federal rules will be
11 accountable for actually implementing that plan and then
12 doing annual updates and recertifications as time goes
13 along.

14 Now, the 41 agencies who are so-called small
15 bus operators have an option to develop their own outside of
16 our evident if they want to and those agencies will be
17 required to notify TxDOT in writing. In the next few weeks
18 or so, we're going to be sending out an e-mail with a letter
19 template that says, you know, by March return this to us if
20 you want to opt out. At that point, you're on your own. At
21 some future date if you want to return in, we can discuss
22 that but your plan will be certified by FTA and you will get
23 looked at in your tri-annual reviews, et cetera. So we're
24 going to work with everyone on that to figure out --

25 MR. GLEASON: Can I just stop you right there,

1 Mark? You just said your plan will be certified by FTA.

2 MR. SPRICK: Yes.

3 MR. GLEASON: If you're a small bus and you
4 opt out, don't we still certify the plan?

5 MR. SPRICK: We're not entirely clear on that
6 yet.

7 MR. GLEASON: Okay.

8 MR. SPRICK: The rule is not real specific.

9 MR. GLEASON: Really. Okay.

10 MR. SPRICK: It's depending on how you read
11 it.

12 MR. McBETH: It would seem like you would.

13 MR. SPRICK: When FTA turns the lights back on
14 in their office --

15 MR. GLEASON: We'll get that clarified. Okay.

16 MR. SPRICK: We've heard both.

17 MR. GLEASON: Okay.

18 MR. CLINE: It seems like there would be a lot
19 of economy of scale for an agency to participate in this. I
20 mean the basic format -- there is going to be agency
21 specific stuff, but a good portion of this should be
22 insistent across all agencies at least to make sure you
23 check all the right blocks.

24 MR. SPRICK: I agree with you, Jim. And, in
25 fact, I think in talking with our contractor we're thinking

1 that we're going to be able to come to each agency with
2 about 50 to 60 percent of their plan pre-written, if you
3 will, because it's going to be common to all agencies, and
4 we'll just focus on the things specific to that agency.
5 Yeah, I agree with that. Okay.

6 MR. McBETH: Encourage people to do it.

7 MR. SPRICK: By the way, that wrecked bus was
8 not one of ours.

9 MR. FICKES: I looked very hard on there to
10 see where that was.

11 MR. SPRICK: Yeah. That's not one of ours.
12 So I won't read you this slide other than to just tell you
13 there is a significant amount of work to do to get
14 these plans developed, and some of the main features of this
15 new planning effort that FTA has put out is -- it's really
16 elevating safety risk and mitigation measures and issues up
17 to the accountable executive level and ensuring that there
18 is a management focus on safety identification and
19 resolution and then use of the so-called safety management
20 system that is out in the National Transportation Safety
21 Plan. Sort of like our performance targets on operations,
22 there is safety performance targets. It's
23 really integrating from the agency level up with
24 the National Transit Safety Plan a focus on fatalities,
25 problems that might come up. It really integrates it in top

1 to bottom. Not -- that part isn't so hard, and that's what
2 we're going to be bringing to each agency is a lot of that
3 national safety plan information. Then you've just got to
4 figure out how that applies to your operations.

5 The reason I'm showing this is our contractor
6 is going to be spending a fair amount of time on these
7 elements with each agency. Many agencies, as Ken and I were
8 discussing yesterday, already have some of these or most of
9 these elements in place. They may not be called this or
10 organized this way, so we're going to crosswalk what you
11 already have over into this format, if you will, and may
12 have to fine tune a little bit but should be fairly
13 reasonable to cut down on the amount of work everyone has to
14 do. So we're going to take advantage of what you already
15 have. Some agencies are further ahead than others, so we'll
16 see.

17 Another thing of note, we did not get any
18 extra funding to do all this from the federal government.

19 MR. McBETH: Really? Go figure.

20 MR. SPRICK: They graciously informed us that
21 these categories you see on the screen can be used out of an
22 existing fund for you and us to do this effort. We at TxDOT
23 have come up with some planning funding to help do our part
24 of it with you. We do receive here at TxDOT, and it's
25 another program I have, is the rail safety oversight, which

1 receives Section 5329 funds of a little over a million
2 dollars a year, and we have I think four separate
3 interpretations from FTA that under no circumstance can we
4 use any of those funds to do this bus safety planning. So
5 I'm sorry to report to you that we can't use that. Maybe
6 that will change in the future. We'll see.

7 MR. McBETH: Well, we know -- this is John.
8 In their original rule, they said it wasn't going to cost
9 anymore money anyway, so no wonder they didn't give you any
10 money. I mean at CTAA we fought that like how -- really?
11 Well, what do you mean it's not going to cost anymore money?
12 I've got to hire at least one person. Are they going to
13 come to work for me free? Yeah, but their -- their position
14 is it's not going to cost anymore money and --

15 MR. SPRICK: Yes, sir. We challenged that as
16 well. I think AASHTO challenged it.

17 MR. McBETH: Everybody challenged it.

18 MR. SPRICK: I can tell you it is not going to
19 be free to TxDOT. I can assure you that.

20 MR. McBETH: It certainly wasn't -- hasn't
21 been free to us. Safety officer --

22 MR. GLEASON: Saves you money.

23 MR. McBETH: Huh?

24 MR. GLEASON: It saves you money.

25 MR. McBETH: It saves you money on your

1 insurance. That's for sure.

