

SAM HARLESS

State Representative District 126
March 2021 Newsletter



Texas House of Representatives



**Texas
House District
126**

**News
and
Information**



Midway Point

The 87th Session has passed the midway point and hearings are slowly turning into marathons, lasting well into the morning hours. Our most recent hearings in State Affairs coincided with hearings in Homeland Security & Public Safety with both covering a number of high profile issues. Hundreds of people poured into the Capitol, many waiting until the wee hours of the morning to express their passionate positions on a range of issues.

Constitutional Carry - Several bills were presented with slightly different approaches to permitless carrying of a handgun. The more open view is the constitutional approach that would allow handgun carrying by anyone unless

prohibited from ownership, without required training or a license. Other variations include at least meeting the requirements of a license to carry without the actual need for a license, although allowing the license to remain in place for reasons of reciprocity with other states. We received a large number of calls, emails, and petitions in support of this issue as well as opposition to it. There are more bills yet to come in this category and we are watching to see what if any changes are submitted on each. **Status - Pending in Committee**

Publicly Funded Lobbying - This bill seeks to prohibit the funding of lobbying efforts by units of local government. That would mean that cities, counties, school districts, port authorities, or any other taxing entity could not pay for outside lobbyists with public funds. The bill does not restrict such entities from having full time staff perform these functions. We heard from scores of people and elected officials with positions on both sides of the issue. Large entities can probably afford and may already have employees to staff such positions, where smaller rural areas rely on their representations at the Capitol to come from lobbyists or staff from their related associations such as the Texas Association of Counties, the County Judges & Commissioner's Association, or the Texas Municipal League. **Status - Pending in Committee**

George Floyd Act - The George Floyd Act is a comprehensive overhaul package of police reform issues. From prohibiting Class "C" arrests, restricting certain "holds" or "techniques", as well as creating direct liability for peace officers, this sweeping bill had a large number of people come to testify in support of the bill. Law enforcement associations came to accept responsibility for their part of some of the issues seen recent years but took exception to drastic changes in qualified immunity or complete prohibition on Class "C" arrests, stating some circumstances do not fit well with "Cite & release" policies. Releasing a drunk, peeping Tom, or other situations are not always resolved with just a ticket. **Status - Left Pending In Committee**

Public Camping Ban - This bill puts pressure on larger urban and metropolitan areas to find solutions for the public camping problems that have led to hundreds camping on streets, under bridges, and panhandling on streets and intersections. This issue likewise has enthusiastic support and opposition. While some say it is inhumane to punish those who are already homeless and cannot afford a ticket or warrant, others say the measures currently being taken encourage further homelessness by providing free services, facilities, and food. Austin's Town Lake area along Caesar Chavez, and under I-35 have become a mecca for the homeless in a sea of tents, much like what Houston saw under the overpass of I-45 near the George R. Brown Convention Center. **Status - Left Pending In Committee**

Texas Electrical Grid & ERCOT

Most of our research into the failings of ERCOT during the big freeze in February has concluded, with nearly 40 hours of hearings crammed into 3 days. Bills attempting to address issues that contributed to the electrical system failure, volatility in pricing in the electricity market, and reliability of our grid in the future are beginning to come to the House floor for discussion. At the same time, the Senate has sent over SB 3 which is a comprehensive bill addressing many of these issues and is awaiting assignment to a committee for hearings.

I have co-authored six of the bills that address preparedness, a statewide extreme weather alert system, creation of a Texas energy Disaster Reliability Council, and restricting regulations for the wholesale indexed products by retail electric providers. These six bills were voted out of the House and will now be sent over to the Senate. There will be other bills and it will take some time before we know the final form of the reforms dealing with the future reliability of our electrical grid.



Texas House Plan for *electricity reform*

House Bill 10: Reforming ERCOT

Requires all ERCOT board members to reside in Texas and creates an additional board position to represent consumer interests.

House Bill 11: Weatherizing Facilities

Requires electric transmission and generation facilities to be weatherized, and gives them the discretion to choose the best weatherization methods for them.

