



## BFBRD Update

### Fort Bend County Commissioners Court

October 2, 2018

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# BFBRD Background Review



- BFBRD established jointly by Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties through concurrent, reciprocal Orders on January 27, 2015
- Major objective is to design and construct a direct link rail system connecting Port Freeport to the intermodal rail hub near Rosenberg, TX., providing connections for local industry

# Objectives Established for the BFBRD

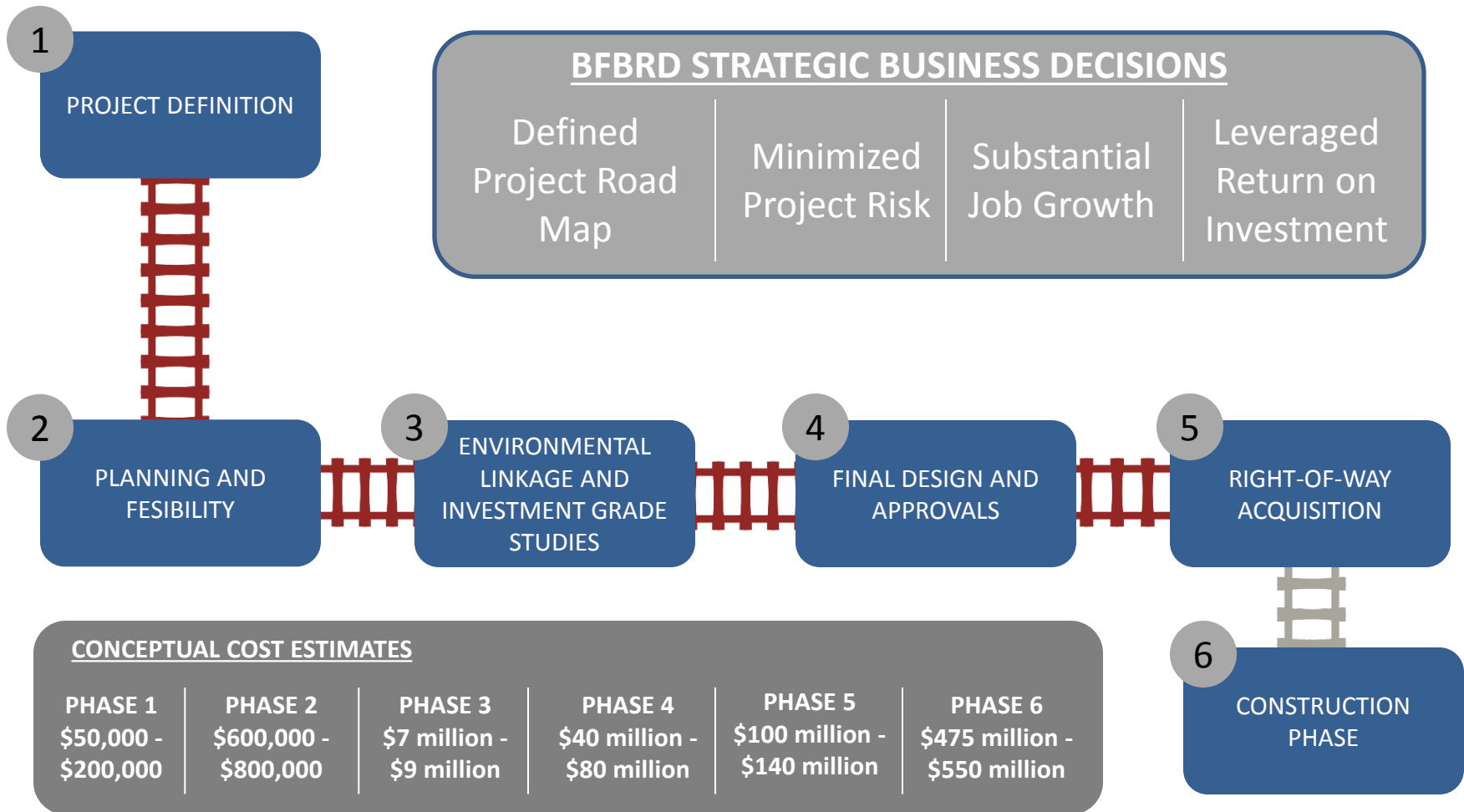


- Create, finance, maintain, and operate a rural rail transportation district to help develop, maintain, and diversify the economies of Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties
- Address unemployment or underemployment
- Foster the growth of business enterprises
- Serve, develop and expand transportation and commerce within Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties

