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CHANNEL CURRENTS

EVENTS



Send your Valentine
a Special Message in
our Feb. 14 issue.
Details on Page 5.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Halle Berry Honoree



Halle Maria Berry, American
Actress/Singer
Black History Month Honoree

One of a series...
By Allan Jamail

February 1, 2024 – March 1, 2024 people in the United States celebrate the achievements and history of African Americans as part of Black History Month. This week NC Star writer selected actress/singer Halle Berry for his first of a series recognizing Black History Month/ African Americans and their achievements.

Black History Month, month long commemoration of African American history and achievement that takes place each February in the United States. It was begun in

Continued. See BLACK
HISTORY MONTH, Page 6

NORTH CHANNEL CHAMBER LUNCHEON:

Homeless Shelter faces financial crunch

By David Taylor
Managing Editor

North Channel Chamber members heard this story about the Bay Area Homeless, at their luncheon last week:

A police chaplain and pastor riding shotgun with officers in ride-alongs noticed something bothersome to him. Rev. Mack Cook noticed a lot of homeless folks wandering around the streets of his hometown Baytown and he wanted to do something about it.

He began picking up some of them and bringing them home with him. Every weekend, he'd have five, six or seven people in his house who he and his wife Bettye fed and welcomed with open arms. After six months, however, they both knew this wasn't a good idea and began to look for a place where they could provide more help on a permanent basis.

"They moved into a house on Wisconsin Street



Bill Eckert, III, executive director for Bay Area Homeless Services spoke to the North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce membership last week. The shelter is in a financial crunch and is looking to the community for assistance and already provides services to the area.

in old Baytown and named their homeless encampment Sheltering Arms," said Bill Eckert, III, executive director of the charity to attendees at the North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

It was later renamed to Bay Area Homeless Shelter Services and since 1983 has been a viable resource to the citizens of the area, including North Channel.

Eckert was surprised to learn that few in the room were aware of their services and realized his presence at the luncheon was a good idea.

Eckert, III has served as executive director at Bay Area Homeless Services since July 2011. As an attorney, he is passionate about assisting low-income homeless individuals and families by blending best practices from the fields of business

management and social services. He also has a background in human resources and served as director of Legal Clinics for Houston Volunteer Legal Program before coming to BAHS.

Cook passed away in 2009, but the work he began continues to thrive and grow in his absence.

It's the only full-service shelter that provides services to the homeless in east Harris, Liberty, and Chambers counties but not in the same sense one might normally think of a shelter.

"When you say homeless shelter, you might think of something a little more along the line of Star of Hope in Houston where you show up at 5 p.m., receive a bed if it's available for the night, take a shower, be fed a hot meal, and by 7 a.m. the next day, you're out on the street on your own again," Eckert said. "That's not how Bay Area works."

He described the vision of Cook as a place with

more comprehensive services to give the homeless a lift back onto their feet and return them as a functioning member of society and contributing members.

In terms of financial impact, Eckert said last year the residents they helped return to the community impacted the local economy with more than \$787,000 in annualized income. The number was reached with 30 former residents through 26 different employers throughout the area.

"That includes rental properties, goods and services, transportation, and much more," he said, "which makes us a vital resource to the area."

The ministry expanded from the one building on Wisconsin Street now to three buildings. The administration building which houses the offices is about 100 years old. The

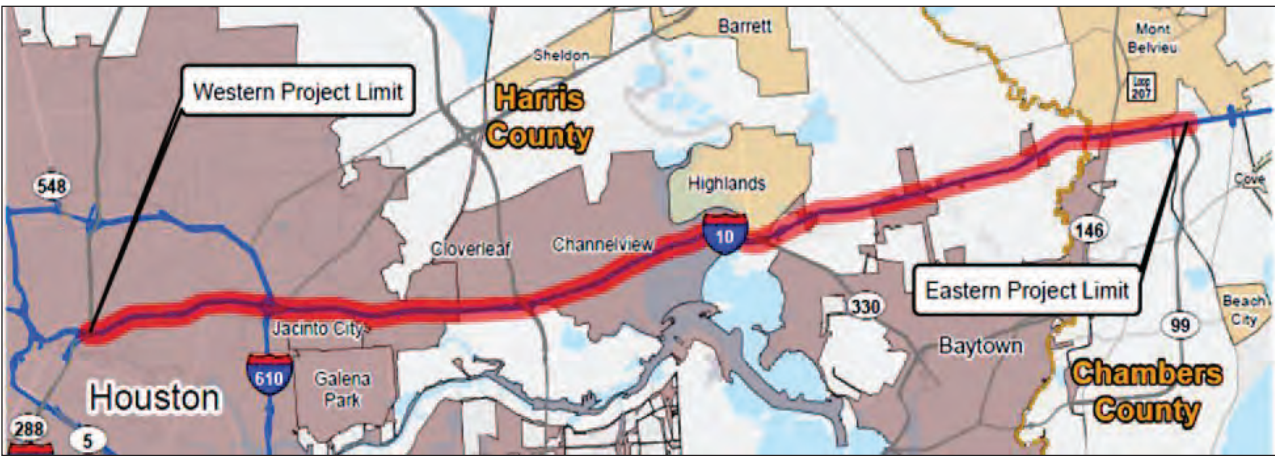
Continued. See HOMELESS
SHELTER, Page 5

TxDOT studies future plans for I-10 Highway

Part 2 of a series...
By Allan Jamail

February 6, 2024 – Houston, TX. In October 2016, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in cooperation with local and regional agencies, stakeholders and the public, began planning activities on the Interstate Highway 10 Corridor East Planning and Environmental Linkages (I-10E PEL) Study.

The study area for the I-10 E PEL spans a 30-mile segment of I-10 in Harris and Chambers Counties. The study extends from IH 69/US 59 in central Houston (Harris County) on the western end to SH 99



IH-10 East PEL Study Route from Houston IH-69 east to State Hwy. 99 @ Mont Belvieu

(Grand Parkway) south of Mont Belvieu (Chambers County) on the east end. The Corridor is located primarily in Harris County, with approximately two

miles in Chambers County.

The corridor within the study area has been identified in many previous local, regional or national

studies. These reports will provides a list and a summary of previous studies along or relevant to this corridor.

Today the Houston-

Galveston region is enjoying a dynamic metropolitan economy – leading

Continued. See I-10 PEL STUDY,
Page 6

Jacinto City's Franklin Petry Celebrates 90th Birthday

By Allan JAMAIL

Jacinto City, TX. ~ Sunday, February 4th, 2024 Jacinto City's Franklin Leon Petry was blessed with a hundred or more family and friends to help him celebrate his 1st Nagenarian (90 – 99) birthday.

