

SAM HARLESS

State Representative District 126
July 2021 Newsletter



Texas House of Representatives



**Texas
House District
126**

**News
and
Information**



Special Session #1 election Integrity, Bail Reform, and More

The 1st Special Session started off pretty quickly following the July 8th call to order. The [Governor's press release](#) states the specific agenda items will be announced prior to convening the special session. In order to accommodate the unique items listed as priority for this session, House Speaker Dade Phelan established a "Select Committee on Constitutional rights & Remedies", where most of this legislation would be heard. Ultimately 56 bills were referred to this committee and many were in the pipeline for hearings when a group left Texas, breaking the quorum, and shutting down the entire legislative process for the Texas House of Representatives. Legislation on election integrity and

bail reform were heard in committee, with lots of testimony on both sides of the issues, with none of the legislation actually reaching the House floor for a full discussion by the House.

Impact of the Governor's Article 10 Veto

Since the Governor followed through on his commitment to vetoing Article X of the budget, the section that funds the legislature and its support agencies, a new budget addressing that will have to be passed, unless a legal challenge now poised at the Texas Supreme Court can resolve potential constitutional questions regarding the separation of powers. The Court has not yet indicated if, or when, they may address the veto challenge. The last similar challenge to the Texas Governor's veto authority came under Governor Rick Perry, in 2014 when he vetoed a section of the budget for the Travis County District Attorney's Unit that prosecuted public corruption cases.

In the meantime, many have questions about exactly who, or what, will be affected by the veto of Article 10. In a statement released by House Administration Chairman Will Metcalf stated, "If Article X funding is not restored prior to September 1st, the House will not have the authority or funding to pay for employee salaries and the many services, contracts, and leases currently in place. The implications to the operation of the House are significant, and the list below outlines some areas of major impact."

- Payroll, Benefits and Insurance - This includes all legislative staff, committee staff, personnel for the Legislative Council, the House Research Organization, and Legislative Research Library. All will be unfunded after August 31st.

- District Office Lease Payments and Telephone Services - Notices will be sent to landlords that lease payments will cease on September 1st and District Office phone services will be cancelled.

- Equipment and Service Contracts - Cleaning services for the House Chamber, which includes disinfection, will be disrupted. Cable services, printing, and outside copier contracts will be cancelled.

- Direct Billed Air Travel for Members and Staff - The option for "direct bill" airfare for any members or their staff will end in Mid-August.

- Travel Reimbursements - All travel reimbursements will be suspended as of August 30th. The constitution allows for travel reimbursement for their personal car mileage only for regular or special session travel.

- House Printing & Reproduction - The Constitutional newsletter planned to provide information about proposed constitutional amendments in the next couple of months will have to be cancelled or seriously postponed.

- House Calendars - The regular physical House Calendars printing and delivery could be delayed due to outside contracts and jeopardize the normal delivery time frame.

□ Office supplies - Purchases of office supplies will be curtailed in early August, with no special purchases allowed after August 6th,

Constituent Issues

Even though the first called special legislative session has stalled, that doesn't mean that the work for myself and my staff is done. I and my staff are coming to work and our Capitol Office remains open. My staff continue to assist area residents with issues related to local and state agencies. Now that life continues to return to normal and people are beginning to travel again, we are experiencing a growing number of people contacting my office regarding passport renewal and wondering if my office can assist in expediting this process.

Since the U.S. Passport is a federal document and is issued by the U.S. Department of State, as a State Representative my office is unable to expedite any passport applications. However, you can contact the offices of your U.S. Senators or Congressman and their offices may be able to assist with this. To find out who your Congressman is, please visit:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Much of the assistance you may need can be found online at their [passport website](#).

Phone: [1-877-487-2778](tel:1-877-487-2778)/ [1-888-874-7793](tel:1-888-874-7793) (TDD/TTY)

- Customer service representatives are available:
- Monday- Friday 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Eastern Time
- *Except on Federal Holidays

ERCOT Reform

Several bills passed during the 87th Session that begin to address the fallout from winter Storm Uri. This is not a small one-time fix, but rather a process designed to identify and fix the components that failed as a result of the storm, while at the same time preparing Texas for greater capacity requirements. Senate Bill 3 creates an Electric Supply Chain Security and Mapping Committee, designed to determine which components that need priority designation as well as full weatherization to support the natural gas and electricity infrastructure. The sponsor of the bill called it "from the wellhead to the light switch mapping".

Communication was a particularly large failure during the winter storm, at all levels. From the generators, producers, and energy transmission companies as well as ERCOT, the PUC, and Texas Department of Emergency Management the public has so many mixed and inaccurate messages. One of the key provisions in this legislation was to ensure that energy customers and generators know about procedures for rolling blackouts. New legislation requires creation of a statewide messaging system and much greater coordination among ERCOT, PUC and the Texas Rail Road Commission so that their dependence on each other is not overlooked. New requirements from

the PUC now dictate that ERCOT must report details about non-nuclear generation failures within three days, rather than the 60 day period they had previously. Nuclear plants have a federal reporting requirement of their own. Senate Bill 2 also ensures that board members will now have to be Texas residents to serve on the ERCOT Board, which resolved an issue highlighted during the winter storm.