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# PHASED IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH





# Preliminary Schedule

Phase	Timing
Definition	Complete
Planning & Feasibility	Aug. 2018 – Apr. 2019
Environmental Assessment	Jan. 2019 – Mar. 2020
Environmental Analysis (STB)	Feb. 2020 – Jan. 2021
Investment Grade Studies	Apr. 2019 – Mar. 2020
Final Design	Oct. 2019 - June 2021
Pre-construction Activities	Jan. 2020 – Mar. 2021
Construction	Jan. 2021 - Dec. 2024

# Definition Phase



- **Funded by County & Port Contributions**
- **Established Vision, Mission Statement, and Objectives for BFBRD**
- **Pursued “Next Step” Funding with Support of Freese & Nichols**
- **Retained Executive Director**
- **Retained Crouch Communications for Public Relations Support**

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# Planning & Feasibility Study

## BETTER-THAN-AVERAGE EFFECT ACROSS CULTURES

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### Cultural Differences in the Better-Than-Average Effect for Easy and Difficult Skills

Americans are boastful and Japanese are reserved. These are widely held national stereotypes (Maddon et al., 2001), but is there any truth to them? One line of evidence comes from cross-cultural studies of the better-than-average (BTA) effect—people's tendency to judge themselves as better than their peers at a variety of traits and skills (Alicke & Govorun, 2005). The BTA effect tends to be strong and consistent among American participants but weaker and often nonexistent among Japanese participants (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999).

I conducted the present study to help clarify cultural differences in cross-cultural differences in the BTA effect. The study compared Japanese and American college students' judgments of their own ability compared to their peers using a standard questionnaire procedure. They made judgments about eight skills—four easy ones and four difficult ones. This allowed me to compare both the BTA effect and the WTA effect across the two samples. Based on previous research, I expected that American participants would show a stronger BTA effect than Japanese participants for easy skills. The more interesting question, however, is whether that effect is weaker or stronger for difficult skills. In addition, the present study has implications because different inter-

## BETTER-THAN-AVERAGE EFFECT ACROSS CULTURES

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In the present study, I compared Japanese and American students' judgments of their own ability compared to their peers using a standard questionnaire procedure. They made judgments about eight skills—four easy ones and four difficult ones. This allowed me to compare both the BTA effect and the WTA effect across the two samples. Based on previous research, I expected that American participants would show a stronger BTA effect than Japanese participants for easy skills. The more interesting question, however, is how the two groups will compare in terms of the WTA effect.

### Method

#### Participants

The Japanese sample included 65 women and 24 men with a median age of 21 years who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. The American sample included 32 women and 10 men with a median age of 20 years enrolled in an introductory psychology course at California State University in Fresno, California. The Japanese students participated as part of a class activity, while the American students participated to meet a course requirement.

#### Design and Procedure

All participants completed a questionnaire that asked them to judge their own ability, compared with their peers' ability, at eight different skills. The skills included four easy skills (using a computer

- **Funded by TxDOT Grant approved in January with Advanced Funding Agreement executed in March**
- **Contract executed with HDR Engineering, Inc. on August 17**
- **Study effort to be completed April 2019**