Franklin's party was held at Jacinto City's Town Center and the attendees were served his favorite fajitas' by Senoritas Alondra and Dania of Iguana Joe's Mexican Restaurant. It was catered from their East Sam Houston Parkway North location. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful decorated cake with refreshments.

Franklin is a singer-musician; he performed some of his favorite songs at his party. Playing his guitar and singing; he performed: the hymn "I'll Fly Away", "You are my Sunshine"&



Franklin Petry celebrates his 90th birthday. (Photo by Allan Jamail)

"Folsom Prison Blues" by Johnny Cash...he also played Elvis music much louder at the beginning of the party including one of his favorites by Elvis which is "Glory Glory Hallelujah".

Susan Trawick Ronsonette his great niece and other family members and

friends kept the party lively and made sure Franklin had the best party one could provide. Susan provided most of the information for this article.

I've known Mr. Petry as I call him for going on 51

Continued. See PETRY 90TH
BIRTHDAY, Page 5

SUPER BOWL LVIII

49ers, Chiefs meet in rematch for Lombardi Trophy: A KC win would put Mahomes in select QB company

The ultimate game of the 2023 season takes place in Las Vegas on Sunday February 11 when the defending Super Bowl champs the Kansas City Chiefs (14-6) take on the San Francisco 49ers (14-5) in Super Bowl LVIII (58).

The Chiefs will be looking for their second straight Lombardi Trophy (they defeated Philadelphia 38-35 on a last-second field goal a year ago) and the fourth in team history, while the 49ers will be looking for their sixth Super Bowl win, which would tie them with Pittsburgh and New England as the only three NFL franchises with six Lombardi Trophies.

SF and Dallas currently have five SB titles each.

You can bet the 49er faithful would like nothing more than to stick it to Jerry Jones' team psyche and win No. 6.

Before we take a look at the game and some of the historical aspects of it, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the amazing job first-year Houston Texas head coach DeMeco Ryans and rookie quarterback C.J. Stroud did for the hometown team this season.



KEENEY'S KORNER

BY
MIKE KEENEY

Ryans, the former defensive coordinator of the 49ers, took a 3-win team and led them to 11 wins, the AFC South title and a dominating (45-14) win over Cleveland in the Wild Card round of the NFL playoffs. The Texans season ending on a disappointing note when they dropped a 34-10 decision to Baltimore in the AFC Division round. Stroud, the No. 2 overall pick in the 2023 NFL draft, had one of the best seasons a rookie quarterback has ever had in league history by throwing for 4,108 yards and 23 TDs (he missed two games in December after sustaining a concussion Dec. 10 against the Jets) and should be the Offensive Rookie of the Year when the NFL announces it awards winners on Feb. 8 on CBS and Ryans should

be Coach of the Year. If he isn't, they should retire the award.

The future is indeed bright for the Texans, but fans should be aware that by winning their division, Houston will play a much tougher schedule in 2024 (they will have to play fellow division winners Kansas City, Buffalo, and Baltimore just for starters). They could also lose some players to free agency, but with their success and a dynamic head coach, other free agents might want to give Houston a serious look. The Texans need another weapon at wide receiver to help out Stroud and need to improve the running game.

Continued. See KEENEY'S
KORNER, Page 7

SHELDON ISD NEWS

Null Middle School Takes First Place in Theater One Act



The Null Middle School theater program has won first place overall at the Middle School Theater UIL One Act Play Contest. The students are directed by Ms. Brandy Viverette and Ms. Shaquanda Taylor. Their performance of Dwayne Hartford’s “The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane” earned the Stallion Theatre Troupe several individual awards as well including best performer and All-Star Cast of Contest. The students competed against middle schools across the northeast Houston area. Congratulations, Stallions.

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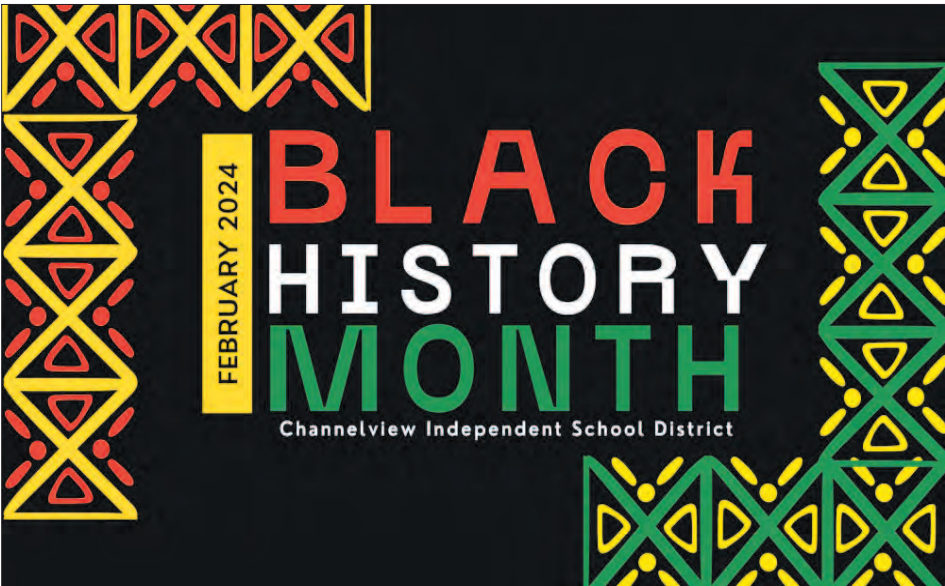
Alumni

Sheldon ISD wants to share the amazing things our graduates have accomplished since their time in Sheldon. Complete the questionnaire for an opportunity to be featured on our social media and website.

Sheldon ISD is offering King High School graduates the opportunity to be featured on our social media and website by completing a quick form. On the form, alumni can share achievements and successes since their time as a Panther. Their stories can even inspire current and future Sheldon ISD students to strive and thrive. The Start-in Sheldon form can be accessed at www.sheldonisd.com/startedinsheldon.

CHANNELVIEW ISD NEWS

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



February marks the start of #BlackHistoryMonth, a time to honor the rich heritage, resilience, and contributions of African Americans and communities throughout history.

HLSR ART GALLERY



CISD is making a strong presence at the Houston Rodeo School Art contest! Our district took 25 pieces, and 7 of them will be showcased in the prestigious Hayloft Gallery this year. Special shoutout to Aguirre Junior High and Channelview Falcons High School for contributing the impressive pieces.

GALENA PARK ISD NEWS

A Second Year of Superstars

kind is the new cool.