House Bill 12: Alerting Texans

Creates an alert system to alert Texans of impending disasters and extreme weather and provide information on power and utility outages to affected consumers.

House Bill 13: Improving Coordination

Establishes the Texas Energy Disaster Reliability Council to improve coordination between the electricity and natural gas industries, which are crucial to providing electricity to Texans.

House Bill 16: Defending Ratepayers

Protects consumers from sky-high electric bills by banning the sale of wholesale indexed products to residential customers, which can leave them vulnerable to extreme fluctuations in electricity prices.

House Bill 17: Empowering Consumers

Ensures homeowners, builders, and businesses have the ability to decide how best to meet their energy needs and prohibits policies that would ban or discriminate against a single energy source in new construction.

(Please note our Capitol office change. We have moved up one floor to E1-402 effective December 10th. Our Capitol phone number remains the same 512-463-0496. Also, please note our District Office is closed to consolidate our personnel at the Capitol during the session.)

Our Legislation This Session

Legislation for this session has begun to hear bills in committees and we are starting to see some movement.

House Bill 759 - Relates to the creation of an electronic process to track school threat assessments created in the last session of the Texas Legislature. The student threat assessment database would take the by-product of the

threat assessment teams and allow it to follow the students permanent school record electronically. **Status - Left Pending In Committee**

House Bill 766 - This is the same bill I filed and pursued last session. It creates a database that would contain any conditions of bond imposed on a defendant for violent offenses, like family violence. It is designed to protect the victims of family violence and responding police officers in the time between the initial arrest until a protective order is issued by a court. I worked with Senator Kolkhorst last session to pass a similar bill that was ultimately vetoed by the Governor due to a bad amendment that tainted the bill. Her version in SB 343 this session is coming to the House and I will be co-sponsoring it. **Status - Voted out of Committee unanimously sent to calendars.**

House Bill 1049 - This bill clarifies the peace officer authority of deputy sheriffs and constables in the time after the expiration of the term of the Sheriff or Constable at midnight December 31st, until the deputy can be issued a new oath of office for a new term of office or under new office holder. **Status - Voted out of Committee.**

House Bill 1417 - Relates to the development of a campus improvement plan that includes, violence and bullying prevention and intervention on campus for dropout deterrence, including providing a research-based teacher development program that provides teachers continuing education that includes creating a nurturing classroom environment; developing respectful and caring relationships with students; promoting student emotional health, and more. **Status - Awaiting a hearing in Public Education**

House Bill 1681 - Relates to restrictions for issuance of permits for construction of any new assisted living facility within a 500 year floodplain. Many of our constituents complained when an assisted living center was built immediately adjacent to Cypress Creek after the Harvey Flood exposing many of our vulnerable seniors to hazards that could impair a rescue in an area known to flood. **Status - Awaiting a hearing in Human Services**

House Bill 1684 - This is an omnibus crime bill to enhance the penalties for offenses committed during mass riot events. While peaceful protests are an American right, damage to property and injury are not. Last year rioters in Austin did \$60 thousand dollars in damage to our State Capitol and vehicles. **Status - Awaiting a hearing in Criminal Jurisprudence**

House Bill 2610 - Relates to the time for completion of a fire code inspection following submission of an application request. This bill extends the timeline to 10 business days. **Status - Voted out of Committee unanimously.**

House Bill 3256 - This bill addresses the confidentiality of a public school employee's home or residence address in certain government records and documents to protect their home and families from potential retaliation from school related actions or decisions. It permits them the option to "opt out" of public access to tax records, vehicle registration, or driver's license data. **Status - Awaiting a Hearing in Public Education**

House Bill 3363 - The bill addresses issues currently being experienced by law enforcement and prosecutors in dealing with social media companies such as Facebook responding to search warrants issued under Texas law.

