

Local links: Texas Star hosting State Public Links

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The Texas Golf Association's State Public Links tournament begins Thursday with 18 holes of stroke play qualifying at Texas Star in Euless.

The low 32 advanced to match play. The first- and second-round matches will be Friday, with the quarterfinals and semifinals on Saturday. The final is Sunday.

This is will be the second State Public Links Championship contested at Texas Star, one of the state's most acclaimed public courses. The course is scheduled to close June 16 for a renovation that will include replacing the bentgrass greens with miniverde Bermuda.

Texas State Open deadline approaching

The deadline for entering the the 44th Bright Realty Texas State Open is 5 p.m. June 12. All entries must be received by the Northern Texas PGA by that time.

The Texas State Open is July 31-Aug. 3 at The Lakes at Castle Hills in Lewisville. The field for the 72-hole stroke play event will consist of 144 professionals and amateurs. They will play 36 holes before being cut to the low 50 scores and ties. Unless otherwise exempt, professionals and amateurs will gain access into the Bright

Realty Texas State Open via an 18-hole qualifying event conducted at 13 sites in Texas during June and July.

Proceeds from the tournament will benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters.

TPC Craig Ranch hosting junior event

The Taylormade Junior Open presented by PGA Tour Superstore is June 23-24 at TPC Craig Ranch in McKinney. The deadline for entries is June 13. The event is open to any junior boy or girl 8 to 18 with no membership fee.

DRG to Open Oven and Cellar Downtown. Chef Kelly Hightower Rejoins Company

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Glory Days: Kelly Hightower at Wild Salsa. (Photography by Kevin Marple)

Mike Hoque, CEO of DRG Concepts, is on fire. Chop House Burger just opened a second location Euless and others are planned for Fort Worth and Southlake. A second Wild Salsawill debut in Fort Worth in January 2015. If that is not enough, DRG is jumping into the Italian food business. They will open Oven and Cellar in late (November) 2014 at 1900 Elm in downtown Dallas.

Manuel De Martino, a native of Sardinia, has been working with the brand since 2007. He will be the operating manager for Oven and Cellar. He will be joined by Kelly

Hightower who has rejoined the ranks of DRG. Hightower left the kitchen at Wild Salsa in February. “I’ve had a rough three months both personally and professionally,” Hightower says. “But I’m back and ready to go.”

Hightower’s new position will be corporate chef. He will work closely with the culinary team leader chef AJ Joglekar to develop Oven and Cellar and the expansion of the DRG brand.

Back to Oven and Cellar: The 154-seat restaurant at the corner of Main and St. Paul Streets, will feature handmade pastas and charcuterie, pizza, sandwiches, and wine. The atmosphere will be casual, and the prices will be similar to Wild Salsa. “We understand the downtown population,” Nafees Alam, vice president and founding partner of DRG Concepts says. “We want residents to feel comfortable in our restaurants and in their pocketbooks.”

The culinary team has traveled to New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles and sampled other Italian concepts. They plan to head to Italy in mid-summer.

Texas Transportation Commission gives expansion of State Highway 183 green light



G.J. McCarthy/Staff Photographer

Work on State Highway 183, which hasn't had a substantial revamp since 1973, is part of an \$847.6 million contract the Texas Transportation Commission awarded Thursday. The project is scheduled for completion in 2018.

By BRANDON FORMBY

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State Highway 183's long wait for an overhaul is over.

Expansion work will begin later this year on the highway that connects Dallas and Tarrant counties as well as dozens of cities to the southern entrance to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. It will be the first time since 1973 that the east-west corridor, also called Airport Freeway, will undergo a substantial upgrade.

The project, which will include upgrades to State Highway 114 and Loop 12, won't add any new free, main lanes to any of the highways. All of the expanded capacity will come from the toll express lanes.

The work is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

"It was unfortunately overlooked for quite a few years," said state Rep. Linda Harper-Brown, whose Irving district includes Airport Freeway.

The Texas Department of Transportation will rebuild 10.6 miles of the highway in Irving and Dallas and 1.5 miles in Euless. It also will add an 18.3-mile toll express lane in each direction from State Highway 121 in Bedford to Interstate 35E in Dallas.

The work is part of an \$847.6 million contract that the Texas Transportation Commission unanimously awarded Thursday to Southgate Mobility Partners.

Southgate also will add toll express lanes on 2.5 miles of Loop 12 and 10.5 miles of State Highway 114, including through Las Colinas. There also will be minor upgrades to portions of 114 and 183 that aren't being completely rebuilt.