Galena Park ISD Super Star Buddy Relays

Pictured: 2024 Galena Park ISD Super Star Buddy Relays Logo, 2023 Superstars and their Buddies

Clear your calendar for Thursday, February 29, 2024; Galena Park ISD’s (GPISD) second annual Super Star Buddy Relays, hosted by GPISD’s Student Support Services and the Special Education Departments. The event will be held at the GPISD Stadium (15025 Wallisville Rd., Houston, TX 77049).

The Super Star Buddy Relays is a specially designed event to create a barrier-free day of fun for students with special needs. The event’s goal is to facilitate a supportive environment where everyone is a star athlete for a day. Witness a powerful collaboration of special-needs students and non-disabled students from across GPISD, showcasing good sportsmanship and teamwork. When we all play - We all win!

The relays will begin around 9:15 a.m., and we look forward to seeing you then! Check-in with Amy Cole at the Media Entrance, near Wallisville & Evanston. Last year’s event was featured in Texas School Business’ Bragging Rights Issue. You can read all about it at https://issuu.com/tasabnet/docs/tsb_br_2023-24_final?fr=xKAE9_zU1NQ.

A Reunion of Champions



Before Wednesday, January 17, 2024, it had been a decade since the 5-A North Shore Senior High School Boys Basketball Championship Team had celebrated their victory with a record of 35-3. As the team gathered for their reunion, it was clear that time had passed, but their bond was as strong as ever. Assistant coaches during their winning season, Willie Gaston, Reggie Wallace, and Michael Williams, also took part in the celebration as they shared their pride about the profound impact the team made. As the champions reminisced, they recalled how they had put in countless hours of hard work and dedication to achieve their goal. Looking back, they all agreed that the unity of the team made them unstoppable.

In North Shore, nearly everyone reads the NORTH CHANNEL STAR. Your Hometown Newspaper.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

By Charlotte Jackson



Building Connections

In the ever changing world, where do you meet new people and make connections? When you are in school, you meet new classmates and often they become friends. As we enter the work-force, we meet a variety of people. Some will become friends, others will remain coworkers and through the connections, we often join various organizations and meet more individuals. Many of the people I know today are those who I have met through volunteering with non-profits as well as attending church. Certainly having children added to my circle on influence, many of them became friends as well as their parents.

This Thursday, February 9, you have an opportunity to meet many in the community who are connected in various ways. The San Jacinto Pilot Club, The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Pine Forest Jewelers as well as Hampton Inn are inviting you to come out and meet others in the community. It will be an opportunity for you to sip on some wine, enjoy some sweets, to learn about various individuals in the area as well as their passions.

Learn about the first female owned basketball team in the National Basketball League and how owner, Dianna Williams, has a passion to open doors for young people in all phases of basketball, not just to play but to learn every details from financing the team to promotions.

You will have the opportunity to register to vote and learn reason why it is a civic responsibility that you should not take lightly. You are invited to learn about how to get involved with working the upcoming elections as well as how to get involved in making the community a safer and fulfilling place to live.

There will be representatives from San Jacinto Pilot Club who will share about the history of Pilot International as well as the many community service projects that they along with the Anchor Club of North Shore Senior High participate in each year. Some of those events, such as the Annual North Channel Relay for Life will soon be looking for volunteers for this amazing event.

You will have an opportunity to learn about the Bridge Over Troubled Waters which is the closest shelter for those affected by domestic violence. The Bridge has been offering shelter and safety for decades to individuals. Not only do they offer shelter, but training classes, childcare while the mothers are in class or working. The community has worked tirelessly to help those impacted and within the past decade, they have welcomed speakers from The Bridge to help reach high school and college students be aware of stalking, texting safety guidelines as well as human trafficking. There are many ways in which visitors to the event can get involved.

The Hampton Inn and Suites, located at 14120 Karissa Court, just off of Sam Houston Parkway and Highway 90, graciously have opened their doors for the event as they believe in being able to welcome guests to the hotel and to be able to provide a wealth of knowledge about the community. The event is from 5 to 7 p.m. and free to the public. Join the fun and perhaps in a door prize!

Send your Love a Special Message in our Valentine Issue



Send your favorite Valentine a Greeting in our VALENTINE ISSUE, Feb. 14th. Send a photo and greeting to NORTHCHANNELSTAR@GMAIL.COM. Only \$20, include credit card info with email. or call 713-266-3444 for more info.

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ASK DIAMOND JIM



Diamond Jim: “What is the Birthstone for February”

For individuals with February birthdays, the amethyst makes a perfect birthstone. This month is often cold, dark, and short for many people around the world, so the amethyst—which is often associated with qualities of peace, courage, and stability—is the right gem for individuals who need a little extra warmth and strength this time of year.

Amethyst is purple quartz and is a beautiful blend of violet and red that can be found in every corner of the earth. The name comes from the Ancient Greek, derived from the word “methustos,” which means “intoxicated.” Ancient wearers believed the gemstone could protect them from drunkenness.



Amethyst, as previously mentioned, is composed of quartz, which is the second most abundant material found in the Earth’s crust. Amethyst gets its color from irradiation, iron impurities, and the presence of trace elements. Its hardness (a 7 on the Mohs scale) is the same as other quartz, which makes it a durable and lasting option for jewelry.

While amethyst is most commonly recognized to be a purple color, the gemstone can actually range from a light pinkish violet to a deep purple that can read more blue or red, depending on the light. Sometimes, even the same stone can have layers or color variants, so the way the gemstone is cut is important to the way the color shows in a finished piece.

Amethyst often occurs in geodes or in the cavities of granitic rocks. It can be found all over the world, including the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Zambia. The amethyst is not only the February birthstone, it is also used to celebrate the 6th and 17th years of marriage.

It has been associated with many myths, legends, religions, and numerous cultures. Some historical accounts say that Saint Valentine had an amethyst ring carved with an image of Cupid. And for those familiar with Old Testament history, amethyst was one of the twelve gemstones that represented the twelve tribes of Israel.

For many years, amethyst was held to be one of the most precious gemstones, often favored by royalty or exclusively by the clergy as a symbol for the deity of Christ. It was even held for many years in the same regard as the diamond. It was not until the discovery of more abundant supplies of amethyst that it became a gemstone enjoyed by more than just the wealthiest buyers.

Many wearers of amethyst throughout history and even today prize the gem for its symbolism as well as its beauty. Leonardo da Vinci once said that amethyst helps to quicken intelligence and get rid of evil thoughts. Other qualities like peace, stability, courage, and strength are said to be derived from this gemstone. Today, many wearers simply prize the amethyst for its beautiful shade and the way it complements both warm and cool colors.

Thank you for reading the “Ask Diamond Jim” column and for supporting the North Channel Star Newspaper!

