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TRANSPORTATION

Metroplex route being reborn

Once neglected, Texas 10 is looking great compared with clogged Airport Freeway



Texas 10 is a roomy, smooth-surfaced, six-lane highway that uses left-turn lanes and synchronized traffic lights to keep vehicles moving.

S-T/Joyce Marshall

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By Terry Evans
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Texas 10's long ride has been a roller coaster, occasionally going off track.

It was originally Texas 15, and its popularity rose when it was a dirt road and the way to get from Fort Worth to Dallas. Its traffic soared when it became Texas 183, Tarrant County's first four-lane highway, around 1940.

At the top of its ride the highway was home to

the prestigious Western Hills Inn as well as other hot spots such as the Midway Cafe, Fireside Inn and the Sip N Nip, a large nightclub.

Then Airport Freeway took away its state highway name and its commuters in 1979. The road became Texas 10, traffic dipped and businesses along the route dried up and blew away by the dozens.

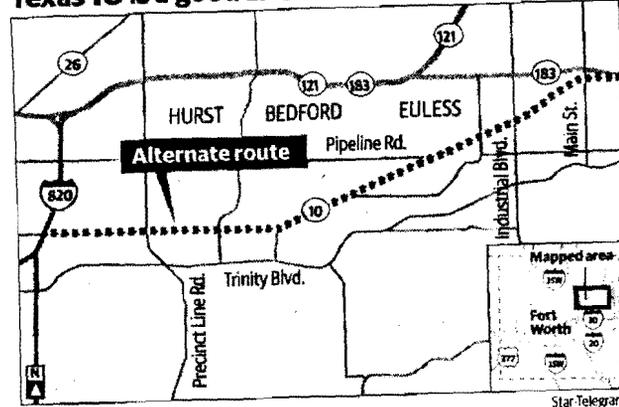
But now, as the North Tarrant Express reconstruction project chokes Airport Freeway traffic to a stop-and-go trickle, the highway that cuts through Hurst and Euless is seeing a resurgence of commuters.

What motorists are finding is a roomy, smooth-surfaced, six-lane highway that uses left-turn lanes and synchronized traffic lights to keep vehicles moving.

Commuters will also see that folks who own businesses along 10 haven't been idle.

Yes, companies such as Bell Helicopter Textron remain fixtures, some areas are heavily industrial and unsightly strip centers can still be found.

Texas 10 is a good alternate for Airport Freeway



"There's never a good time to go down Airport Freeway."

Jeff Woody, commuter

Honkin' Mad

For more transportation and traffic coverage, check out star-telegram.com/blogs

But between the extremes, several points of light create a bright future for the corridor. There are numerous restaurants on the 8.3 mile stretch of 10 between Hurst and Euless, along with hotels, banks, specialty shops, middle-class subdivisions, a Trinity Railway Express station and one of the top public golf courses in Texas.

Tim Depaape of Hurst, who has driven 10 for 48 years, said it was a main road when he was young, "and everyone went through here. I could go all the way to Belknap [Street] in downtown Fort Worth."

Depaape said there were lots of stores on the highway in Euless and lots of country surrounding it in Hurst.

"We'd race our motorcycles on 10 and go off-road in the country," he said. "We'd cut down into Mosier Valley where the dirt track was and shoot guns on the Trinity River. Now, it's all homes back there."

Golf and poi

Without question, the Texas Star Golf Course and Conference Center is one of the corridor's most brilliant lights.

Mike Collins, Euless economic development director, said building a premier golf course in 1997 and combining it with a quality restaurant (Raven's Grille) showed how cities

can prime the pump for improvements.

"It absolutely helped, proving that something like Texas Star can improve the perception of quality of the corridor itself, and that perception promotes development," he said.

More recreational attractions followed - The Parks at Texas Star, Dr Pepper StarCenter Ice Arena and Softball World at Texas Star - as did economic development.

When Euless assessed the corridor's progress two years ago, Collins was amazed at the amount of restorations and remodeling, landscaping and beautification.

"At least 70 businesses had made some investments in their properties," he said.

A good example of successful redevelopment, Collins said, is a former grocery store at Vine Street that was empty for two years before Family Dollar moved there with an exotic neighbor.

Shop Aloha brought Hawaiian culture to Euless, catering to the city's Tongan population. Its manager, Ana Tuipulotu, said business has been great because people want specialty imports.

