

**SOUTHERN HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING  
Mississippi State Capitol  
Jackson, Mississippi  
March 16, 2012**

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Billy McFarland at approximately 4:25 p.m. He began the meeting by thanking Representative Tommy Woods and the entire Mississippi delegation for hosting the March meeting and followed by The Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was called by Chris Miller and it was decided to continue meeting until a quorum was confirmed.

**ALABAMA**

Larry Watts (Bennington proxy)  
Billy McFarland  
Greg White (McFarland proxy)

**LOUISIANA**

Martin Bruno  
Colonel Phil Jones (Bruno proxy)  
Michael Jackson

**GUEST**

Paul Waidhas, BKI

**MISSISSIPPI**

Kay Kell  
Charles Ozier  
Representative Tommy Woods  
Robby Burt, MDOT  
Knox Ross—proxy to Kay Kell

**SARPC**

Chris Miller  
Grace Crawford

**OLD BUSINESS**

***Update: Status of dues payment from Alabama.***

Chairman McFarland enclosed a copy of a letter on Page 9 that was hand delivered to David Perry, Chief of Staff, to Governor Bentley which gives a good synopsis of what the Alabama delegation has done since the last meeting. We were promised that two issues would be addressed within two weeks of meeting. 1) A decision about our two vacancies – one being Robert Lake’s position and the other Governor’s designee. 2) The outstanding annual dues. Chairman McFarland stated he contacted Speaker Mike Hubbard’s office to follow-up with the Governor’s office but still have not heard as of our meeting today but feels we should hear something any day. Did find out that there were seven applicants for the vacant commission seats.

***Report for Governmental Affairs AD Hoc Committee:***

Chairman McFarland stated that during our Executive Committee teleconference (which we had in order to save funds) we tabled any discussion on addressing the need for professional services through a professional advocacy service until such time as the dues issue is cleared up.

***Update: AL/GA Corridor Feasibility Analysis, Stakeholder Meeting***

Andrew Smith, HNTB, sent an email update to Commission Toby Bennington stating that since the stakeholder meetings for the Atlanta-Birmingham Corridor in December, the high-speed rail study team finalized the final report and submitted to Georgia DOT at the end of the year. The report underwent review by both GDOT and FRA. HNTB received feedback and comments at the beginning of March and are currently working to finalize the report. HNTB anticipates that

the revised report will be submitted to GDOT this week, in which GDOT has indicated that they will begin providing stakeholders with electronic copies of the report shortly thereafter.

***Update: Proposed High Speed Rail Service from Mobile to Birmingham “Gulf Breeze Line”***

Robert Smith, Planning Director, City of Montgomery, has secured \$20,000 from the Conecuh County Commission towards the 50/50 match and is working on two other donations. FRA has given an extension to secure the additional funds.

***Update: New Orleans to Baton Rouge Rail Service***

The Regional Planning Commission and DOT are still in the discussion phase and want to hand it to FRA- this will not be high speed rail focus, but will be intercity passenger rail which would be a better match for the physical environment and cut the capital costs in half. The project should be let in the early summer.

***Discussion: Marketing Presentation developed by Paul Waidhas, BKI – Steps for Community Outreach***

Chairman McFarland recognized Paul Waidhas for his and BKI’s marketing presentation that was developed for SHSRC. The Commission is very grateful for BKI’s work at no charge. Paul Waidhas passed out three information pieces, 1) A PowerPoint presentation used as a continuous loop – provides the basic information on the Commission which could be used for any community group. This can be customized by adding information as needed; 2) Handout produced for the Amtrak 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; and 3) Photographs taken at the Amtrak 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event – suggested that we take photos or rail photos that can be added to the website – which could be added to presentations.

***State Reports***

***Alabama:***

Chairman McFarland stated that everything was covered in the Old Business in regards to efforts to collect the annual dues from Alabama.

***Mississippi:***

Robby Burt reported he talked to Ed Lee, FL DOT representative, and discussed that they would be willing to participate in support for renewal of the Amtrak service in to Tallahassee.

***Louisiana:***

Commissioner Bruno had nothing new to report.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman McFarland asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2011 Commission meeting. Commissioner Martin Bruno motioned for approval and seconded by Commissioner Charles Ozier. A motion to approve the minutes of the Executive Committee teleconference call on February 1 was made by Commissioner Martin Bruno and seconded by Representative Tommy Woods.

***Website Update***

Chairman McFarland added this item to the agenda and requested the Commission to consider UWA services to update the SHSRC website for free. The one issue to consider whether if UWA could host the site and what would be the cost.

### ***By-Laws Update***

Chairman McFarland asked that an email be sent with the draft copies of the By-Laws from December 2010 to be reviewed. It will be on the agenda for a vote at the next meeting.

### ***Resolution No. 2012-1 recognizing Mr. Gary W. Devall***

A 2012-1 Resolution was prepared honoring the service of Gary W. Devall, Commissioner from Louisiana from fiscal years 2007 to 2011. Commissioner Martin Bruno motioned for approval and seconded by Commissioner Charles Ozier. The motion carried unanimously.

### ***Discussion: Amtrak Update: City of Tallahassee Advocacy for Amtrak Service Renewal of Sunshine Limited, Feasibility Study for new service between Shreveport to Dallas and Fort Worth***

Chris Miller was contacted by a representative of the City of Tallahassee to get support for Amtrak to renew service. He also contacted Robby Burt, MDOT for his support. Paul Waidhas reported that a feasibility study will be done on the old Texas Eagle route which was from Shreveport to Dallas/Ft. Worth and a piece of the Texas triangle route. It will be advertised and then a feasibility study to be completed.

### ***Congressional Briefing Trip Schedule and Review Briefing Packet***

Included in the March booklet is a copy of the schedule of appointments with the congressional members for March 27-28, 2012 in Washington. For the handout Chris Miller indicated he used information from the last trip and needs direction from each delegation to add into the packet. Commissioner Kay Kell stated she would like to restructure the booklet to be in the same format in order to be able to sell. Charles Ozier suggested the economics of SHSRC being a viable commission showing the return on the investment that was shown on a previous white paper. After much discussion it was decided that the initial question to the congressional appointments would be how can they directly help us and by articulating what we are seeking funding for and asking their assistance. It was suggested we need to rank the projects; show the Amtrak ridership and show what we can to support a line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, Mobile to New Orleans, Birmingham to Atlanta and Birmingham to Mobile. Chris will reorganize the booklet and include a one page handout for a leave behind at each appointment. A preparation meeting will be setup on Monday night in Washington at the Capitol Hill Club.

## **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

Chris Miller presented the financial report on pages 16 through page 21. A motion was made to approve SARPC invoices 21-23. Commissioner Martin Bruno motioned for approval and seconded by Commissioner Charles Ozier. The motion carried unanimously.

## **FUTURE MEETING DATES**

A June date and Alabama location will be determined.

## **Adjourned**