Diamond Jim is a master jeweler, diamond dealer and precious metals broker. Pineforest Jewelry has been a proud member of the Independent Jewelers Organization (IJO) and the Retail Jewelers Organization (RJO) for many years. See more at: www.pineforestjewelry.com.

If you have questions pertaining to jewelry, watches, diamonds, precious stones, precious metals, and other questions related to the jewelry industry, email jmills@pineforestjewelry.com.

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OPINION

By **BILL KING**



Houston METRO’s Purple Line: A Case Study of the Insanity of Building Light Rail

In 2015, Houston Metro opened its Purple Line (aka Southeast Line). The Purple Line is a light rail facility that snakes 6.5 miles from downtown by Texas Southern and the University of Houston, ultimately terminating at Palm Center on Griggs Road.

When Metro first proposed this line in 2008, it estimated that the cost would be \$591 million and the line would carry 28,750 weekday riders. As of September 2020, the project had cost taxpayers \$787 million and is projected to ultimately cost \$822 million, 39% higher than projected. That equates to a cost of just over \$126 million per mile. The line’s actual weekday ridership last month was 5,230, less than 20% of what Metro originally projected. As a result, Metro spent about \$150,000 per daily rider to build the Purple Line.

How did Metro get it so wrong?

We happen to know a lot about this particular project because it was partially funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which required Metro to file an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC). Also, the FTA included the Purple Line in an analysis it did of about thirty transit projects, known as a Projected versus Actual Study, in 2020. Here is what those records show.

This project was originally conceived as part of the Metro Solutions program that Metro put before the voters in 2003. By 2008, Metro had completed its original analysis and came up with a proposed route, which in transit vernacular is called the “Local Preferred Alternative” (LPA).

The EIS filed with HGAC included a chapter on how the Purple Line would impact transportation in the area where it would be built, including a projection of ridership. Below is the table from that chapter which showed Metro’s average daily ridership projection for the Purple Line at 28,750.

By the time Metro got around to applying for FTA funding for the Purple Line in 2011, it had quietly dropped its daily ridership projection to 17,200.

While transit ridership projections are notorious for their exaggeration, Metro’s ridership projection on the Purple Line was so egregious that it drew special attention from the FTA in its 2020 study. The report notes that Metro’s Purple Line projection was the worst of the thirty projects it reviewed. This is a chart that the FTA included in its final report showing what an outlier Metro’s projection was.

Because of this, the FTA asked Metro for an explanation of how the projection could possibly be so far off. Specifically, the FTA asked to review the models that Houston Metro used to make the projection.

However, by that time Metro had lost access to the software and the data used to make the original projection. So, instead of providing the FTA with the detailed modeling data it asked for, Metro sent an email to the FTA in which it speculated that the earlier projection models had relied on the assumption that all of the light rail lines included in the Metro Solution program (including the Richmond/Westpark and to each airport) would have been completed and feeding passengers onto the Purple Line.

The FTA skeptically responded, “It leaves us still pondering how changes in the transit network – by themselves – could triple the forecast of Purple Line ridership compared to the . . . the actual outcome.” Its skepticism was well founded because there was nothing in the 2008 EIS referencing the other light rail lines, other than the Main Street (Red) Line which had been in place since 2003. I think it is fair to conclude that the original projection was badly flawed, and Metro created this explanation after the fact as an excuse

Metro also admitted in the correspondence with the FTA, that it had run a new projection in 2013 that showed average daily ridership would only be about 6,500. Metro pressed the FTA that the 6,500 projection should be used in its study and not the earlier projections of 17,000 or 28,000. The FTA responded, “While METRO and the FTA no doubt wish that those revised assumptions had been used in the forecast in play at the time of the FFGA decision, we cannot substitute the revised forecast for the forecast actually provided to FTA at the time of the FFGA.”

The significance here is that the FFGA is the point in time when the FTA had committed to financially supporting the project. If Metro submitted a projection of 6,500 daily riders, the FTA would almost certainly have never approved funding the line. Of course, Houston taxpayers were never told that the original projection of 28,500 riders per day had been reduced by nearly 80%.

Last year, the total trips on the Purple Line were just under 1.2 million. In 2016, Metro estimated that the operating cost of the Purple Line was just under \$13 million. Of course, that is undoubtedly higher today. So, the Purple is costing Houston taxpayers something like \$12 per ride in operating costs.

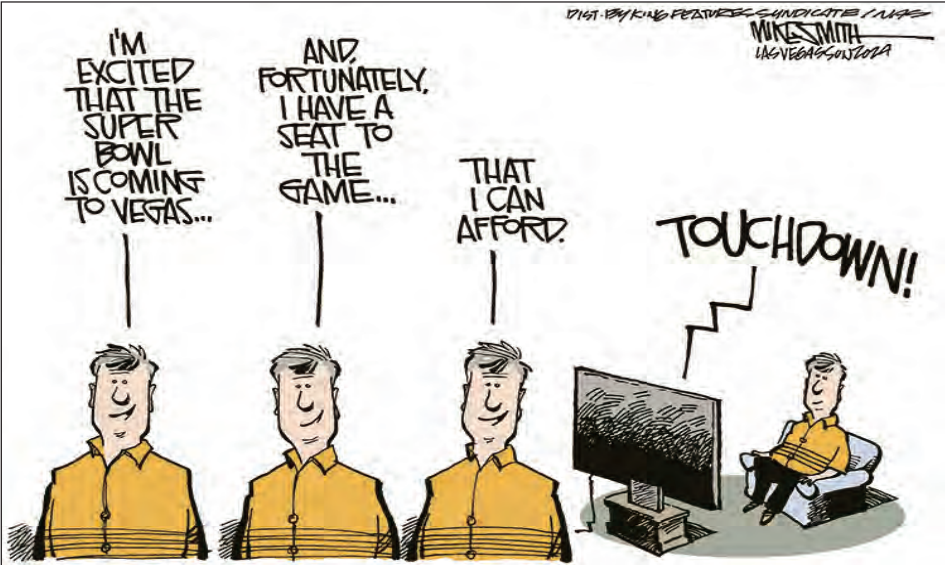
However, that does not include the capital cost of building the line. If you assume that the capital cost of \$822 million is, say 5%; that would add another \$41 million of annual cost, or an additional \$32 per ride. So, the actual ongoing cost of the operations and the opportunity cost of the capital is about \$44 per ride. And that is before you even think about trying to recover the capital investment.


Keep in mind that any trip on this line is, at a maximum, 6.5 miles. A ride sharing trip would cost a small fraction of what taxpayers are paying to provide this service to Metro’s riders. By the way, according to a Metro study, the average speed is 14 miles per hour, and it takes about 30 minutes to travel from one end of the 6.5-mile line to the other.