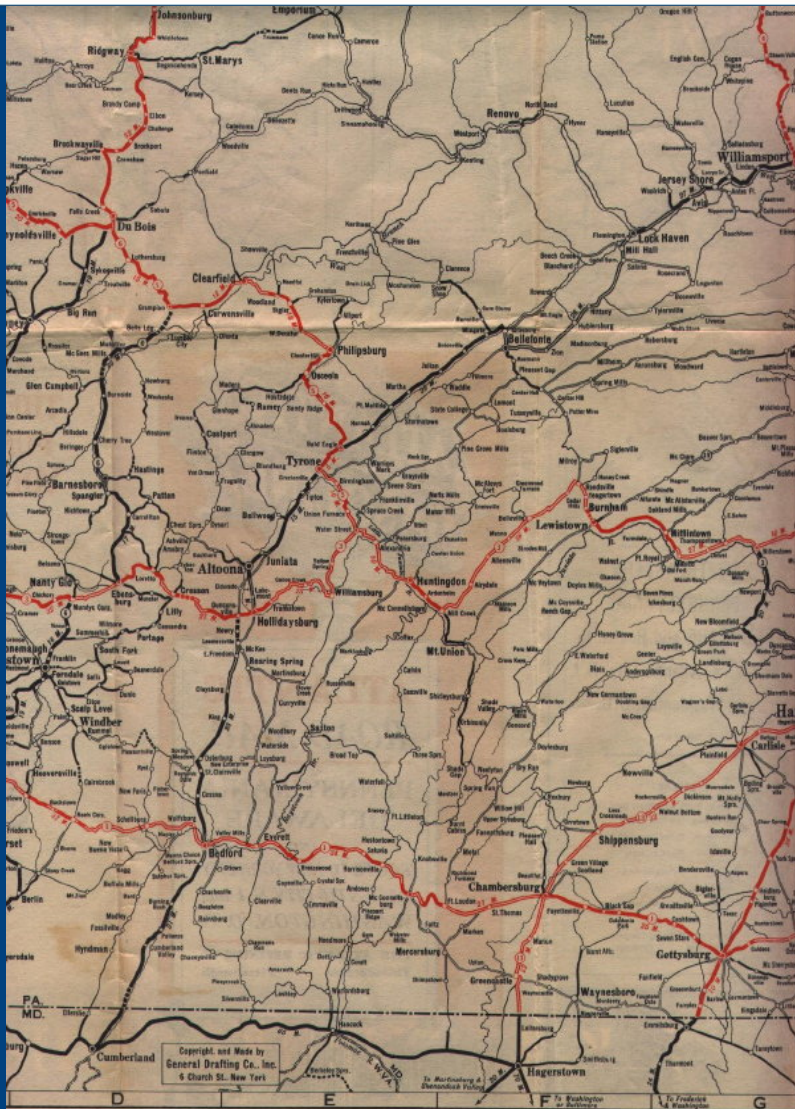
# Planning Study Focus Areas



- Identify and analyze alternate route alignments
- Obtain public input and involvement
- Develop capital and operating estimates
- Establish time-phased freight volume requirements
- Develop economic cost/benefit analysis
- Establish overall financial feasibility