"They come here to buy poi, pork laulau and Hawaiian Portuguese sausage," she said.

Tacos and courts

There are numerous other successful businesses along the corridor, Collins said, and prospective restaurant entrepreneurs need look no further than Fuzzy's Taco Shop, 1363 W. Euless Blvd., to see that.

The building that Fuzzy's moved into - previously a series of restaurants from Calvin's Cafe to Paradise Cafe and Catering - was vacant on and off for about five years, Euless spokeswoman Betsy Deck said.

"They came in, made significant improvements, and you can't park there now it's so busy," she said.

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Not far away, Verna's Cafe serves loyal locals who followed Verna Kight and her home cooking through two moves during the cafe's 35 years in business. The last move settled Verna's into an old Dairy Queen at 607 W. Eules Blvd., 17-year waitress Jean Robinson said.

While both restaurants are examples of the restoration and remodeling investments, what happened with an old K-mart at 10 and South Industrial Boulevard is equally impressive.

"Reynolds Asphalt bought the building, occupied 20,000 square feet for its administrative headquarters and marketed another 30,000 until Harmony went in a year and a half ago," Collins said.

Harmony Science Academy is a charter school that emphasizes science and technology programs. Empire Gymnastics moved into the space between Reynolds and Harmony, completing the rebirth of a building that was on the ropes.

"It's 100 percent occupied and looks great," Deck said.

Still, the corridor isn't all shiny and bright; it remains a study in contrasts.

While the La Quinta Inn & Suites and Plaza Suites DFW Airport serve as attractive anchors to the corridor's far east end, a less glamorous reminder of 10's past, the 183 Motel, sits several blocks to the west.

What Eules did with another hotel showed how a city can overcome serious blight when its mind is made up.

One of Elvis Presley's rumored favorite stops in its heyday, Western Hills Inn fell from grace as 10 did. By 1989 it was a partially burned-out, crumbling eyesore.

Eules bought the building, tore it down and replaced it with an \$11 million, 56,500-square-foot police and courts building in 2002.

Its addition to the 10 landscape prompted Eules Mayor Mary Lib Saleh to predict continued resurgence.

"It's going to come back," she said then of 10 business activity.

She said she's even more certain of a comeback now because traffic has already increased dramatically.

"Granted a lot of people are just passing through," she said. "But just look at the people who are stopping."

'Never a good time'

While 10 is an easy, less stressful alternate route to Airport Freeway, there's no guarantee that it will save time.

On a recent weekday morning, *Star-Telegram* reporters drove east at 7:45 a.m. from Yamaha Suzuki of Texas, where 10 crosses Loop 820. One reporter took 10; the other, Airport Freeway. They headed toward the parking lot of First United Methodist Church of Eules on Main Street, almost to the point where 10 merges with Texas 183.

The Airport Freeway drive was nine miles and took 17 minutes, 45 seconds. On 10, the 8.2-mile drive took 17 minutes, 14 seconds.

Time is not the issue for some commuters.

"You've been down Airport Freeway, right?" said Jeff Woody of Meadowbrook, who works for Michael's Stores in Las Colinas. "There's never a good time to go down Airport Freeway. If someone breaks down or has a wreck, it's a parking lot."

Between 22,000 and 26,000 vehicles drive 10 daily, according to the latest traffic counts from the Texas Transportation Department, compared with 129,000 to 176,000 vehicles on a parallel stretch of Airport Freeway.

Kim Rocha, a Hurst resident who takes her kids to school in Arlington, said the morning drive is fine on 10.

"In the evening it's congested trying to get onto 121 or 820," she said. "It's backed up so bad you can't get to anything."

But Rocha said she can live with those negatives to avoid Airport Freeway.

Mayor Saleh said most of 10 looks great compared with how it was even a decade ago.

More than \$20 million has been spent since 1992 on 10, including \$6.5 million in 2006 — when transportation officials knew that the North Tarrant Express was coming — that was used to fix a congested, hourglass-shaped section on the Eules/Hurst border.

"I think, because they widened and redid 10 in advance . . . they're ready for it now," Saleh said.