2 MR. SPRICK: So here's where we're at. This
3 is the final slide. And really where the committee I think
4 is going to be involved is when we bring to you the set of
5 draft rules. We're developing those now. And I'll tell you
6 this time line is based on some coordination with our
7 general counsel division and other parts of TxDOT that have
8 advised us that this would be a really good thing for us to
9 work on but to not bring to the commission until after
10 legislative session is substantially completed. So it's
11 based in part on that.

12 So we're developing some rules. The governor
13 has a policy in place where he wants to see those rules and
14 review them. So we have to include that in our time frame
15 here between March and April. We're going to then based on
16 that final review of our draft rules, if that makes sense,
17 develop draft final rules and then share those with you this
18 summer. And then we'll have a discussion about those and
19 then hopefully -- and I'll tell you they're not as lengthy
20 as the rules you looked at, what, last year, the year before
21 when we were doing formula rules and all that. This is a
22 much briefer set of rules. And then late this summer we'll
23 be going to the commission with the draft rules and then out
24 to the public and then looking for a fall adoption by the
25 commission. And I would suspect that at every meeting until

1 then we'll be bringing something to you to look at and/or
2 consider.

3 And with that I will of take any questions.

4 MR. GLEASON: If I can, Mr. Chair -- if I can
5 -- a couple points for the committee. I think -- we don't
6 necessarily see in the rule development a tremendous amount
7 of policy discussion type issues. And so I think when the
8 time comes, we typically bring all rule changes
9 affecting transit through this committee, but this committee
10 could make the decision that, you know, this is pretty
11 straightforward stuff and you don't really need to spend too
12 much time on it. I'll leave that up to you. But right now
13 we don't see this is as a policy discussion necessarily for
14 the committee.

15 The only area of potential concern that we see
16 is around the funding needed to support to program and where
17 we take those funds from. And right now the -- right now
18 under the current approach with our contract, we've actually
19 been able to tap into -- over in the planning and
20 programming division of TxDOT, they're actually tearing that
21 expense for us.

22 MR. McBETH: Good.

23 MR. GLEASON: Down the road in terms of just
24 ongoing effort to sustain the plans and whatever we might
25 need to do for that, the 5304 program is probably our most

1 likely source. And, you know, that's kind of spoken for in
2 any number of different arenas. And so there may come a
3 point in time where we come to you with a discussion on that
4 program and say here is how we spend it and look for some
5 direction on priorities and -- but we're not there yet.

6 And so those are kind of the two things I see
7 with this near term. The rules -- I don't think there's too
8 much there. Long term there may be a funding priority kind
9 of conversation we may have with the committee.

10 MR. CLINE: Can I ask a question? Timing is
11 something to me that -- because having been an account
12 executive and knowing I've got to take it to a board, I
13 would suspect that the consultant's work needs to be done
14 end of April, beginning of May to get two board cycles --
15 likely board monthly cycles to allow that to proceed. I
16 mean most agencies are on a monthly -- at least
17 monthly meetings; right? Probably. Maybe every other
18 month, something like that. And so if you have -- if there
19 is anything that did change -- if you start saying it's
20 going to be published in November of '19, has to be approved
21 -- or has to have a product ready for boards by May of '20,
22 all of a sudden those dates start squeezing together pretty
23 tight. I agree it's probably going to be a rule that says
24 thou shalt meet all the requirements of the FTA; right? I
25 mean at the end of the day, that's probably what the

1 administrative code says in a nutshell. But I think that if
2 they're not prepped to be ready in May to actually have
3 board approval by July, it may be really hard.

4 MR. GLEASON: Yeah, well, that's going to have
5 to be part of the schedule. And I think the challenge for
6 us is -- around this effort is mostly sort of organizational
7 project management type challenges when we have 41 --
8 possibly 41 agencies that at the end there -- that end game
9 between April or May, or whatever it is, in July getting
10 that all through their efforts and signed and certified by
11 us. So that's -- that's going to be the real challenge. I
12 think we're going to try -- I think we're going to try and
13 do a fast start and not try and save a lot for the end
14 because I suspect that's going to be --

15 MR. CLINE: If the board gets fussy about it
16 and says we want to wait another month, you know, to think
17 about it again, all of a sudden you're going to be August,
18 September before, and then everybody is out -- and you're
19 out of compliance.

20 MR. SPRICK: And internally -- I mean while
21 our contractor is doing the work to get these plans
22 developed, my section will be parallel with the rules
23 effort, and we're going to keep each other informed as we
24 go. I think we're going to share with the 41 agencies as
25 much of these rules as we can early on. I don't think

1 anything in the rules is going to necessarily change what is
2 in their safety plan. It is going to be more the timing of
3 it, so -- I don't think anything --

4 MR. GLEASON: Rules are one thing. I think
5 Jim has gone from the rules, and we're into the end game on
6 getting certified by July 20th, 2020.