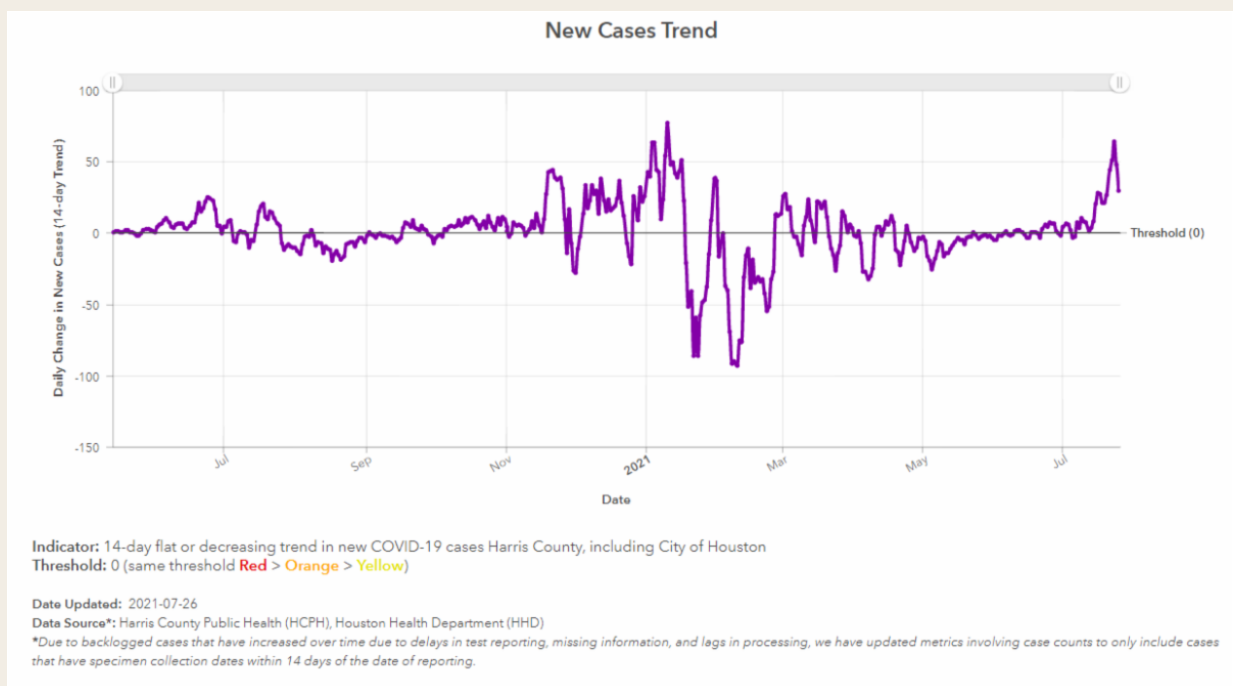
Senate Bill 3 also strengthened reporting for on-site generators to make sure that ERCOT has a better picture of power generation capabilities across the state as well as a better methodology when it comes to planned outages for maintenance during seasonal peak periods.

Constitutional Amendment Newsletter

We would typically be mailing a "Constitutional Newsletter" to registered voters in the District this fall to detail proposed changes to the Texas Constitution caused by legislation during the regular session of the 87th Texas Legislature. Due to the impact of the veto of Article X and the walkout creating an impasse for passing new funding legislation, we will not produce that newsletter this year. We will be doing another mailed newsletter a few months later to give time to resolve these issues.

COVID STATS & INFO

COVID In Harris County



The chart above provides a reflection of the trend for new COVID-19 cases reported for all of Harris County.

Hospital Population Trend



Indicator: 14-day flat or decreasing trend in COVID-19 hospital population in Harris County.
Threshold: 0 (same threshold Red > Orange > Yellow)