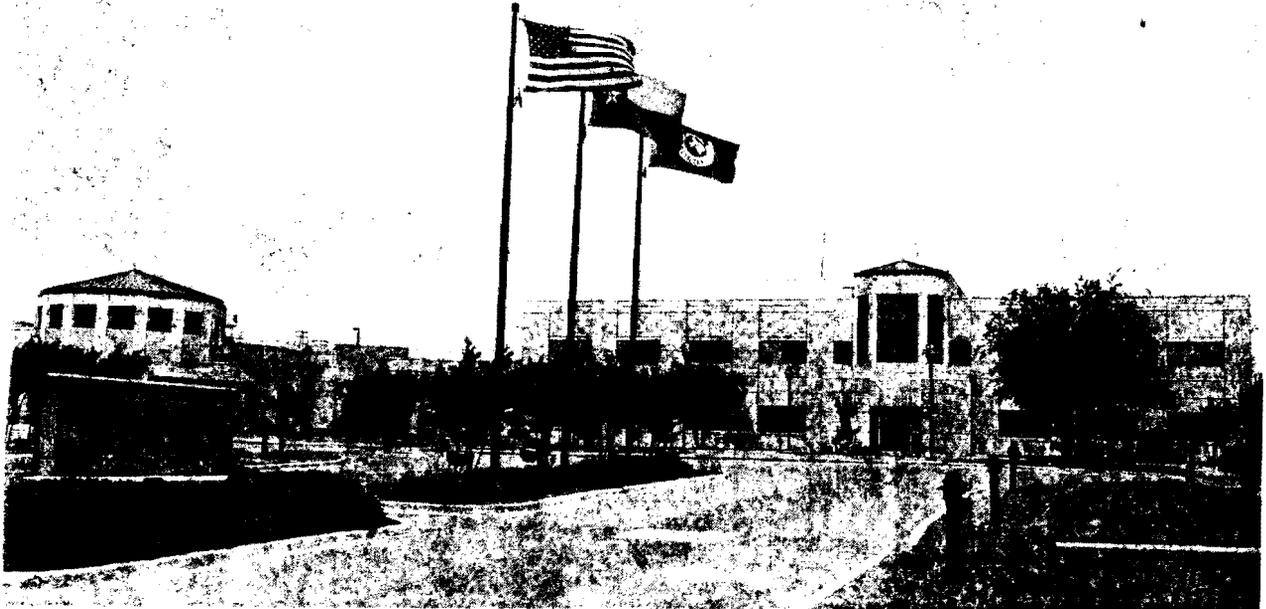
Staff writer Krystle Cantu contributed to this report, which includes material from the *Star-Telegram* archives.

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A police and courts building replaced an old, abandoned hotel.

Star-Telegram/Khampha Bouaphanh

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World Trade Center beam finds new home in Euless

It will be the focus of a memorial that will be unveiled Sept. 11 in front of the fire administration building on the City Hall campus.

By Terry Evans
 tevans@star-telegram.com

EULESS — A 3-ton piece of history waits for a place of honor in Euless.

Fire Chief Wes Rhodes said a 12-foot-long steel I-beam from the World Trade Center arrived June 7.

It's being kept behind Fire Station 2 for now, but it will be the focus of a memorial that will be unveiled Sept. 11 in front of the fire administration building on the City Hall campus.

"We made a request, like a lot of fire departments have across the country, through the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey," Rhodes said.

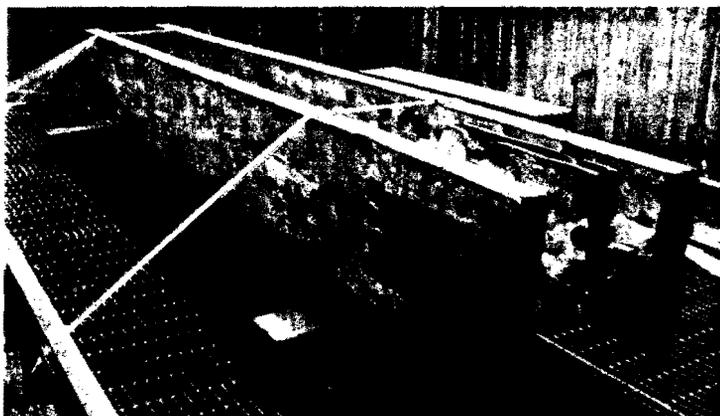
Port Authority spokesman Steve Coleman said the agency has received more than 1,500 requests from all 50 states and five foreign countries for parts of the twin towers of the World Trade Center. The towers collapsed on 9-11.