7 MR. CLINE: Right.

8 MR. GLEASON: And recognizing, as we talked
9 about yesterday, the board approval process and, you know,
10 how much can they know for sure about whether -- what
11 they've got is certifiable on our standpoint before they
12 start the board process only to find out at the end of that
13 that it's somehow short on the certification. So we'll have
14 to kind of work that end game really, really carefully.
15 Absolutely.

16 MR. SPRICK: Okay.

17 MR. McBETH: Thank you.

18 MR. SPRICK: Yes, sir.

19 MR. McBETH: Good report. Item number seven,
20 this is a discussion of options and priorities for the
21 potential additional public transportation funding requested
22 and TxDOT's current legislative appropriations request.
23 Eric.

24 MR. GLEASON: I will introduce this, and then
25 I will turn it over to James from TTI to walk you through

1 the presentation.

2 So when we were discussing about next steps
3 and what the committee wanted to focus on this year, one of
4 the topics that came up is a desire to keep talking about
5 the \$41 million program and kind of how we would get there I
6 think was the next logical step, how would we implement it
7 if we actually got this money.

8 What we've done for this meeting is we asked
9 TTI to kind of go back into that work. We gave them some
10 upfront guidance that said let's just assume for the
11 purposes of this conversation we get \$41 million over
12 bienniums at \$10 million a shot roughly, and let's talk
13 about the kinds of different ways that are out there that we
14 might choose to figure out what to do each step along the
15 way, what's going to drive our priorities for the first \$10
16 million, what's going to drive our priorities for the next
17 one, and what are the different ways without trying to
18 decide one over the other -- but what are the different ways
19 we can look at that. And that's what you have in front of
20 you today.

21 So, James, why don't you walk the committee
22 through and -- you know, we're just kind of feeling our way
23 into this conversation. I don't know how far -- I think,
24 Mr. Chair, this is something you're interested in
25 particularly.

1 MR. MCBETH: Uh-huh.

2 MR. GLEASON: I don't know how far you want to
3 take it. I don't know how far we can take it from a
4 make-a-decision standpoint, but it seemed like it would be
5 helpful to begin talking about it.

6 So, James, why don't you go through it and
7 show them what you've got here.

8 MR. CARDENAS: All right. Thank you, Eric.
9 This is James Cardenas with TTI. So I think, Eric, that's a
10 good intro for our discussion today. As Eric mentioned for
11 looking at our objectives, the question is how the
12 additional state funding would be it implemented. So we
13 have a couple options to discuss. And after we have
14 discussed those options and during each option, we'll be
15 discussing some of the considerations that we thought of and
16 what we thought through.

17 This is just the order of which I'm going to
18 present. We're going to look at the assumptions. We're
19 going to look at two prioritization approaches. In each of
20 those prioritization approaches has two options. So a total
21 of four options today to look at how we go through that
22 prioritization list. We'll look at some additional
23 considerations and then turn it over for discussion and
24 questions.

25 So our key assumptions. Considering the \$41

1 million ask, we are not anticipating that we get the whole
2 thing at once. We're looking at the -- our assumption --
3 our one example is to get \$5 million and have that compound
4 annually as it is in this chart here. As such, there will
5 need to be a prioritization methodology as developed to see
6 how these funds are distributed year in and year out.

7 The span threshold we're looking at is the
8 14-hour weekday transit service. And we're going to look at
9 filling all of these service gaps -- span gaps. And that
10 includes service that is not operated at that 14-hour
11 weekday service level. And we'll also be looking at
12 coverage gaps as well, geographically areas in Texas that do
13 not have general public transit service.

14 Regardless of the prioritization approach, at
15 the end of this disbursement of funds all those gaps will be
16 covered.

17 So the two prioritization approaches I
18 mentioned, one will be looking at need and the other one
19 focuses on performance.

20 So under the need approaches, we'll look at,
21 first, addressing coverage gaps and then one addressing span
22 gaps. And then for performance, we'll look at ridership
23 within the transit district and looking at cost
24 effectiveness for transit districts.

25 So let's look at need option one, which is

1 coverage gaps. So for this approach, what we'll be looking
2 at -- focusing on providing funding to cover those coverage
3 gaps. And the ranking process that we're looking at is by
4 population. So that's population within those coverage
5 gaps.

6 So the funding process -- that's the same
7 funding process I mentioned earlier, looking at \$5 million
8 per year. It will be used to, first, get that
9 prioritization list and look at filling those coverage gaps
10 based on their assumed operating cost expenses and continue
11 to fill those gaps each year with each of those \$5 million
12 disbursements until all those coverage gaps are filled at
13 that point, which then we'll look at filling the remaining
14 span gaps.