Status - Awaiting a Hearing in Criminal Jurisprudence

House Resolution 23 - Relates to congratulating the Champions Golf Club on their hosting the 75th Annual US Women's Open the 10th through the 14th of December

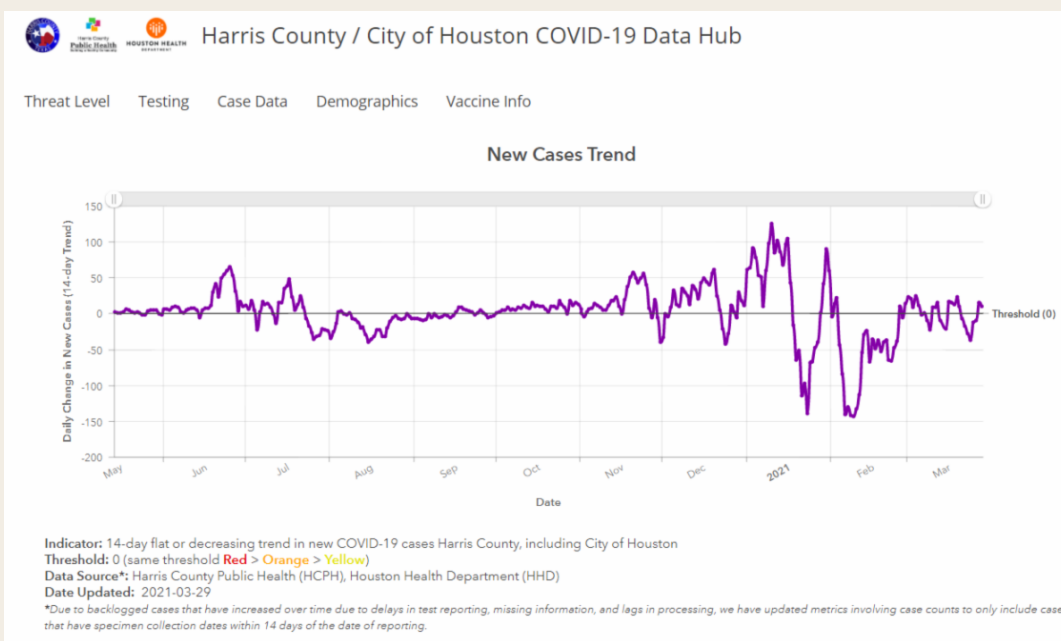
Other Bills I have co-authored or joint authored

[Co-authored Bills](#) [Joint-Authored Bills](#)

COVID's Continuing Impact On Texas

COVID STATS & INFO

COVID Cases Reported In Harris County

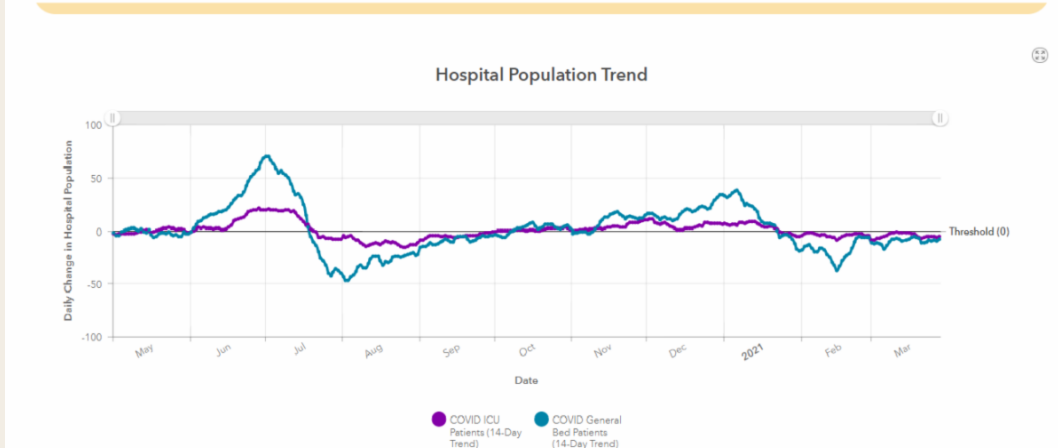


The chart above provides a reflection of the trend for COVID-19 cases reported for all of Harris County during the last 14 days.



