

## Former Harris County Judge Robert Eckels Joins Gray Reed

June 1, 2011

**HOUSTON** – Houston-based Gray Reed & McGraw this week announced that former Harris County Judge [Robert Eckels](#), the Chief Executive of Harris County from 1995 until 2007, has joined the firm as a Member. His legal practice will focus on the issues he tackled in public service: transportation, public finance/public private partnerships, homeland security, the environment and health care.

"My colleagues and I are honored to welcome Judge Eckels to our firm," said Gray Reed's managing director Cary Gray. "His experience and expertise will be a great asset in helping us advise and assist our clients on a wide range of areas so critical to today's businesses."

As County Judge of Harris County, Judge Eckels served as chair of the Harris County Toll Road Authority, a 500-lane mile toll road system that is the only county owned toll road system in the nation. He also built partnerships with Houston METRO for the Westpark Toll Road, which exceeded demand projections within weeks of completion, and the Texas Department of Transportation with the Katy Freeway Managed Lanes Project, which allowed years to be taken off the freeway construction schedule. With TxDOT and local jurisdictions, he built the Houston Transtar Transportation and Emergency Operations Center into a global model of interagency partnerships for transportation operations and sustained training and planning for disaster mitigation, response and recovery. Following 9-11, Judge Eckels won respect from county executives across the country as well as from the White House as he was the point person for homeland security in the Gulf Coast region.

Judge Eckels received international recognition when Harris County responded to Hurricane Katrina and the floods, wind and storm surge that led to massive destruction and loss of life in New Orleans and the US Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Alabama. The Harris County Astrodome and Reliant Park became the largest shelter operation in US history as over 250,000 residents of storm ravaged areas fled to the Houston region.

Since leaving public service, Judge Eckels was the founding chairman of the Texas High Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation, a coalition of local governments, educational institutions and the private sector working to bring high speed rail to Texas. Robert left that organization in December of 2010 to accept a position as President of Lone Star High Speed Rail, LLC; a private enterprise seeking to build a high speed rail system linking the major metropolitan areas of Texas with true high speed rail service.

Judge Eckels was first elected as a state representative in his 20s, and served six terms before being elected Harris County Judge in 1994 – a role with executive, legislative and judicial functions of a county that is home to nearly four million residents.



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## **About Gray Reed & McGraw**

Founded in 1985, Gray Reed & McGraw is a full-service, Texas based law firm with more than 100 lawyers practicing in Houston, Dallas and Tyler. Gray Reed & McGraw offers a wide range of legal services including business litigation, corporate transactions, oil & gas, tax planning and litigation, real estate, healthcare, trusts and estates, employment law, family law, and bankruptcy. For more information, visit [www.grayreed.com](http://www.grayreed.com).