15 So the main result from option one, the need
16 option, is that the coverage gaps with the highest
17 population would be first covered and filled with this --
18 these disbursements of funds. And, of course, these areas
19 are influenced by density and land area. What that means is
20 that there are different coverage gaps with different size
21 land area and different density. For instance, there is a
22 coverage gap in the lower Rio Grande Valley area that is
23 very wide, very large areas geographically but does not have
24 the high population. There are other coverage gap areas
25 around the Harris County area that are very dense and have a

1 high population -- in the high population density. So
2 that's option one.

3 So option two in the need -- looking at need
4 option would be span gaps -- focusing on span gaps. And
5 that's, of course, getting those services that are below the
6 14-hour weekday threshold.

7 So what's our ranking process for this? We'll
8 be looking at ranking areas with the most need, in other
9 words, the areas that have -- that need the most span gap
10 hours. That's the hours needed to reach that 14-hour
11 weekday service. And with this funding process, again,
12 we'll be using the \$5 million yearly disbursements to go
13 after those transit districts that are at the top of our
14 prioritization list in this area to fill those 14-hour
15 weekday span gaps. The difference here is that we're going
16 to fill the span gaps first. And once those are addressed,
17 then we'll go and look at the coverage gaps. And that's the
18 main result of this option is that the transit districts
19 with the largest total span gaps, and that's across all
20 modes operated, the total hours of span gaps -- the hours
21 needed would receive the funding first.

22 So those are our two need options. So what
23 are our two performance options? Both of these performance
24 options look at filling span gaps first, and the reason why
25 it's because the coverage gaps do not currently have

1 service; and, therefore, they do not have current ridership
2 or they don't have a cost effective measure that we can put
3 to this. So with that being said, how would this -- how
4 would these two approaches work.

5 So if we look at ridership, we would
6 essentially rank the gap areas by the transit district's
7 passenger trips, their ridership. And this will be across
8 all modes. So that's how we would start our prioritization
9 list for this method.

10 Another -- another note up here is that we
11 could also use expected ridership instead of the current
12 ridership for each transit district.

13 The funding process, again, looking at that \$5
14 million disbursement, look at filling these span gaps,
15 looking at this prioritization list with the highest
16 ridership. And then once we get through that list, then
17 we'll go looking at filling in the coverage gaps. So the
18 main result is the highest -- the transit districts with the
19 highest ridership would get that funding first.

20 Okay. Our second option and our last option
21 -- or second option performance approach would be to look at
22 cost effectiveness, which is effectively the cost per --
23 cost per rider.

24 So we start that prioritization list by
25 looking at transit districts that have a span gap, which

1 ones -- which one of those would have the highest -- or the
2 most effective cost per ride.

3 And as we rank those, we will go through the
4 list. And after we fill the span gaps, again, we'll address
5 the coverage gaps. So in each scenario, the span gaps are
6 addressed first and then the coverage gaps for these
7 performance options. So the result would be that the most
8 cost effective transit districts would get the funding
9 first, and this is based across -- on all modes operated.
10 And then, of course, we'd go in to fill -- use the funding
11 to fill the coverage gaps.

12 So our last, additional considerations. So
13 once we have prioritization method selected and those
14 recipients are selected, they'll have to complete a transit
15 development plan or a service plan, and that's to ensure
16 that the estimated funding that is appropriate for that
17 identified gap -- or for filling up those gaps.

18 Additionally, those recipients will have to enact data
19 collection protocols so we can track the progress and see
20 the impacts and benefits from those -- from filling those
21 gaps.

22 And now we have questions and discussion.

23 MR. GLEASON: If I can, Mr. Chair, set some
24 context for the committee. I think there is a fundamental
25 up-front question, and that is, you know, do you even want

1 to try and be strategic and deliberate about the investment
2 if it comes in phases. The option being, of course, is you
3 just distribute it out by formula to everyone and everyone
4 gets a little bit along the way. And at the end you -- I
5 guess you assume you've got what you wanted. You know,
6 there's -- it doesn't necessarily have to be that open
7 ended. I mean everyone can do a plan at the beginning,
8 everyone, and everyone can demonstrate and confirm how much
9 they needed to get to the picture we want to get at, and
10 then everyone gets a little bit of the pie point as it
11 becomes available along the way. The issue becomes -- you
12 know, I think one of the -- one of the challenges, of
13 course, is you don't get a commitment for all of the money.
14 You get it one -- one step at a time.

15 MR. McBETH: At a time, yeah.

16 MR. GLEASON: And every time you want to go
17 for more, you want to be in a position of being able to show
18 what you did with the first part, and that may mean a more
19 proscriptive and deliberate investment strategy that we
20 embark on how to spend the funds as they come in as opposed
21 to just everybody getting a little bit of everything when it
22 comes in. So I think that's a very fundamental upfront kind
23 of consideration for the committee to think about. And then
24 if you choose to go the more deliberate approach, what James
25 has just presented is obviously a very -- you know, perhaps

1 oversimplified set of choices for you, but I think -- I
2 think it does sort of highlight some of the key policy
3 areas, and that is, you know, do you make the investment in
4 a way initially that generates the higher performance
5 measures and numbers that you think it can from ridership
6 and cost effectiveness knowing all the while that in some
7 areas of the state that really investment isn't going to
8 generate that kind of performance, but it's absolutely
9 critical that it will be there from a coverage and span
10 standpoint. And, you know, it's a -- it's a balance, and
11 you can always pick to do a little bit of both. But I think
12 for the purposes of provoking a conversation, our direction
13 to TTI was to make it a little more black and white for you
14 and just to kind of talk about it. We don't have -- I don't
15 think we are going to get to a point where we would reach a
16 conclusion in this conversation that we could then turn
17 around and say to the world, you know, this is how we are
18 going to do it. Obviously that is a conversation that has
19 to take place with the industry as a whole.

