



High speed rail group forms in Commerce

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By Brad Kellar

A new group was formed in Commerce earlier this month, with a goal of bringing high-speed rail to Texas.

The South Central High-Speed Rail and Transportation Authority Incorporated conducted its organizational meeting at Texas A&M University on Dec. 15.

According to a release from the authority, the group will serve as the development arm of the Texas High-Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation (THSRTC), and represents the legal and organizational framework necessary to develop true high-speed intercity passenger rail, capable of accommodating passenger travel at speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour in the State of Texas.

During the meeting, the authority's board of directors selected as its officers: Tarrant County Commissioner Gary Fickes as President; Bill Jones, Mayor of the City of Temple as Vice President; Dallas County Commissioner Maurine Dickey as Secretary; and Ben White, Mayor of the City of College Station as Treasurer.

The THSRTC was formed in 2002 as a grassroots effort to develop high-speed intercity passenger rail in the state of Texas. THSRTC has the support of 23 members of Congress from three states and 43 members of the state legislatures in Texas and Arkansas. Owned and operated by cities, counties, and rail districts in Texas and Arkansas, THSRTC advocates for the development of high-speed intercity passenger rail along the South Central and Gulf Coast High-Speed Rail Corridors capable of operating at speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour. The first phase in this development will be the 440-mile Texas T-Bone High-Speed Rail Corridor, which will connect Texas' four major population centers.

The THSRTC also includes Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District (NETEX), which hosted last week's meeting. NETEX was created in 1994 by the County Commissioners' Courts in Hunt, Hopkins, Franklin and Titus counties to preserve rail service across the northeast Texas corridor. Collin County joined the district in July 2005. Blacklands Railroad utilizes the track preserved by NETEX AND can interchange with major class one railroads at both ends of the line. The Blacklands Railroad runs from Greenville through Commerce and on to the Franklin/Titus County Line. The Blacklands Railroad interchanges with the Union Pacific at Mount Pleasant and the Kansas City Southern in Sulphur Springs.

Those wanting more information about the THSRTC can contact Travis Kelly with Dean International, Inc. at 214-750-0123.