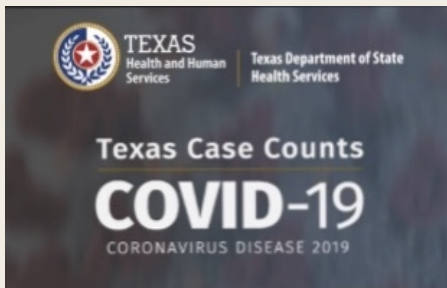
Harris County / City of Houston COVID-19 Data Hub

Threat Level Testing Case Data Demographics Vaccine Info



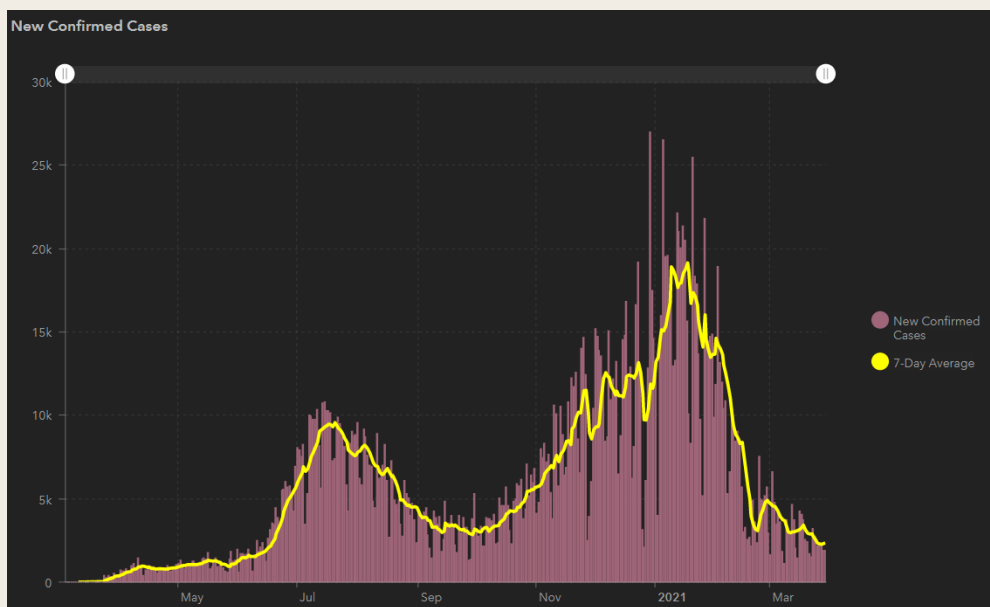
The second chart displays the hospital population trend of COVID cases. It should be noted there will be occasional time lags or delays in reporting that can affect total numbers.

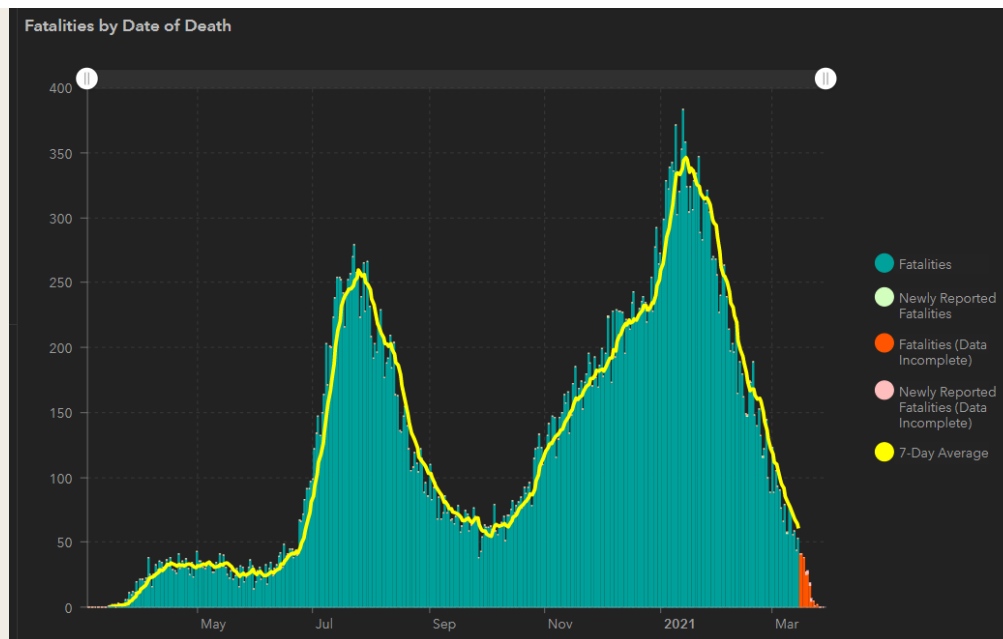
These charts can be found at the Harris County COVID Dashboard www.readyharris.org