In 2019, Houston voters approved the Metro Next plan, in which Metro incredibly included an additional 16 miles of light rail. Of course, Metro did not share with the public its abysmal record on the Purple Line; or the Green Line which is equally horrible and I will be writing more about soon.

Based on inflation since the Purple Line was completed, that additional 16 miles of light rail would cost something close to \$200 million per mile. If dropping another \$3.2 billion on light rail in Houston is not the definition of insanity, I cannot image what is.


EDITOR’S NOTE: Reader comments on this or any article are welcome.





STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By **Gary Borders**



Standoff at Border Continues between State, Feds

A standoff at an Eagle Pass park continues as the Department of Homeland Security has sent a second letter to Gov. Greg Abbott demanding access to the Rio Grande park that is now under state control. Abbott contends the state has the right to defend itself from what he called “record-smashing levels of illegal immigration.” The Dallas Morning News reported. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that the Border Patrol can resume cutting or removing razor wire that the state installed to deter migrants. Citing that ruling, DHS sent a second letter demanding the state give Border Patrol agents “full access to the Shelby Park area currently obstructed by Texas.” A DPS spokesman said the state is installing more razor wire along the riverbank. U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-San Antonio, has urged President Joe Biden to federalize the Texas National Guard if the state defies the Supreme Court ruling.

JUDGE REJECTS PAXTON’S MOTION TO BLOCK DEPOSITION

A Travis County judge again blocked a motion by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to stop a deposition in a wrongful termination lawsuit brought by former top aides in his office, the Austin American-Statesman reported. The deposition is scheduled for Feb. 1. The four aides went to the FBI to complain about the embattled attorney general’s actions in helping developer Nate Paul. The aides were subsequently fired and filed suit in 2020. Earlier in January, Paxton tried to end the matter by saying he would no longer contest the facts of the case and accept whatever judgment the court handed down, though he continued to deny any wrongdoing. He condemned the judge’s latest ruling, saying Travis County Judge Jan Soifer was “recklessly disregarding legal precedent, abusing the litigation system, and displaying shocking bias.” Before Paxton filed his latest motion attempting to avoid testifying, both the state 3rd Court of Appeals and the



Texas Supreme Court rejected his earlier appeals. Meanwhile, four months after the Senate voted to acquit Paxton in his impeachment trial, which stemmed from an investigation into a proposed settlement of the whistleblower lawsuit, a senator that voted to acquit is accusing Paxton of possibly misleading the Senate during that trial. He urged the Senate to consider reopening the Paxton’s impeachment. State Sen. Drew Springer, R-Muenster, said Paxton’s decision not to contest the facts of the whistleblower lawsuit point to his culpability. Paxton “cannot admit guilt while claiming innocence,” Springer wrote in a post on X. Springer had previously announced plans to retire from the Senate.

STATE DELAYS VOTE ON PROPOSED LAND SWAP WITH SPACE X

Heat from conservation groups prompted Texas Parks and Wildlife commissioners to delay a proposed land swap with SpaceX. The proposal would have given the space exploration company 43 acres of Boca Chica State Park land in exchange for 477 acres near the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, The News reported. Groups, including the Sierra Club and Save RGV, urged commissioners to delay the vote to allow the public more time to examine the proposal, which will be revisited in late March. Environmental groups sued the Federal Aviation Administration last year over its approval of the expansion of billionaire Elon Musk’s SpaceX’s rocket-launch operations. The suit was filed after

the company’s Starship exploded during a launch and hurled debris thousands of feet into the air. They have also expressed concern for possible loss of wildlife and habitat since the launch site is within miles of the state park and wildlife refuge.

RECORD NUMBER OF TEXANS ENROLL IN ACA

More Texans than ever have signed up for health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act for 2024, according to federal health data released last week and reported by the Texas Tribune. The number of Texans in ACA programs, which offer inexpensive or free health care coverage, rose 37% to nearly 3.5 million – or 1 in 9 residents. National enrollment is at record highs as well, with more than 16.3 million people signed up for plans under ACA. That is double the number of Americans signing up for ACA plans since it was launched in 2014. “The clear takeaway is that Texans want coverage that is affordable and comprehensive, and when you make sure they have that — and it’s easy to know about, and it’s easy to get signed up — they sign up in droves,” said Stacey Pogue, a health care policy analyst. Texas continues to lead the nation in the number of uninsured residents, with nearly 5 million Texans living without health insurance coverage. That’s nearly double the national average.

DSHS LAUNCHES NEW TOOLS TO TRACK RESPIRATORY VIRUSES

The Texas Department of State Health Services has created a respiratory virus dashboard that shows trends in the three major respiratory illnesses most likely to cause serious illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths – COVID-19, influenza and RSV. “Those data points demonstrate the diseases’ most severe effects on people, communities and the health care system,” said DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford. “The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions, so people can make informed decisions on precautions for themselves and their families, and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients.” The site can be accessed at healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/Home.

FORMER PUC DIRECTOR IS NOW CHAIRMAN

The former executive director of the Public Utility Commission was sworn in last week as chairman of the commission. Thomas Gleeson, who has worked at the PUC for 15 years, most recently as the agency’s executive director, was appointed to the commission by Abbott in mid-January. “As a long-time employee of the PUCT, I’m deeply familiar with the duties and responsibilities of the agency. Even more importantly, as a husband, dad, and ratepayer, I know how the decisions we make here impact the daily lives and finances of Texas families,” Gleeson said.



THE POSTSCRIPT

By **Carrie Classon**

Enough

My husband, Peter, and I are headed out to Mexico again, and before we do, I thought it was a good time of year to check in with some folks I care about, to see how 2024 had been treating them so far.

First, I had dinner with my oldest friend, Andrew. He told me about his mother, who lives alone and has been feeling her 92 years. Her activities are becoming more limited, and she may move into a smaller place. She’s figuring out what she is still able to do, and how much is enough.

Andrew prepares taxes, and so this is about the last chance I would get to see him in three months, even if I were not leaving for Mexico. He will be working long hours, making most of the money he makes in the year in a short time, and still caring for his mom.

“Take care of yourself?” I say because Andrew is single, and I worry he won’t get enough rest. I worry he will eat poorly.

“I do!” he insists. I don’t know if this is true. But I hope he gets enough food and sleep and sunshine during this season of cold and gray and taxes.

Then I had lunch with Dane, the cousin who is closest in age to me. This is quite a distinction, because I have 36 cousins. Dane is good about calling me up when he is nearby so we can have lunch. He didn’t have a lot of news. Work was going as well as could be expected. He’d had two flat tires hauling a trailer across the country. Dane’s sister had successfully nagged him into scheduling a physical and making a will.