20 MR. McBETH: Yeah.

21 MR. GLEASON: But I think this gives us the
22 capacity to at least describe what we're talking about.
23 And, you know, certainly if I were to find myself in front
24 of legislative committee this session and ask about what
25 would you do with this, this is the conversation I would

1 have with them. It wouldn't be specific. It would be just
2 saying here's what we're thinking about because that's where
3 we are. Anyway, so --

4 MR. McBETH: This is John. My -- my attitude
5 is to be -- what you presented is very well thought out.
6 It's very well thought out. There is a lot of choices to
7 make. It's a nice outline, a lot of choices to make. But
8 my -- my proclivity would be to be very proscriptive as to
9 who is going to get the money.

10 We went forward with the \$41 million
11 recommendation based upon that extensive work that TTI did
12 for us over the last 24 months. And as a person that has to
13 go in front of legislative committees and tell them we want
14 you to give us this money, they don't give you any money
15 unless you tell them what you're going to give them in
16 return, and it's got to be fairly substantial. And so what
17 we have spent our time doing is telling them it's coming.
18 And what it's going to do is it's going to address needs
19 that TTI pointed out that are state wide. They affect every
20 system. The primary among them is the 14-hour a day, which
21 allows us to get more people to jobs; therefore, it's the
22 economic development side of what goes on over there in the
23 pink building.

24 The other one is just service gaps, which is a
25 little dicier because you're dealing with some communities

1 that, like you said, down in Rio Grande Valley, vast swaths
2 of land. There is more goats there than there are people.
3 Goats don't -- well, sometimes goats ride buses, but -- I
4 don't -- I can't remember the last time one of them had a
5 fare.

6 So I think we have to be proscriptive, and I
7 think that the industry in general I hope will support it.
8 There is always this thing, well, we've got more money.
9 What's my take of the money going to be. Well, from our
10 perspective, our span gap is non-existent. We've got the
11 service out there and the right spans. We do have service
12 gaps, particularly over in East Texas and it's because of
13 money, but I see it being more important to develop those
14 systems that have span gaps right now that are not open in
15 time to get people to work than it is for me to get more
16 money to serve more service area. That's my perspective.
17 And I think we're in a position that we kind of have to
18 adopt that. I don't think we can just say let's take all
19 the money and put it in -- that would be great if we got the
20 \$41 million and we just put it in the formula, but I don't
21 know that that's going to solve the problem. We pointed out
22 that there are systems out there that if they got more
23 money, they -- if they weren't told you've got to go 14-hour
24 days, they wouldn't and -- I mean we know -- we know that
25 those systems are out there. I know.

1 MR. CLINE: Seems to me that -- and this is
2 the only thing that I looked at -- or one of the things.
3 Just initial to look at this is that by very nature the --
4 where there is not a span, where there is a span issue or a
5 coverage issue, it's by its very nature probably going to
6 have low performance. I mean so if those are the questions
7 we're trying to answer, then we -- ridership and cost
8 effectiveness should be tracked and evaluated but probably
9 not drive the equation; because if we want those things to
10 drive the equation, then we're going to be doing -- we're
11 basically going to be providing money to the existing
12 systems to keep doing what they do better. And so it seems
13 to me that if you had the ability to be able to go to a
14 legislative committee and say if you give me \$5 million a
15 year, I can achieve X coverage of the State of Texas and
16 we're aiming to 100 percent, or we're going to start with --
17 we're going to get people to work and make sure that across
18 the board all of the existing services that have 14, 50
19 percent of it the first -- I don't know what the number is.
20 Right? I mean that's math. I don't know the numbers that
21 feed into it. But a quick 30-second, one-minute pitch that
22 describes it very succinctly would be really valuable and
23 just by its very nature is going to serve the rural areas
24 and the less populated areas of the state anyway. And so,
25 you know, if we're going to argue, you know, cost

1 effectiveness, it should be ultimately all the money will go
2 to a highly dense urban area and just spend it there. But
3 we're not -- we're not in the business of doing that. We're
4 trying to address these less dense areas that need -- people
5 need access, right, to get there.