Direct connections from the new 183 and Loop 12 toll lanes will be added. That interchange also will get new direct ramps from eastbound 183 to northbound Loop 12 and southbound Loop 12 to westbound 183.

"There are many transportation needs within these corridors," Ed Pensock, TxDOT's strategic projects director, told transportation commissioners Thursday.

The toll portions, also called TEXpress lanes, will operate with fluctuating prices like the similar lanes on LBJ Freeway and the DFW Connector. Toll rates will fluctuate based on congestion, with the goal of keeping motorists moving 50 mph or more.

The North Tarrant Express, which expands 183 and Interstate 820 from Bedford to Fort Worth, will open later this year. It, too, will have TEXpress lanes.

TxDOT is expected to set the toll rates next month. An agency spokesman said the North Texas Tollway Authority probably will manage toll collections. TxDOT is paying for the project outright and hasn't decided how it will use revenue from tolls once the lanes open.

"This project does have \$250 million in debt, and that is one option for toll revenues," said TxDOT spokesman Tony Hartzel.

A long wait

Irving has waited a long time for 183 to be upgraded. The highway runs the width of the Dallas County suburb. When Steve McCullough was named city manager there in the early 1990s, he was ordered to lobby for a rebuild.

He was at the transportation commission's Thursday meeting in Austin to thank officials for funding the project. The city has spent years helping relocate businesses that had to be moved to make way for the highway's new, wider footprint. But in some parts of the city, cleared land has sat vacant next to the highway as funding eluded transportation officials.

“This day is a welcome day for Irving,” McCullough said.

TxDOT still has some land to buy for the widening. The contract approved Thursday will have a narrower footprint through Euless than originally anticipated, so some businesses that expected to be affected may not be.

Mike Collins, planning and economic director in Euless, said city officials will try to help relocate affected companies elsewhere along the highway.

“There could be some opportunities created throughout the corridor for there to be new investments made,” he said.

Schedule uncertain

Hartzel said there’s not yet a schedule detailing when construction will begin on specific portions of the highways. The agency is well aware that it’ll be working on three major highways in Irving at once.

Hartzel said attempts will be made to prevent congestion on multiple routes during construction.

“That will be key on this one because there’s going to be so much at one time,” he said.

While Irving will bear the brunt of the construction work, transportation officials see the project as a benefit to Texas. Both 114 and 183 are major arteries that connect Dallas to suburbs in three counties – and the state’s largest international airport to all of North Texas.

“This has been long in coming,” said transportation commission chair Ted Houghton.

Follow Brandon Formby on Twitter at @brandonformby.

BY THE NUMBERS

Project details

Construction projects on State Highway 183, State Highway 114 and Loop 12 will start later this year and are expected to finish in 2018.

12.1: miles of rebuilt roads

31.3: miles of new toll lanes

\$847.6 million: Budgeted cost of the project

Star-Telegram

Relief on the way for Texas 183 in Euless, Irving

Posted Saturday, May. 31, 2014

BY GORDON DICKSON

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EULESS — Motorists can expect some major traffic relief in the Texas 183/Airport Freeway corridor from Euless to Dallas after the Texas Transportation Commission awarded an \$847 million contract to rebuild the existing free lanes and add toll lanes.

And we're talking about no small number of drivers. About 170,000 vehicles per day pass through the corridor, which runs from Euless through Irving to Dallas, including connections to the south entrance of Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, Texas 360 and Texas 161.

"We are absolutely thrilled," said Mike Collins, planning and economic development director for Euless.

He said the project will not only alleviate traffic headaches for Northeast Tarrant County residents but also create new opportunities for businesses to sprout up along the highway. "We're anxious to make contact with the contractor and get a better idea of what the project is going to entail."

But there are a couple of catches.

Motorists must endure nearly four more years of construction.

The work, which was awarded to a team of contractors known as Southgate Mobility Partners, is expected to begin in late 2014 or early 2015 and be completed in spring 2018.

Also, in Euless, several businesses along the highway — particularly those on the south side of the road — will likely lose some or all of their land to make way for the improvements.

For motorists, the new project will feel like a continuation of the North Tarrant Express — a \$2.5 billion makeover of Loop 820 and Texas 121/183 in Northeast Tarrant County. That project, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, tapers to an end between the Texas 121/183 split in Bedford and Farm Road 157/Industrial Boulevard in Euless.

SH 183 Managed Lanes

The new project, known as SH 183 Managed Lanes, will continue eastward where the North Tarrant Express leaves off. In all, SH 183 Managed Lanes will add about 20 more miles of improvements.