Texas COVID Cases Statewide

The two charts below come from the [Texas Covid Dashboard](#) and reflect the recent information on daily reported cases statewide along with the trend in fatalities.





COVID VIRUS & VACCINES IN TEXAS

Texas COVID cases in Texas now number at 2,388,650 confirmed cases and the death toll stands just over 47,000. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines continue to roll out to hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics across the state. Johnson & Johnson has recently received approval for distribution from the Centers for Disease Control for its "one-shot" dose vaccine. It is the third in the United States to obtain approval but the only single dose vaccine to date. The vaccines continue to be distributed to hubs and providers and all adults over the age of 16 are now available to receive the vaccine. Texas has now surpassed 10 million doses administered, with 3.5 million individuals being receiving their 2nd dose.

Governor Abbott on March 2nd issued an executive order lifting the mask mandate and business capacity requirements for counties with a COVID hospitalization rate of less than .15% over a 7 day period. The virus is still a threat to our society and the Governor, as well as local leaders, encourage the citizens of Texas not to abandon safe practices that have been successful this past year.

While these are just statistics, remember these cases and fatalities are friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

To find a vaccine distribution site near you, the state has created this map:

[COVID Vaccine Provider Map](#)

If you are in the eligible tier, to find doses available in your area, check this link:

[Vaccine Dose Availability Map:](#)

If you need to find a testing site near you, follow this link:

[COVID Testing Locations](#)

THREAT LEVEL SYSTEM

Harris County's Threat Level System, which can be found here: [READY HARRIS THREAT LEVEL](#), provides the current threat status to the County. Executive Orders and other COVID related news for Harris County as well as the COVID Dashboard can always be found at www.readyharris.org.

Harris County now has met only one of the metrics for change in status in the current downward trend in COVID hospital population and the reduction in daily new positive cases. There are four more metrics to meet before a change in threat status will be downgraded. *(Note that the county uses a 14 day average as opposed to the 7 day average used by the state)*

As your State Representative, I continue to maintain contact with our county and state officials and provide you details and updates from those calls. I try to keep you posted on updates to news and announcements about local actions and state efforts to contain this virus and to provide the highlights so you aren't inundated and hope you find our information useful. Like many of you I am concerned about the growing restrictions on our lives and businesses and I hope it yields a continued improvement in the spread of the virus in the coming months.

Let me say again how proud I am to be chosen once again to represent the residents of House District 126. I will continue to work to make our business and communities better places to work and live, even during these trying times.

Sam Harless, State Representative

Please follow my Facebook page for daily updates and new information at: www.Facebook.com/samharless126

or our Twitter Page at

<https://twitter.com/SamHarless126>

COVID-19 Resources

Texas Workforce Commission

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) continues to explore options to keep the 2021 tax rates as low as possible for Texas employers as Texas and the entire nation continue to deal with the economic disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more about 2021 tax rates in the press release.](#)

TWC Website to Apply for Benefits: [TWC Unemployment Benefits](#)

Texas Workforce TeleCenter - 800-939-6631

TWC has a new Chat service on their website in the bottom right of the screen, called "Chat With Us". This new function will be able to answer most general questions from individual. <https://www.twc.texas.gov>

Harris County COVID Resources

ReadyHarris Website: <https://www.readyharris.org/#resources>

Harris County Fire Marshal hotline to report businesses who are in violation of the County and State COVID-19 health and safety policies - 832-839-6941

Precinct 4 Commissioner Community Assistance -
[Pct 4 Community assistance](#)

People can sign up to receive emergency alerts from Harris County at: [Ready Harris Alert Signup](#).