6 Anyway, so that's -- I would hope we find a --
7 an answer like that to say if you give us additional funds,
8 we're going to focus on -- John, you proposing this span of
9 service -- whether it's span or coverage, I think that's an
10 issue that the policymakers need to decide. But seems to me
11 that if you had an answer in saying \$5 million would give
12 you X percentage of coverage or X percent of span, that
13 would be answer and I'll do it. I say I. I'm speaking as
14 if I'm Brother Gleason here, but --

15 MR. GLEASON: So let me -- this is Eric. Let
16 me try and rephrase. I think the entire package of \$41
17 million is all about span and coverage. I think the -- what
18 we're trying to do with what we've presented was to suggest
19 that within that span and coverage package of investments
20 there -- you know, is it the areas that have the greatest
21 lack of span and the greatest coverage gap -- is that where
22 you start or is it -- is it an area that, you know, you're
23 only short by a couple of hours on span and, you know, it
24 would actually -- those two hours more of span
25 would actually generate more ridership for you than an

1 eight-hour span investment somewhere else in the state.
2 Because the whole package is about span and coverage. We're
3 not -- I mean you're right. There is a whole -- and I can't
4 even imagine what the rules would look like. We'd have to
5 ride around this money to actually guide that investment.
6 But because -- you're right. There is a whole tendency to
7 possibly even just forget about the basis for the request to
8 begin with --

9 MR. CARDENAS: Exactly.

10 MR. GLEASON: -- and just go and put it where
11 you think you need to put it as an individual board, you
12 know, independent political subdivision of the State making
13 their decision about what to do with their money.

14 And so our conversation today is -- so keeping
15 the faith with the span and gap investment -- span and
16 coverage and gap investment where to begin. And none --
17 instead of trying to tackle that larger question about
18 what's the most cost effective investment we can make with
19 new money, it's kind of what's the most cost effective
20 within this investment in general is what we're trying to
21 say.

22 MR. MCBETH: Your -- this is John. Your point
23 of looking at the systems that are out there and you find
24 one that -- for \$300,000 a year, they can add two hours and
25 have the 14-hour span that they need, that's just plain good

1 economic investment. And I think that is something that we
2 would rely on the division to look and say we've looked out
3 there, and these are systems that for a small investment we
4 can get a bigger bang for our buck, but we have these other
5 systems that are operating eight hours a day and they're
6 going to cost us more money, and we might not -- like Jim
7 says, we might not get the performance that we want, and we
8 might have a real hard time convincing a local board to do
9 it because they're the ones that make the decisions.

10 But I think that point you bring up of you can
11 look at some of these systems that just for a little bit of
12 money you can add two hours and they've got their 14-hour
13 day, two hours strategically added is extremely important.
14 That's getting someone to work and being able to pick them
15 up at the end of the day hour on each end. So I'm all for
16 that.

17 I like the outline you put together. I think
18 it's something we need to sit down and we have to look at,
19 but I also have been doing this long enough to know that it
20 has to be proscriptive. We just can't -- if we get this
21 money -- I'm not going to say that. We can't be flippant
22 about how we spend it. It needs to be done in a very
23 strategic manner so that we can demonstrate to the
24 legislature -- we've got a very odd appropriations committee
25 this session, one of the strangest I've ever seen. So our

1 work is cut out for us on that \$41 million. It's cut out
2 for us. But I don't say it's possible. It will work.

3 MR. SALAZAR: The only thing I worry about
4 starting with the transit districts with a big span -- for
5 example, if you have a system that's running six hours,
6 we're going to try to get you up to 14 hours, you know, I
7 just struggle with the fact that maybe they're at six hours
8 for a reason and performance and, you know, their boards and
9 that kind of thing. And so I think for us to start with
10 that would be hard for me to kind of accept. And I don't
11 know -- I don't know if there is transit districts in the
12 state that only operate eight hours a day. I really don't
13 have a clue. I'm sure there is but --

14 MR. CARDENAS: Eight hours -- I think the
15 lowest -- I don't want to throw anyone under the bus. Sorry
16 for the pun. But I think the majority -- there was a lot --
17 I think eight hours was very -- very, very few transit
18 districts have had span. And, remember, span -- we're
19 talking about from start of service to end of service
20 throughout the day. So there is very, very few I want to
21 say, but --

22 MR. SALAZAR: So that's my thought.

23 MR. McBETH: Yeah, that's a good thought. I
24 mean like I was saying to you, what can you tell local
25 boards that they're going to do. They may have a reason for

1 doing what they do, but it's counterintuitive that if you're
2 trying to spur economic development you have to get people
3 to work, and you can't get people to work if you're only
4 operating -- if you're not operating early in the morning
5 and late in the afternoon. You could run cut during the
6 middle of the day and have no service in the middle of the
7 day --

8 MR. SALAZAR: No, I'll concede that point. I
9 mean I understand --

10 MR. McBETH: You've got -- you've got to have
11 the early morning routes and -- when I instituted them back
12 in 1983, I lost nine drivers overnight. They just told me
13 they weren't going to come to work before 8:00. Bye. See
14 you later. So that's just my thoughts.

15 MR. WHYTE: And this is Marc. And I'll just
16 say that I agree with John. It's got -- it's got to be
17 proscriptive. And, you know, looking at the economic
18 development side of it I think is of utmost importance. We
19 can't -- I mean we've asked for a lot of money. It needs to
20 go to good use. If we really need all that money, then
21 let's make sure it goes to something that's critical.

