



# Mayor's Monthly Newsletter

Written by Mayor Rod Erskine

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### High Speed Rail Update

On February 17, it was announced that the preferred route for the planned high speed rail connection between Houston and Dallas, would run along the Hwy. 290 corridor. While the decision is not yet final, this is potentially good news for the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) we planned for Jersey Crossing several years ago.

The high speed rail is a privately funded venture led by Texas Central Railway, whose president is former Harris County Judge Robert Eckels. This project has been in the planning stage for several years as TCR studied various potential routes, and held public hearings leading up to the announcement of the preferred route. Consideration for acquisition of right away was a significant part of the evaluation, as TCR cannot simply invoke eminent domain to acquire property like a government entity such as TxDOT can. TCR has stated that a best case scenario would have construction starting as early as 2016 and trains running in 2021. It is important to understand that this is not the light commuter rail that was being discussed several years ago, but could facilitate a commuter line being developed later as part of the system.

Jersey Village has met with Judge Eckels to make the case for a station to be located at Jersey Crossing. City manager Mike Castro presented our TOD vision to Judge Eckels, who was not previously aware of the plans. In March, there will likely be an early indication of where the stations might be located, with a more definitive announcement coming when the draft Environmental Impact Study is released in August of this year. I would add that the city of Houston has requested that a route along I-10 be given preference over the Hwy. 290 choice, and any impact that may have is unknown.

While it is still early days, Jersey Village is engaged with TCR. If Jersey Crossing is selected as a station location, this will potentially lead to huge benefits for the city in many ways. In other cities, development begins around future station locations well in advance of the trains starting to run. Council was working on this vision when I was first elected six years ago, but the results have been dormant for several years. Should the station be built, it would be a great tribute to the efforts of city staff, and my colleagues at that time - former mayor Russell Hamley, council members Francis Wubbenhorst, Curtis Haverty, Jill Klein, Mark Maloy, Joyce Berube, Ernie English, and current council member Greg Holden.

Several years ago, one of my fellow council members, Harry Beckwith, made the statement that he wanted JV to be a destination rather than something people see in the rear view mirror. Having a high speed rail station in our city could make that a reality. Fingers crossed.

Until next month.