Also, 2-1-1 is a resource hotline set up by Harris County. If someone is in need of resources fast they can call that number and they will be connected to resources in their community. They can also text CV19 to 888-777. This hotline is available 24/7.

City of Houston

Houston Public Health Dept - <https://houstonemergency.org/covid19/>

Federal Resources / Websites

CDC- Center for Disease Control: [CDC Coronavirus](#)

Small Business Administration: [SBA](#)

SBA Paycheck Protection Program - [Paycheck Protection Loans](#)
An SBA loan that helps businesses keep their workforce employed (during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.)

FEMA Corona Response: [FEMA CoronaVirus](#)

Around The District

Our Schools and COVID

Fortunately, we haven't seen the dramatic spike in COVID cases associated with school reopening that was anticipated by some, largely as a result of the planning and preparation by each of our districts, their leadership, and superintendents. We should all be very thankful that they are monitoring the health and safety of our children.

Our School Districts are closely monitoring COVID cases in the staff and student population. You can see the COVID Campus Dashboards for each of our area districts here:

[Klein ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Cy-Fair ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Tomball ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Spring ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

COVID statistics in Texas Public Schools may be found here:

[TEA School Campus COVID Link](#)

Scroll down and you can get Excel reports that are searchable by school district or campus.

In The District

Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts Pearls of Art Gala



Our Heroes
PORTRAITS OF COURAGE

Save the Date for the *virtual* 14th Annual Pearls of Art Gala
A fast-paced evening of entertainment and art with gourmet dining
in the comfort of your own home or watch party!

Saturday, April 10th, 2021

Pearls of Art Virtual Gala 2021 - Our Heroes: Portraits of Courage
Gala Chair: Frances Stetson, Ph.D.

Benefiting the Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts

[Register Here](#)

Precinct 4 Commissioner Capital Project Status Update

(Our thanks to Pct 4 Commissioner Cagle's Office and Pamela Rocchi)

(Any new changes will be highlighted in RED)

- **Boudreaux Road 3 between Old Boudreaux Lane and Gleannloch Forest Drive at SH 99**
 - Summary: Proposed improvements include widening Boudreaux Road to a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
 - Status: Study Phase
 - Construction Timeline: TBD
 - Construction Cost: TBD

- **Bourgeois Road between Cutten Road and West Richey Road**
 - Summary: Proposed improvements include upgrading Bourgeois Road as a 2-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
 - Status: Study Phase
 - Construction Timeline: TBD
 - Construction Cost: TBD

- **Cutten Road between Bavaria Drive and Cossey Road**
 - Summary: Proposed improvements include the extension of Cutten Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
 - Status: Pre-Planning Phase
 - Construction Timeline: TBD
 - Construction Cost: TBD

- **Cypress North Houston Road between Jones Road and FM 1960**
 - Summary: Planned improvements include widening and extending Cypress North Houston Road (formerly Lou Edd Road) as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installations at Misty Moss Drive, Autumn Mills Drive, and FM 1960.
 - Status: Design Phase – Project bid phase has been delayed to incorporate the design requirements for addressing the Atlas 14 drainage mitigation needs.
 - Construction Timeline: TBD
 - Construction Cost: TBD

- **Hollister Street 4 between Log Hollow Drive and Breen Drive**
 - Summary: Proposed improvements include extending Hollister Street as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved

drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.