22 MR. CLINE: Just a thought here kind of
23 building on John and what you said is that if -- there is a
24 -- one way to say it is we're going to push it down and the
25 other is that someone pulls it up.

1 MR. MCBETH: Uh-huh.

2 MR. CLINE: Right? So if the agency came back
3 and said -- if TxDOT was to say it's our goal first year
4 we're going to address those -- to fill in those last gaps,
5 right, the runs that are short, in an area where we can get
6 a lot of population for a minimal investment; right? That's
7 the focus. So you get -- and we're addressing both and --
8 but the agency comes back and says if you give me \$300,000,
9 I will provide you two hours, not saying we're going to give
10 you this to make -- do you see what I'm saying?

11 MR. MCBETH: Yeah.

12 MR. CLINE: That's where the commitment comes
13 in. So you get a grant for it. And if we -- whichever way
14 we got; right? And, Marc, you brought up an excellent
15 point. It's about economic development. That's probably
16 going to ring well. But the first year to me it should be
17 we're going to start closing some of these gaps.

18 MR. MCBETH: The biggest bang for your buck --

19 MR. CLINE: Right.

20 MR. MCBETH: -- initially.

21 MR. CLINE: And it's -- you're going to either
22 -- we've got an area that has a big population with a small
23 area that's unserved or small gaps in coverage, I'm sorry,
24 and the time, and then we're going to be go track
25 performance and report back because next year we're going to

1 ask for some more money and tell that story. I think that
2 to me would be a very concise point.

3 MR. WHYTE: And to that point -- and this is
4 -- I mean may be a side point. There is -- I mean we sort
5 of have a money crisis in Texas right now. We need money
6 for a lot of things.

7 MR. MCBETH: Yep.

8 MR. WHYTE: Most specifically I think we're
9 going to see this legislative session as the school finance
10 issue is -- I mean it's incredible. We've got -- we have to
11 properly fund education in this state. And so going
12 forward, I just want to make sure that we're really asking
13 for dollars that we absolutely have to have; because, if
14 not, this money could be well spent other places.

15 MR. GLEASON: If I can ask the committee, I
16 don't -- like perhaps our two previous topics, I don't
17 really have a strong feeling on where we go next with this
18 discussion. And so I would -- I'd like to hear back kind
19 of, you know, what the committee might be interested in
20 doing next with this. And the caveat I'll put on this is
21 I'm not looking to put the committee in a position of making
22 a recommendation. You can do so. Obviously you can do so
23 on your own. But as staff, our approach would be to take a
24 more grassroots effort, you know, approach with the industry
25 as a whole to work through this conversation we're having

1 today so at the end we have more inclusive buy into it.
2 Obviously the committee under your chairmanship can do what
3 you wish with it, but -- so where -- where would -- where do
4 we go next with this topic? What else would you like to
5 hear?

6 MR. McBETH: I'd like to see it on the next
7 agenda.

8 MR. GLEASON: About what?

9 MR. McBETH: About this -- this report and
10 give us time to look at it and consider it. At the same
11 time, I -- it would be great if you guys could point us to
12 those systems that for a small investment we can show that
13 we've done amazing work. You can show that in the first
14 year of a biennium if we got the money. That's worth a lot.
15 It's worth a lot.

16 MR. CLINE: It would be really cool to say
17 that 41 agencies -- you had a span and coverage block and
18 you checked on all of them, and you're able to check them
19 off and literally just put up one graphic that says -- and
20 where are the checkmarks and here is the red ones we added
21 this time. Your money gave you this. That would be --

22 MR. McBETH: That's perfect.

23 MR. CLINE: -- very effective I believe and --

24 MR. McBETH: One table.

25 MR. CLINE: Yep. One page. This is our

1 story. This is where we want to go. And then at the end of
2 the first year and end of the second year, this is what we
3 achieved. That would be very powerful.

4 MR. GLEASON: We'll be in touch. So we will
5 work on that general -- general strategy there and try and
6 come back with something for the committee on that.

7 MR. McBETH: Great. Thank you. Item number
8 eight. Josh, do we have any people signed up for public
9 comments?

10 MR. RIBAKOVE: We do not.

11 MR. McBETH: We do not have any people signed
12 up for public comments. That pretty much brings us to item
13 number nine, propose and discuss agenda items for next
14 meeting, confirm the date for the next meeting. Two items I
15 have. Talk about intercity bus again and talk about the TTI
16 report again.

17 MR. CLINE: John, could I add one?

18 MR. McBETH: Sure.

19 MR. CLINE: The administrative rules for the
20 safety plan -- I would suspect, unless there is something
21 that's dramatically different from the -- well, it can't be
22 dramatically different from the feds -- that we may want to
23 just turn that loose on the staff and get back reports --

24 MR. McBETH: I agree. I was --

25 MR. CLINE: That was a topic that came up, and

1 I just thought we ought to --

2 MR. McBETH: I was going to comment on that
3 and it just escaped my mind. I don't think this committee
4 can do anything about that. It's federal requirements. I
5 think we have a very able transportation staff. They've got
6 their work cut out for them. I heard great things about the
7 consultants you guys hired from my staff that were here
8 yesterday, who evidently had several conversations with the
9 guy. He seems like our kind of people. So, no, I don't
10 think there is much we can do. I just like for us to be
11 informed as to where we are and where we're going.