The plan calls for rebuilding existing main lanes, frontage roads and bridges and adding two toll lanes in each direction. The work zone will extend on Texas 183 east through Irving to the intersection with Loop 12, Texas 114 and Interstate 35E — all near the former Texas Stadium site.

"We are excited to see progress on the Airport Freeway and hope to provide Texas drivers with some much-needed traffic congestion relief," said Joe Weber, Texas Department of Transportation executive director.

Once that project and the North Tarrant Express are complete, motorists can get on the so-called managed toll lanes on Interstate 35W near the U.S. 287 Decatur cutoff in far north Fort

Worth and travel uninterrupted nearly 50 miles on toll lanes to the Garland-Richardson area northeast of Dallas.

But what's still unclear is how much a motorist might pay in tolls on such a route.

The state Transportation Department will hold a public meeting in June in Fort Worth to discuss toll pricing, agency spokesman Tony Hartzel said. Details of the meeting are still being finalized.

The Regional Transportation Council set a policy many years ago limiting the price on managed toll lanes to no more than 75 cents per mile, although state officials have said privately they don't expect motorists to pay anywhere near that under most circumstances.

But after the toll lanes have been open for a year, the operators can initiate what's known as variable pricing, which means the cost of traveling on the lanes can vary based on congestion at any given moment.

So the precise cost of tolls will likely remain something of a mystery until the lanes open in the coming years and regional planners and toll operators observe how many people want to drive on them.

Former mayor credited

Eules officials who were concerned that their portion of Texas 183 wasn't getting enough attention can also breathe a sigh of relief. The winning bid for SH 183 Managed Lanes includes improvements to frontage roads and bridges in Eules that weren't necessarily expected in the proposals from Southgate Mobility Partners and two other finalists, Hartzel said.

"The proposal submitted includes rebuilding everything from 121 to Industrial and over to Main Street in Eules," Hartzel said. "The proposal will bring out even more reconstruction than we anticipated."

State Rep. Linda Harper-Brown, R-Irving, said the partnership, which allows the Transportation Department to turn over maintenance of the road for 25 years, is "a model for innovation in project delivery, leveraging public funds with private-sector resources."

"The project will enhance safety, better connectivity, and encourage economic development from Dallas and Irving to Eules, and function as the gateway to the DFW International Airport," she said.

In Eules, Collins credited former Mayor Mary Lib Saleh for more than two decades of work trying to get state officials to move forward with the Texas 183 expansion.

"Without her efforts, it simply wouldn't have happened," he said.

One of the city's main roles now, he added, is to help any businesses affected by the project to move — hopefully within Eules.

Collins said it's too early to say which businesses might be most affected. Maps unveiled during a federally required environmental study showed the Texas 183 expansion would likely require the purchase of property belonging to a large swath of businesses on the south side of Texas 183 between Industrial Boulevard and Main Street.

"There will be some businesses displaced," Collins said. "We're trying to put ourselves in a position of being a resource for them."

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Society highlights Shelbyville-Texas ties

Thursday, June 5, 2014

The summer quarter meeting of the Bedford County Historical Society will be held at the First United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall on Monday, June 16.

The evening will begin with a pot luck supper at 6:30 p.m., followed by the business meeting at about 7:30 p.m., and then the evening's program.

The meeting program will feature a presentation by Dr. Weldon Cannon, professor emeritus of history at Temple College in Temple, Texas. Cannon's ancestors were part of the Cannon Family that donated the land for the city of Shelbyville. Some of them later moved from Tennessee to Texas and founded the city of Euless. Cannon is the grandson of one of the founding families of that city. Weldon has been a member of the Euless Historical Committee since its inception and is devoted to the research and preservation of Euless history. He will speak on the migration of Tennesseans and Bedford Countians to Texas as well as other local family connections.

Attendees are reminded to bring their spent printer cartridges to donate to the society to recycle with its printing partner.

Hosts for the meeting are Pat Hastings and Ken Armstrong, Roxanna Francesconi, Martha Hitt, and Charles and Rita Armstrong. The public is invited to bring a dish for the pot luck supper and enjoy the meal and program. For more information, call program coordinator Mary Ruth Simmons at 580-6538 or society president Al Simmons at 680-6313.

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CHEERS & JEERS

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Cheers: To Angela at the Euless Public Library for consistently creating such engaging, interactive, fun-filled story times for the pre-schoolers. She's an important part of why my 4-year-old daughter loves visiting the library and reading books.

— Susan Gechter, Bedford