- Status: Pre-Planning Phase
- Construction Timeline: TBD
- Construction Cost: TBD

- **Hufsmith-Kohrville Road 2 between Hollow Glen Lane and Ezekiel Road**

- Summary: Planned improvements include widening Hufsmith-Kohrville Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installations at Lacey Road and Ezekiel.
- Status: Design Phase
- Construction Timeline: Goal to advertise for construction purposes in early 2022 (barring any unforeseen circumstances). Goal to advertise was delayed in order to accommodate additional drainage needs to comply with Atlas 14 drainage criteria.
- Construction Cost: TBD

- **Hufsmith-Kohrville Road 3 between Ezekiel Road and Holderrieth Road**

- Summary: Planned improvements include widening Hufsmith-Kohrville Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation at Woodland Shore Drive.
- Status: Design Phase
- Construction Timeline: TBD
- Construction Cost: TBD

- **Fairbanks North Houston Road at Terrace Brook Drive**

- Summary: Planned traffic signalization of intersection as warranted.
- Status: Design Phase
- Construction Timeline: Goal to begin construction in **third** quarter of 2021 (barring any unforeseen circumstances).
- Construction Cost: TBD

- **Stuebner Airline Road at Oakwood Glen Boulevard**

- Summary: Modernize existing traffic signal with pedestrian push button components and ADA-accessible ramps.
- Status: Design Phase
- Construction Timeline: **It is Harris County's goal to activate the pedestrian push buttons on April 1, 2021 (barring any unforeseen circumstances beyond Harris County's control) which will complete the improvements.**
- Construction Cost: \$65,000

- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality 4 joint participation project with Texas Department of Transportation**

- **Phase 4 - 2D: SH 249 corridor** between Antoine Drive and Spring Cypress Road, and FM 529 corridor between Greenhouse Road

and North Eldridge Parkway

- Summary: Planned improvements include installation of additional turn lanes, turn lane extensions, and median modifications along the SH 249 and FM 529 corridors.
 - Status: Construction Phase
 - Construction Timeline: August 2019 – March 2021 Construction has been completed at all 13- intersections associated with Phase 2D
 - Construction Cost: \$3,618,458
- **Phase 4 - 2E: Beltway 8 corridor** between West Gulf Bank Road and T.C. Jester Boulevard
 - Summary: Planned improvements include installation of additional turn lanes, turn lane extensions, and median modifications along the Beltway 8 corridor.
 - Status: Construction Phase
 - **Construction Timeline: August 2019 – March 2021 Construction has been completed at all 13 intersections associated with Phase 2E**
 - Construction Cost: \$3,000,244
- **Phase 4 - 2F: SH 6 corridor** between West Little York Road and West Road, and FM 1960 corridor between Fallbrook Drive and Kenswick Drive
 - Summary: Planned improvements include installation of additional turn lanes, turn lane extensions, and median modifications along the SH 6 and FM 1960 corridors.
 - Status: Construction Phase
 - Construction Timeline: August 2019 – March 2021 Construction has been completed at all 10 intersections associated with Phase 2F
 - Construction Cost: \$2,000,868



Greater Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce

Transportation and Mobility Committee

2nd Tuesday of each month
Meeting Location:
29201 Quinn Rd.
Tomball, Texas 77375
Upstairs Conference Room

Tomball Government Affairs
Committee

Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce

Transportation\Government Affairs Committee



The committee meets the 1st Thursday of each month to discuss governmental issues that confront their Cy-Fair area. They meet at the Chamber offices located at 8711 Highway 6 North, Ste. 120 Houston, TX 77095.

[Cy-Fair Chamber Website](#)



Houston NW Chamber Public Safety Forum

Public Safety Forum Meeting:
4th Thursday each month
8:30 am - 9:30 am
Champions Emergency Services District
12730 Champion Forest Dr.
Houston, TX 77066

[Houston NW Chamber Website](#)

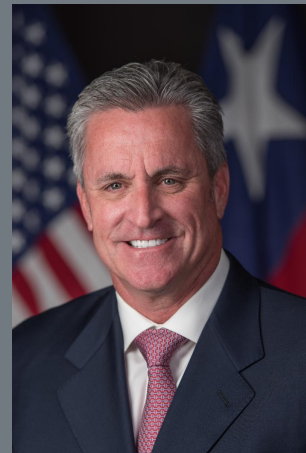
[Visit our House of Representative Website:](#)

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