12 MR. GLEASON: So I will --

13 MR. CLINE: That would take an impediment out
14 of -- that would take a step out of the process.

15 MR. McBETH: Yeah.

16 MR. GLEASON: So we will take that approach.
17 I will use my director's report as an opportunity to kind of
18 let you know where we're at. And if at some point the
19 committee wants to add it to a subsequent agenda, we can do
20 that.

21 MR. CLINE: Super. Charge forward. Thank
22 you.

23 MR. McBETH: And with that, what's the next
24 date and time, Josh?

25 MR. RIBAKOVE: The next date and time we were

1 looking at Tuesday the 26th of March, 10:00 a.m. start, if
2 that works for everyone.

3 MR. WHYTE: What did you say, 10:00 a.m.
4 start?

5 MR. RIBAKOVE: Yeah, that's our general start
6 time.

7 MR. MCBETH: I actually think I have a board
8 meeting that day, but I'll look and see.

9 MR. GLEASON: So this committee is -- I think
10 from the department -- now, this is not a department
11 committee, and I recognize that. The department committees
12 traditionally I think -- the expectation is they meet on a
13 quarterly basis. We have been on an every other month basis
14 with this committee since I think we were in rule making and
15 perhaps a little bit before. So the committee always has an
16 option to revert back to the baseline quarterly meeting
17 schedule either --

18 MR. MCBETH: Quarterly is fine with me if no
19 one has an objection.

20 MR. FICKES: I don't.

21 MR. MCBETH: With sessions going on, I have
22 other things to do.

23 MR. FICKES: I know that, but I consider the
24 timeline we've got for the -- this is Ken talking, by the
25 way. The timeline we have for the safety program is heavily

1 little dependent on what happens here. And I really want to
2 kind of stay on top of that. So is there any way we can do
3 that and not come meet every other month? Can we get
4 updates on e-mails or something?

5 MR. GLEASON: Let me -- I want to make sure I
6 understand, Ken, where you're coming because we just had a
7 conversation --

8 MR. FICKES: Right.

9 MR. GLEASON: -- about diminishing the
10 significance of the discussion for this committee on the
11 safety rules.

12 MR. FICKES: Right.

13 MR. GLEASON: And I'm hearing what I think is
14 something different from you. I'm not sure I understand.

15 MR. FICKES: I just want to know what's going
16 on as far as the process.

17 MR. GLEASON: We can -- we can keep you
18 apprised of what's going on.

19 MR. FICKES: The next operators meeting is
20 next summer, so --

21 MR. GLEASON: Yes. So we can -- we can keep
22 the committee apprised of our progress independent of a
23 meeting. If that's what you're looking for, --

24 MR. FICKES: Right.

25 MR. GLEASON: -- that's fine. Okay.

1 Absolutely.

2 MR. McBETH: So going quarterly, Josh, what
3 would be the date?

4 MR. RIBAKOVE: If we're going quarterly, the
5 next date we would be thinking about would be Tuesday, April
6 30.

7 MR. McBETH: Okay.

8 MR. GLEASON: We'll work with that date and
9 see how --

10 MR. McBETH: That works for me. With that
11 being done --

12 MR. FICKES: My only thought, John, would be
13 when do you need input? When can we help the process? If
14 that's every other month, if that's every quarter --

15 MR. McBETH: Well, I'm not shy about picking
16 up the phone and calling Eric. He always answers.

17 MR. GLEASON: 979 area code. Pick up with
18 care.

19 MR. McBETH: I keep trying different numbers,
20 though.

21 MR. GLEASON: That and 903 are my two area
22 codes that I watch out for.

23 MR. McBETH: That's my Lufkin.

24 MR. GLEASON: Off the record.

25 MR. McBETH: Yeah. Item number ten,

1 adjournment. Do I have a motion?

2 MR. SALAZAR: Motion to adjourn.

3 MR. WHYTE: Second.

4 MR. McBETH: I have a motion and a second.

5 All in favor, signify by saying aye.

6 (Aye.)

7 MR. McBETH: All opposed. You'll be here by
8 yourself. Okay. Motion carries. Thank y'all. Great
9 meeting.

10 (Proceedings concluded at 11:23.)

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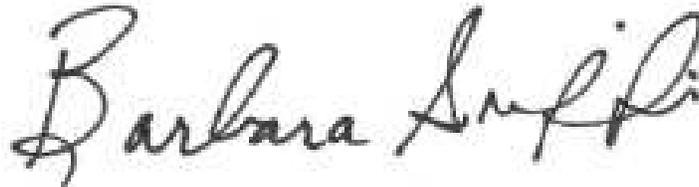
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