“You need to have regular physicals!” I told him.

“I know. I’ve got one scheduled.”

I did not ask how long it had been since his last one.

“I’m getting my teeth cleaned, too,” he added, as if he read my thoughts.

I was glad to hear he was taking care of himself (with his sister’s urging). Then Dane said something unexpected.

“I realized the other day how unimportant money is to me.”

This was a surprising thing for him to say. Dane works hard for his money. He gets up before the sun and does a lot of hard labor and drives a trailer in adverse weather. He’s a guy who paid off his mortgage early, doesn’t buy new furniture and doesn’t take a lot of vacations.

“Oh?”

“I found a \$20 bill on the sidewalk. I picked it up, and it was wrapped around two \$100 bills.”

“Wow. Any idea where it came from?”

“No idea. I kept it, but I felt bad. Someone was missing a lot of money and I just felt bad there was no way of getting it back to them.”

I looked at my cousin. Like me, he was getting older. Like me, he had a pretty good life. “It’s good to have enough, isn’t it?” I said.

Dane nodded. Dane is happy with what he has, and he has enough.

Peter and I are leaving for Mexico soon. We’ll be staying in our little one-bedroom apartment, and I’ll be writing at my little green Formica desk. It’s not the fanciest place. It’s nowhere near as nice as the homes of most of our friends. But every night our landlord, Jorge, will greet us and the colorful suns hanging from the walls around us will smile at us and we will know we have everything we need. We have more than enough.

Till next time,
Carrie

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SUPER BOWL LVIII
49ers, Chiefs meet in rematch for Lombardi Trophy:
A KC win would put Mahomes in select QB company

Now it's up to the front office to get Ryans and Stroud the help they need to go even further in 2024, and maybe, just maybe, put them in the same position the Chiefs and 49ers are.

Speaking of this year's Super Bowl, it has the makings of another classic. These two teams met four years ago in Super Bowl 54 in Miami. The 49ers carried a 10-point lead into the fourth quarter, but KC QB Patrick Mahomes lead the Chiefs to 21 points, enroute to a 31-20 win, giving Mahomes and head coach Andy Reid their first championship. The Chiefs are definitely the class of the NFL, having played in six straight AFC title games and four of the last five Super Bowls. They kind of remind me of a certain baseball team that calls Minute Maid Park home!

Last year, the dynamic duo won their second title as Harrison Butker kicked the game-winning field goal with just seconds left to defeat a game Eagles team, 38-35.

Should Mahomes win on Sunday in the City of Lost Wages, he would become just the fifth quarterback in NFL history to win three or more Lombardi Trophies. Tom Brady leads the way with 7, Joe Montana and Terry Bradshaw have four each and Troy Aikman has three.

The Chiefs are also looking to become just the sixth NFL franchise to win back-to-back titles. Green Bay won SB I and II, Miami won back-to-back in SB VII and VIII, while Pittsburgh did it twice with wins in SB IX and X and XIII and XIV and Denver did it in SB XXXII and XXXIII. Dallas was the last team to win back-to-back titles when Jimmy Johnson's Cowboys dominated SBs XXVII and XXVIII.

This will be KC's sixth Super Bowl (they played in the first one in 1967, in 1970, 2020, 2021 and 2023), while SF will be making its eighth appearance (1982, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1995, 2013 and 2020).

Both teams took different routes to get to Vegas. The Chiefs struggled during the regular season as the offense



sputtered and Mahomes lacked a go-to receiver. Even reliable tight end Travis Kelce (93 receptions, 984 yards, 5 TDs) was not his usual dependable self, but he and his QB have come alive in the playoffs.

Mahomes (4,183 yards, 27 TDS/14 interceptions during regular season) and Kelce have been on a roll in their first three playoff games. Mahomes has completed 70-103 (68%) passes for 718 yards, with four TDs and no interceptions, while Kelce has grabbed 23 passes for 262 yards and 3 TDs. While Mahomes struggled to find a dependable wide receiver during the regular season, he seems to be clicking with rookie wideout Rashee Rice (79 receptions, 938 yards, 7 TDs in regular season) as Rice has latched on to 20 passes for 223 yards and one TD in the postseason. Having a second go-to guy has been a huge boost to Mahomes and the KC offense.

The Chiefs also have a solid running game led by second-year man Isiah Pacheco (935 yards, 7 TDs in regular season as the former seventh-round draft choice has picked up 254 yards on 63 carries (4 yards a carry) with three TDs.

Many figured the Chiefs would be finished when they lost the home field advantage to Baltimore and had to play back-to-back playoff games on the road for the first time in Mahomes' career. KC accepted the challenge with a 27-24 win at Buffalo and a 17-10 win at Baltimore in the AFC title game.

While the offense appears to have found itself, the defense has carried this team for much of the season and continues to be the strength heading into the Big One on Sunday. KC's defense has

allowed 41 points (13 points per game) in its first three playoff games. The Chiefs defense collected 57 sacks during the regular season, along with eight interceptions. SF will need to slow down edge rusher George Karlaflis (10.5 sacks in regular season) and big and quick defensive tackle Chris Jones (10.5 sacks in regular season) if it hopes to have a chance on Sunday.

While Mahomes is connecting with new weapons, SF QB Brock Purdy has a plethora of talent to turn to on offense. Purdy (4,280 yards, 31 TDs in regular season) has struggled a bit in the 49ers first two playoff games, but he rallied them for home wins over the Packers (24-21) and led SF from a 24-7 deficit in the NFC title game to a 34-31 win over Detroit by leading the 49ers to 27 second-half points. This will be Purdy's (43-70 519 yards, 2 TDS/1 interception in the playoffs) first big test, and how well he handles the pressure will be a key factor if the 49ers are to win the game.

The 49ers have perhaps the best offensive weapon between the two teams with running back Christian McCaffrey (1,459 rushing yards, 14 TDS/67 receptions, 564 yards, 7 TDs in the regular season. McCaffrey has rushed for an additional 188 yards and 4 TDs in the playoffs. The KC defense must slow him down if it hopes to win its second straight SB title.

Purdy also has three solid options in the passing game in wide receivers Deebo Samuel (60 receptions, 892 yards, 7 TDs in regular season), Brandon Aiyuk (75 receptions, 1,342 yards, 7 TDs) and tight end George Kittle (65 receptions, 1,020 yards, 6 TDs). In the playoffs, Samuel was injured early in the Green Bay

game but returned for the NFC title game and has grabbed 10 passes for 113 yards, while Aiyuk has 6 catches for 100 yards and 1 TD. Kittle also has 6 catches for 108 yards and a TD in the playoffs.