"We're honoring 1,118 requests and have fulfilled 60 percent of them," Coleman said. "We still get quite a few calls every day, probably because it's getting close to the 10th anniversary."

Coleman said hundreds of requests have been turned down because all the recovered steel has been committed.

"We have a program starting next to give away some of the other objects we have," he said. "They'll go specifically to museums."

Those objects include signs, severely damaged vehicles and a couple of subwaylike cars that ended up in the Staten Island Landfill, Coleman said.



The beam "has a lot of character," Facilities Administrator Kyle McAdams said. "We're going to maintain that character." Special to the 5-7/Kyle McAdams

The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History received a piece of the North Tower in February and plans a Sept. 11 unveiling, museum President Van A. Romans said.

"It looks like we're going to try to have it in the atrium for about six weeks beginning Sept. 11," Romans said. "We'll have a tribute that morning, and we'll try to sync in to New York, where a huge tribute will take place on the Trade Center site."

The Euless memorial is designed to stir memories and emotions with the artifact's roughness, Facilities Administrator Kyle McAdams said.

The beam "has a lot of character," he said. "It's got rust, paint, concrete embedded in it. We're going to maintain that character. We won't alter or change the color of it or take any of the patina off it. It's only original once."

The beam will be mounted vertically on a pentagon-shaped platform, McAdams said. "Behind it will be a granite slab that will have 9-11-01 engraved, with the towers making up the two dashes," he said. "On each side in the upper corners are the emblems of the New York police and fire depart-

ments."

Atop the beam will be an eternal flame representing the American spirit, which "nothing can extinguish," McAdams said.

Rhodes said the committee overseeing the project wanted a timeless memorial.

"We want it to be something that 10 years from now will help people remember that day and also be able to pass on the emotions they felt to their kids who weren't even born yet," he said.

Mayor Mary Lib Saleh said those who died on 9-11 deserve to be remembered.

"It's important for everyone in the United States to have something to remember what happened," she said. "Even if it's a service or a prayer, we need to all remember what happened on that dreadful day 10 years ago."

Saleh said the memorial probably will cost Euless \$50,000 to \$75,000.

"We don't have all the contracts out yet for what we're going to do," she said. "We're not asking for private money. We happen to have an art fund in the city of Euless."

Terry Evans, 817-390-7620

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Texas voters can expect big changes in elections

Next year's election calendar remains up in the air for many cities and school districts.

By Aman Batheja
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The 2012 election season will likely be a disorienting one for Texas voters, and not just because of the possible *deja vu* of seeing another Texas governor running for president.

A bill signed by Gov. Rick Perry on Friday will mean noticeable revisions to the election process. From the perspective of voters, the biggest change may be that a host of cities and school districts move their elections next year from May to the November ballot.

Senate Bill 100 adjusts several dates in the election calendar to bring Tex-

as into compliance with federal law. Congress decided in 2009 that military and overseas voters should get 45 days to fill out a ballot. The only way to allow for that much time in next year's primary is pushing back the date of the primary or moving up the deadline for candidates to file for races. After some tense debate, state lawmakers opted to move up the filing deadline from January to December.

While much of the debate in Austin has focused on how the measure will affect the presidential primary and other partisan races, many local entities will also face upheaval.

The primary may be staying put in early March, but other changes in the calendar have set off a domino effect. Any runoff

PoliTex



blogs

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elections from the primary will now be held in late May. They are usually held in April. Election officials have said they won't be able to handle local May elections if they have to contend with a primary runoff around the same time.

"We are probably not going to be able to be in a position to offer voting equipment to cities or school districts in May elections in even-numbered years," Tarrant County Elections Administrator Steve Raborn said.

In Tarrant County, many school districts and cities typically hold May elections in even-numbered years, including Ar-

lington, Haltom City and Keller, which stagger their council terms so that only some seats are on the ballot each year.

Raborn said local entities will have a few options.

They could still hold their election next year in May with a private vendor. Otherwise, they will have to move their local election to the November ballot or plan to hold elections only in odd-numbered years.

City officials plan to participate in a statewide conference call that the Texas Municipal League is holding next month to discuss the issue.

"After our conference call, we will schedule a meeting to discuss the options with the council," Keller City Manager Dan O'Leary said.

In Arlington, officials expect to bring the issue up with the City Council, said Jennifer Wichmann, the city's assistant director for management resources.

