**SOUTHERN HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION**

**FULL COMMISSION MEETING**

**Shaw Center**

**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

**September 9, 2011**

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Kay Kell at approximately 3:30 p.m. followed by The Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was called by Christopher Miller, Assistant Executive Director, of South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) and a quorum was confirmed. A welcome address was given from Adam Knapp, President of the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce. He reiterated that their top project is the CONNECT by CPEX connectiong Baton Rouge the New Orleans Corridor. Chairman Kell introduced Brent Warr, former Mayor of Gulfport, as one of the new commissioners from Mississippi and welcomed all SHSRC Commissioners and asked each commissioner and guest to introduce themselves around the room.

**ALABAMA MISSISSIPPI**

Toby Bennington Kay Kell

Billy McFarland Charles Ozier

Greg White Knox Ross

 Brent Warr

 Representative Tommy Woods

 Charles Carr - MDOT

 Ralph Farrell, MDOT

**LOUISIANA**

Martin Bruno

Gary Devall **SARPC**

Colonel Phil Jones Chris Miller

Rep. Walt Leger Grace Crawford

**GUEST**

Paul Waidhas, BKI

Joe Silen, PB

Todd Stennis, Amtrak

Adam Knapp, Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce

Rachel Diresto, CPEX

Lacy Strohschein, CPEX

Commissioner Phil Jones introduced Rachel Diresto from the Center for Planning Excellence CPEX (our meeting host) who gave a presentation on the CONNECT Program whose mission is the development of the New Orleans/Baton Rouge corridor since 2010. CONNECT’s mission is working with communities across the state on land use issues, on planning issues, education and outreach to elected officials advocating for expanded mobility choices throughout the New Orleans to Baton Rouge Metro Region to offer improved access to affordable homes, job centers and economic opportunities.

Chairman Kay Kell asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 31, 2011 Executive Committee Meeting and the June 3, 2011 Full Commission . It was motioned by Commissioner Martin Bruno to approve the minutes and seconded by Toby Bennington. The motion carried unanimously.

**OLD BUSINESS**

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

Commissioner Billy McFarland reported that he and Commissioners Greg White and Toby Bennington have made three trips to secure dues funding. Their meeting with Jim Byard, ADECA, produced following: have the Governor appoint Mr. Byard as designee to the Commission; setup meeting with Governor’s Chief of Staff, Dave Perry; and Mr. Byard acknowledged money in this year’s budget for annual dues, however, no money in 2012 budget. Commissioner Bennington stated that after his meeting with John Cooper, Executive Director of ALDOT, that ALDOT supported the Commission but did believe it was not a part of the ALDOT vision. Commissioner McFarland stated that he had a backdoor through the legal department but only wanted to use it if all other attempts fail. He hopes to have these outreach efforts completed within the next four to five weeks.

***AL/GA Corridor Feasibility Analysis, Stakeholder Meeting #2***

Commissioner Toby Bennington gave copies of the HNTB handout from the online webinar. There is no update at this time but the analysis should be completed in November. HNTB is open to making a presentation of its findings for the Commission if desired.

Todd Stennis, Amtrak, reported on the FY2012 Appropriations Hearing relative to Amtrak Passenger Rail—the House sub-committee bill came out as $1.1B which would be a shutdown number for Amtrak—this would be $358M cut in operations. Amtrak has 15 states that it runs passenger trains for and are supported jointly through various funding elements—that makes 50% of the ridership where Amtrak carries 30 million people this year. However, the Senate Sub-committee has their number out as $1.46B which is a much more manageable figure and does not have the specific language of the state corridor trains and cutting the actual operating budget from $563M to $227M which is actually a cut $563M to $544M. Mr. Stennis suggested that the Commission write a letter to each state’s senator for support of the Senate’s position. Mr. Stennis indicated that he would provide the language and send to SARPC at the appropriate time. Chairman Kell asked for a motion to approve the letter writing campaign. Tommy Woods motioned to approve and Martin Bruno seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

***Resolution No. 2011-3 recognizing Mr. Robert B. Lake for service to the SHSRC***

***Ratification of Mr. Billy McFarland as Vice Chairman of SHSRC***

***Resolution No. 2011-4 Affirming support of the Alabama delegation’s work in promoting
 the development and implementation of the corridor from Birmingham to Mobile, Alabama***

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the Resolutions 2011-3 & 4 and Ratification read by Chris Miller. Motioned by Martin Bruno and seconded by Knox Ross. The motion carried unanimously.

***Consideration of FY 2011/2012 SHSRC Budget and SHSRC-SARPC Contract for Services***

Chris Miller presented a memorandum on the proposed revisions reflect reductions of $39,668. Please note projected revenues of $210,000 are the same as last year’s budget due to the staff assumption that annual operating dues for each member state will remain $70,000. If the full $210,000 in revenue is realized with $70,000 from each member state being received the proposed budget reflects a non-itemized reserve of $53,548. Additionally, approximately $86,000 in savings in the current year budget will be carried over to the 2011/2012 budget for use if a member state cannot provide the annual operating dues, or if dues are reduced from $70,000. Commission Greg White motioned to approve new budget and Commission Toby Bennington seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

 ***Election of SHSRC Officers for FY 2011/2012***

The Executive Committee meeting recommended the following slate of officers from each state’s delegation.

Chairman: Alabama Delegation—Commissioner Billy McFarland

Vice Chairman: Louisiana Delegation—Commissioner Martin Bruno

Secretary: Mississippi Delegation—Commissioner Knox Ross

A motioned to approve by Toby Bennington and Tommy Woods seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

***State Reports***

***Mississippi:*** Commissioner Charles Ozier stated that he was glad to see two representatives from MDOT and valued their participation.

***Alabama:*** Commissioners from the Alabama delegation have determined to adopt a project that will gather support for the Commission. This project is the Gulf Breeze line from Birmingham to Mobile. Secondly, they indicated that they would reach out to new legislators to gather long term relationships so we won’t have to lean so heavily on the Executive Office or the Governor for support. Commissioner McFarland added that he would like to add a third item, to possibly add an Educational/Legislative Advocate, such as, David Ewing since he has done such a wonderful job.

***Louisiana***: Commissioner Phil Jones reported that his office is relocating to the DOT headquarters building and he has a new phone 225-379-3030. The DOT Secretary has reorganized the Intermodal department to move and join the Planning department (99% highways) which is now the Office of Multimodal Planning. Mr. Jones stated that he can already see positive changes by being included in planning, design and budgets.

**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

 The Chairman asked Mr. Miller to give a detailed Financial and Administration report and Accounts Payable report which included SARPC Invoices 15-18. After the report the Chairman asked for a motion to approve the report and SARPC invoices submitted in the report. Commission Greg White motioned to approve new budget and Commission Toby Bennington seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

 Commissioner Kell asked that the Executive Committee explore the options for the design of a Presentation similar to the CPEX and/or BKI PowerPoint be developed for the SHSRC.

**Future Meeting Dates**

It was agreed upon for the next full commission meeting to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana to coincide with the BKI function, therefore the Mississippi delegation would host the next meeting in Jackson. Representative Walt Leger offered to look for and coordinate a meeting space in New Orleans.

**Adjourned**