The Chiefs front seven must first slow McCaffrey, which is a tall task. Don't be surprised if head coach Kyle Shanahan (whose father Mike won back-to-back Super Bowls with Denver) has Purdy come out throwing it all over the place to help calm him down and keep the KC defense on its toes. If the 49ers can be successful early with the passing game, that will make McCaffrey all the more dangerous as the game progresses.

The 49ers defense has some issues in the secondary, but its front seven can rush the passer as well as Nick Bosa (10.5 sacks) and Co. recorded 46 sacks and picked off 21 passes this season.

Mahomes, though, is such a cool customer who can move around in the pocket to avoid pressure. The KC offensive line is a veteran bunch and takes pride in keeping Mahomes upright.

SF linebackers Fred Warner and Drew Greenlaw have the speed and quickness to keep up with Kelce. I would expect them to be tasked with keeping tabs on the tight end with the famous girlfriend (I won't mention her name) all afternoon.

This game should be competitive and could be high scoring since it will be played on a fast turf indoors at Vegas' Allegiant Stadium. I expect another nailbiter, just like last year's game.

Purdy has proven he can shake off a bad start and be there when his team needs him the most, but it's tough to bet against Mahomes and Reid. All they've heard all year is that their time at the top has come to an end, but all they've done is keep proving the critics wrong.

Look for Mahomes and Kelce to be the key players down the stretch, as Mahomes leads the Chiefs to their second straight Super Bowl win and third in the last five years. It's been an amazing ride, and it's not done yet. **My pick, Kansas City 33, San Francisco 31**

Homeless Shelter
Struggles
Financially,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

men's shelter next door is also 100 years old and the women's shelter is behind the administration building and is a younger building.

The Britton -Fuller Family Center Program was opened in 2016 and can house six intact families of five members at any given time. The facility helps the shelter abide by federal requirements and allow families to remain together.

Eckert said they face many obstacles but find ways of resolving them.

"That includes lost or missing ID's, lack of residence documentation, misdemeanor warrants and fines, lack of work credentials, no money for healthcare referrals and treatment, childcare issues, and workforce certifications," he said.

The shelter itself faces some challenges including a downturn nationwide in national and local philanthropic downturn, and traditional local supporters.

"We also have increased costs for food, supplies, wages and benefits while trying to manage a 24/7/365 program, and maintenance costs on our existing buildings," he said.

Jim Wadzinski, a board member, said one of their residents, a young lady from the East Coast had gone through a divorce and was wanting to move to get away from her circumstances. She came to Houston with her daughter and was hired as a teacher in Channelview ISD. She had paid a deposit on a rental house, but

the house wasn't available, and she couldn't get her money back.

"She's stuck here with no money in the bank, and no check from her job for another two to four weeks. She's looking at no income for the next six weeks. After a few paychecks, she had earned enough to rent an apartment. We were able to provide a safe place for her and the child during that time.

Depending on their length of stay, Wadzinski said they can assist them with job searches, writing resumes, teach them financial literacy and help with other life skills.

"Sometimes it's as simple as trying to help them get an ID, or get them access to a phone, or computer," he said.

A capital campaign is underway led by former Baytown mayor Steve Don Carlos and he's asking everyone in the community to pitch in and help.

They are planning a fundraiser at the Hyatt Regency on February 24. To learn more about how to help the shelter, visit their website at [www. htps://bahs-shelter.org/](http://www.htps://bahs-shelter.org/)

020424 NCHomelessShelter 01 – Bill Eckert, III, executive director for Bay Area Homeless Services spoke to the North Channel Area Chamber of Commerce membership last week. The shelter is in a financial crunch and is looking to the community for assistance and already provides services to the area.

Petry's 90th Birthday,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

years when he moved to Jacinto City in 1973, it was my first year of being elected to the city council. I first met him at the Jacinto City Flint Street Church of Christ where we both were members. He was a member there for 17 years, for the past 15 years he's been a member of the Greens Bayou Church of Christ. He's one of the city's finest citizens; he always greets those he meets with his big smile.

Franklin's full name is Franklin Leon Petry, but originally he did not have a middle name. At 10 years old, he gave himself the middle name, Leon to be added to his Christening certificate.

At age 13, Franklin got his first job ushering cars at the South Main Drive-In Theater.

Franklin graduated from Waller High School in 1951. As a Bulldog when he was a junior he won 1st place in broad jumping at the Waller County Track Meet. On weekends while in high school, he would come into town & deliver telegrams for Western Union.

Franklin also worked at Rettig's Ice cream scooping/dipping ice cream and serving up smiles and sweet goodness to customers. He also worked as a blueprint delivery man for a short while.

While in the Army, Franklin served in the Korean War and visited Japan several times. Franklin remembers Korea being miserably cold and spending his 21st birthday washing dishes all day long.

At age 17, his sister Rosalie got him a job at her place of work, Western Electric and he worked there for 34 years and retired in 1981. Naturally, this was his favorite job of all.

Franklin is a major car lover and his favorite was his 1939 Ford Deluxe Convertible Coupe. In 1957, he bought a brand new Ford Fairlane Convertible, white with red interior, which was also a favorite. He is a former member of the Convertibles of Houston Car Club & a current member of the Bayshore Fine Rides Car Club.

Franklin started playing the guitar at age 13. He once played the bass fiddle in Sleepy LaBeef's band. He was also the song leader at Church for 13 years. He



Graduate Franklin Leon Petry, Waller High School in 1951



Korean Army Veteran Franklin Petry on guard duty in freezing snow.

loves singing and playing music & has performed for many audiences throughout the years.

Some of his favorite music artists include: Elvis, Sleepy LaBeef, Willie Nelson, & Gene Autry (just to name a few). Visiting Graceland (Elvis Presley's mansion in Memphis, TN) was one of his favorite trips of all time. The 50's have been his favorite decade, SO FAR...

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Black History Month,

I-10 PEL Study,

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1976.

The idea for a Black History Month was first conceived by the historian Carter G. Woodson and members of his Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History). Together they organized a Negro History Week, beginning in February 1926. They selected the month of February for this celebration because it was close to the birthdays of U.S. Pres. Abraham Lincoln, who had been responsible for the Emancipation Proclamation, and the African American orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

During the next 50 years Negro History Week grew in popularity, with American cities initiating their own celebrations of Black achievements and with teachers—particularly in schools with a large percentage of African American students—using class time to discuss contributions to history made by notable African Americans. The civil rights movement also contributed to its popularity. Negro History Week was expanded to become Black History Month in 1976, with U.S. Pres. Gerald Ford urging Americans to participate in its observance.