# Alignment Alternatives



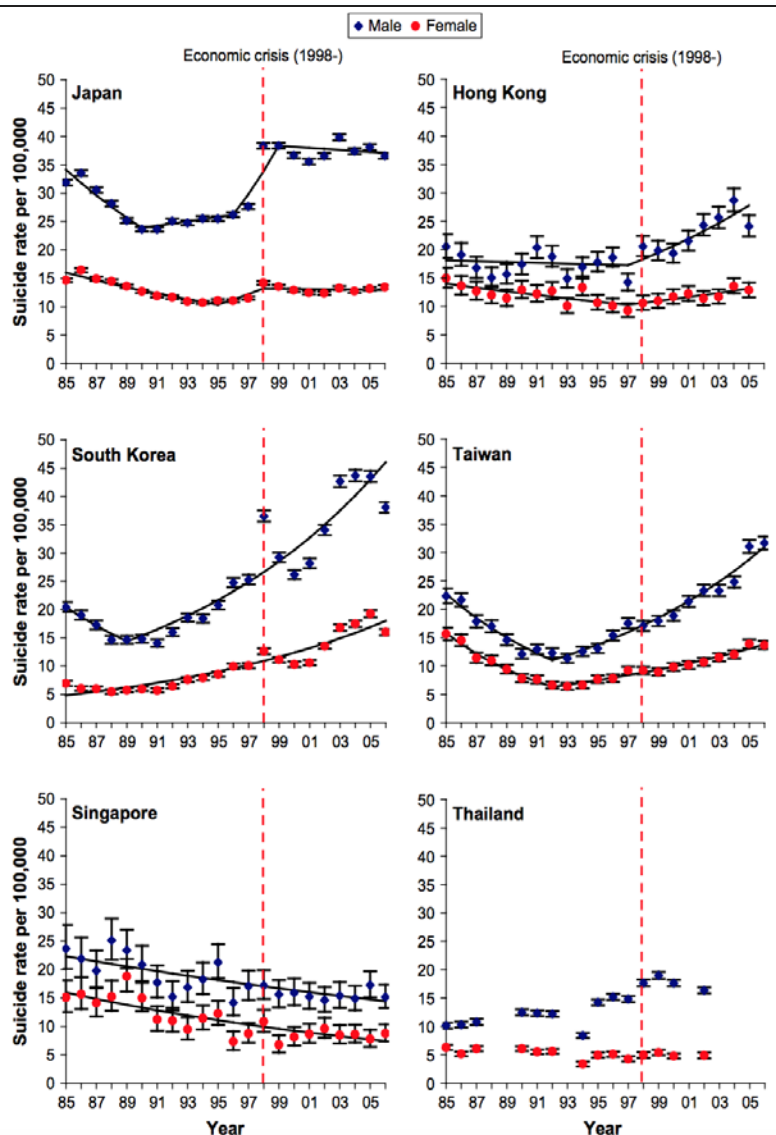
- Primary alignment + 2 Alternatives
- Primary connections
- Identifies key environmental factors and constraints for each alternative
- Alternatives form bases to proceed with Surface Transportation Board (STB) application
- Final route subject to STB – OEA approval

# Public Involvement



- Two series of meetings
  - Brazoria County
  - Fort Bend County
- Series 1 – Scoping
- Series 2 – Feedback & concerns on identified route alignments
- Web-site information and contact capabilities

# Economic - Financial Considerations



- Develop overall capital cost estimate including right-of-way acquisition for each alternative
- Assess impact of alternative operating strategies for the Rail District
- Develop operating cost estimate
- Project overall annual expense for the rail system



# Establish Freight Volume Requirements



- Evaluation of current and projected rail freight economic parameters
- Projections of revenue requirements to meet capital cost amortization, annual operating costs, and return on investment
- Establish time-phased freight volumes requirements to support viable rail system
- Utilize Port Freeport volume/growth projections and evaluated area business use to assess revenue generation





# Planning & Feasibility Study Final Report



- Technical Report providing overall design and engineering parameters including environmental considerations
- Technical Report basis to proceed with STB
- Overall Final Report summarizing all considerations including financial projections
- Final Report basis to proceed with securing Statements of Interest for financial investment

# Next Steps

- File Background Information and Notice with STB (required information part of Planning & Feasibility Study – January 2019)
- File application for Operating Permit with STB – target date May 2019)
- Initiate Environmental studies – Q1 2019
- Initiate Investment Grade Financial Study – Q2 2019



# FY 2019 Budget Requirements

- BFBRD administrative costs  
\$250,000
- Environmental assessment  
FY 2019: \$2.4 million  
Total: \$4.8 million
- Investment grade study:  
FY 2019: \$500,000  
Total: \$1.5 million

**Total FY2019 Budget  
requirements to maintain  
schedule: \$4.2 million**







# Funding Pursuits

- **Dept. of Transportation BUILD Grant**
  - Responded to FY18 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
  - Application was not selected in initial review
    - Project not fully defined
    - Lack of firm commitment for matching funds
  - Plan to resubmit on FY19 NOFO based on information coming from Planning & Feasibility Study
- **Pursuing EDA grant opportunity**
  - Funding application submitted
  - Awaiting initial evaluation
  - Expect issue on firm commitment of matching funds (20%)





# Contact Us



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