If council members decide to move elections to November in even-numbered years, the city would probably also move elections in odd-numbered years to November, she said.

"We try for consistency for our voters," Wichman said.

Many local voters may see a mix of partisan and nonpartisan races on the ballot next November. Though Houston and other areas have run their elections like that for years, it will be a new experience for many voters.

Voters who are used to using the straight-party option on the ballot may not expect nonpartisan races, Raborn said.

In order to make sure those races aren't overlooked, election officials may put the nonpartisan races first on the ballot ahead of even the presidential race.

"We've discussed the possibility of putting those [nonpartisan] races at the top of the ballot above the straight-party races," Raborn said. "We think that might help address some confusion."

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Local election shake-up coming

Editorial Many city councils and school boards will have to switch to November voting.

The Fort Worth school board, Arlington City Council and similar elected bodies across Tarrant County and the state must choose between two bad options for next year's local elections. For that, they can thank the Legislature.

Local municipalities and school boards that hold elections in even-numbered years can maintain what has become their traditional election date on the first Saturday in May. That will be very expensive and maybe even impossible beginning next year because the county elections office won't be able to supply voting equipment. Pri-

vate contractors might be found to supply the machines, but that won't be easy or cheap.

Or those entities can change their elections to the November general election day, when voters will be distracted by high-profile, partisan elections for president and other national and state offices.

No other options are available. It's Bad Choice 1 or Bad Choice 2. It won't get any better in subsequent years, so school boards and city councils might as well go ahead and pick one.

The choice is necessary because the Legislature

moved the runoff date for primary elections to the fourth Tuesday in May. Those runoffs had been in early April, so they were finished before local elections. But the change means early voting for the runoffs would come too soon after the early-May local elections, and county elections administrators wouldn't have enough time to reprogram and deploy the voting machines for back-to-back elections.

Legislators made the change for a good reason: A 2009 federal law says military men and women serving overseas must be given at least 45 days to mark and

return absentee ballots. With Texas primaries normally held in early March of even-numbered years, the only way to meet that requirement was to change the voting schedule.

Besides putting more time between the primaries and their runoffs, lawmakers also pushed back the filing deadline for candidates: to early December, instead of early January.

Legislators could have moved the primary elections to early April, allowing municipal and school elections to remain in early May. But then the primary runoffs would have to be in late June, when schools are

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closed and voters are on vacation.

Five Fort Worth school board members and four Arlington City Council members are up for election next year. Terms for two council members in Keller, two in Euless, three school board members in the Birdville district and two in Hurst-Euless-Bedford will also expire, and the picture is similar in just about every community and school district.

Except the Fort Worth City Council. In a quirk of the new law, elections in odd-numbered years face no conflict with federal, state or county primaries. The entire Fort Worth council and the mayor face elections every odd year.

For cities and school districts with elections scheduled next year,

switching from May to November would mean extending the terms of current officeholders by six months. The new law allows that, despite any conflicts with city charters or local governance policies.

The motive behind these changes, altering the schedule so men and women in uniform can exercise their right to vote, is laudable. Still, putting nonpartisan local elections in the shadow of partisan state and national elections is not good.

The 2009 federal law allows election officials to furnish ballot materials to overseas members of the military by e-mail, but it requires that ballots be sent by regular mail. Secure electronic voting would be faster and would eliminate red tape.

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Charles M. Hunt

EULESS — Charles M. Hunt, 81, a loving husband, father and grandfather, passed away Monday, June 27, 2011, in Fort Worth.

FUNERAL: 10 a.m. Wednesday at First Baptist Church of Euless, 1000 Airport Freeway, Euless. Interment: Bluebonnet Hills Memorial Park. Visitation: The family will receive friends 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Bluebonnet Hills Funeral Home.

SURVIVORS: Those left to cherish his memory are his wife of 59 years, Ruth Hunt; sons, C. Kim Hunt, Kerry Hunt and wife, Belinda, and Kyle Hunt and wife, Trena; and grandchildren, Lesley Hunt, Wade Hunt, Jenn Hunt, Selina Hunt and Kyla Novak and husband, Josh.

Mr. Hunt served on the Euless City Council from 1975 to 1981.

Bluebonnet Hills Funeral Home
Colleyville, 817-498-5894
View and sign guestbook at
www.star-telegram.com/obituaries