Halle Maria Berry (/hæli/ HAL-ee; born Maria Halle Berry; August 14, 1966) is an American actress/singer. She began her career as a model and entered several beauty contests, finishing as the first runner-up in the Miss USA pageant and coming in sixth in the Miss World 1986. Her breakthrough film role was in the romantic comedy Boomerang (1992), alongside Eddie Murphy, which led to roles in The Flintstones (1994) and Bulworth (1998) as well as the television film Introducing Dorothy Dandridge (1999), for which she won a Primetime Emmy Award and a Golden Globe Award.

Berry established herself as one of the highest-paid actresses in Hollywood during the 2000s. For her performance of a struggling widow in the romantic drama Monster's Ball (2001), Berry became the only African-American woman to win the Academy Award for Best Actress, and the first woman of color. Berry took on high-profile roles such as Storm in four installments of the X-Men film series (2000–2014), the henchwoman of a robber in the thriller Swordfish (2001), Bond girl Jinx in Die Another Day (2002), and the title role in the much-debated Catwoman (2004).

Berry was born Maria Halle Berry in Cleveland, Ohio, on August 14, 1966, to Judith Ann (née Hawkins), an English immigrant from Liverpool, and Jerome Jesse Berry, an African-American man. Her name was legally changed to Halle Maria Berry at the age of five. Her parents selected her middle name from Halle's Department Store, which was then a local landmark in Cleveland. Berry's mother worked as a psychiatric nurse, and her father worked in the same hospital as an attendant in the psychiatric ward;

he later became a bus driver. They divorced when Berry was four years old, and she and her older sister Heidi Berry-Henderson were raised exclusively by their mother. She has been estranged from her father since childhood, noting in 1992 that she did not even know if he was still alive. Her father was abusive to her mother, and Berry has recalled witnessing her mother being beaten daily, kicked down stairs, and hit in the head with a wine bottle.

Berry grew up in Oakwood, Ohio, and graduated from Bedford High School, where she was a cheerleader, honor student, editor of the school newspaper, and prom queen. She worked in the children's department at Higbee's Department store. She then studied at Cuyahoga Community College.

In the 1980s, she entered several beauty contests, winning Miss Teen All American 1985 and Miss Ohio USA in 1986.[10] She was the 1986 Miss USA first runner-up to Christy Fichtner of Texas. In the Miss USA 1986 pageant interview competition, she said she hoped to become an entertainer or to have something to do with the media. Her interview was awarded the highest score by the judges. She was the first African-American Miss World entrant in 1986, where she finished sixth and Trinidad and Tobago's Giselle Laronde was crowned Miss World.

Information on this article is from compiling my research from libraries and the internet.

Texas in economic recovery, growth and development. Rapid economic growth is not new to this region. Since 1980, about one million new residents were added every decade. Most recent estimates suggest population growth of over 120,000 new residents each year.

The outlook anticipates this region will continue its economic development and growth, as noted by the following:

1. 4th in the nation in regional GDP
2. 1.5 million additional jobs will be added by 2040 – for a total of almost 4 million
3. 60% increase in vehicular travel and double the movement of freight over the next 25 years
4. 2% annual population growth, adding almost 4 million persons by 2040.

The existing and future transportation demand of the study area exceeds the capacity of the local roadways and many of the study area's roadways have high crash rates. Projected population growth within the study area is expected to place an even greater strain on the existing transportation infrastructure and likely to increase minor and fatality crashes.

The summaries of previous studies include information that may be relevant to this study such as goals and objectives, outcome and/or recommendations, public involvement, and any ongoing activities. This report is one of the first deliverables for the scope of services performed on this PEL Study and thus prepared

in such manner. The report will eventually be incorporated into the overall I-10E PEL Study report in the form of a brief content and an appendix.

There are 4 different municipal jurisdictional boundaries within the corridor: Houston, Jacinto City, Baytown, and Mont Belvieu. The study area includes 10 miles in Houston's city limits, 8 miles in Houston's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), 9 miles in Baytown's city limits, and 3 miles in Baytown's ETJ. The study area, along with these boundaries, are illustrated in the photo.

SEE COMING PART 3 ARTICLE FOR ADDITIONAL INFO. ON CURRENT AND FUTURE TRAFFIC VOLUME PROJECTIONS.



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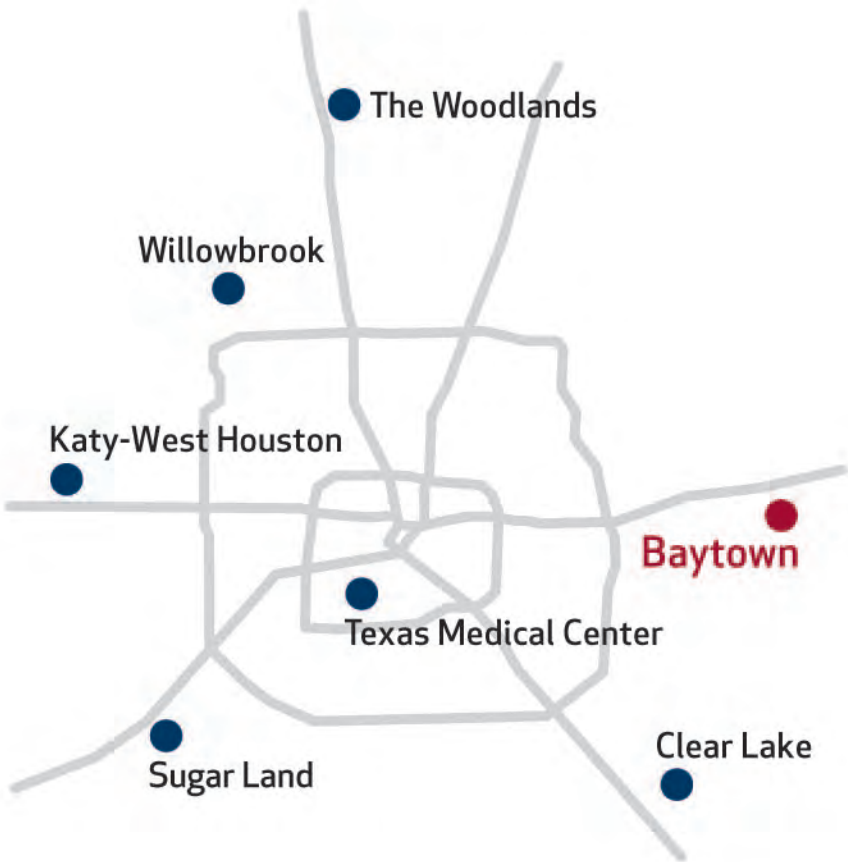
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