Data Updated: 2021-07-26

Data Source: SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC)*

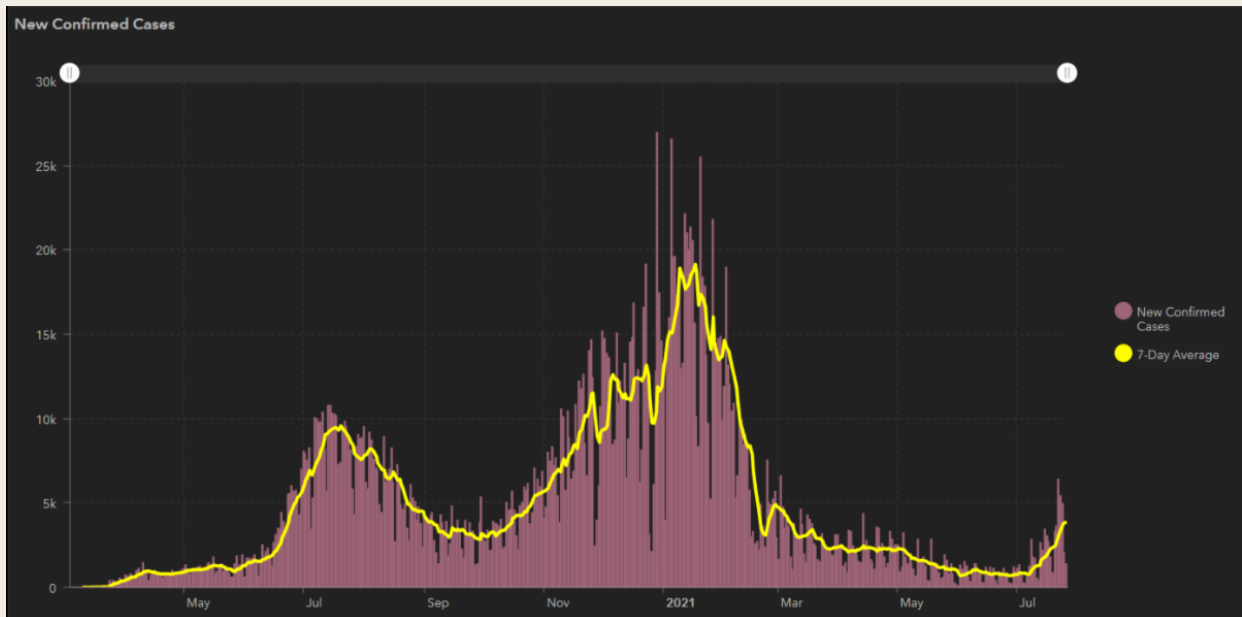
*Data is for Harris County including City of Houston.

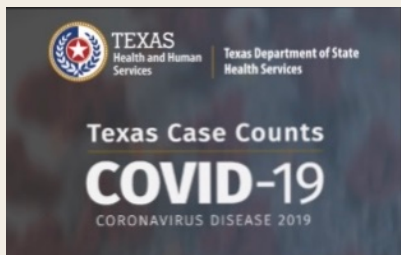
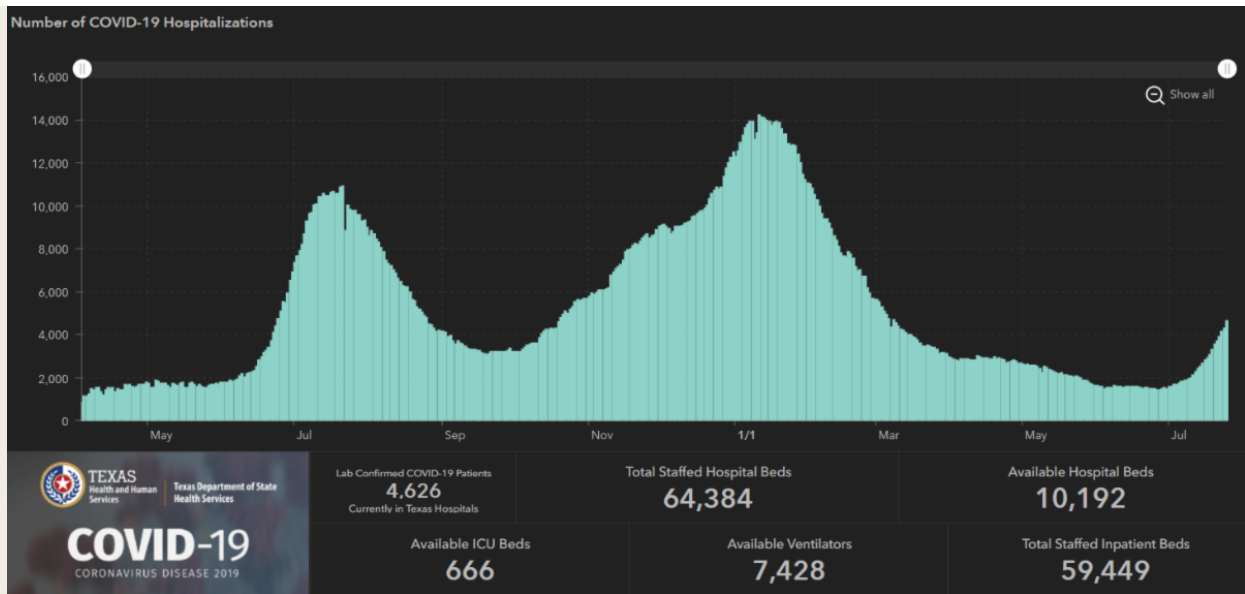
The second chart displays the hospital population trend of COVID cases. It should be noted there will be occasional time lags or delays in reporting that can affect total numbers.

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

Harris county has changed it's threat level to Orange.

At present, over 53% of Harris County's population has been vaccinated with at least one dose. We still rank among the lowest of Texas' large counties in vaccination rates.





Texas COVID Cases Statewide

To see charts reflecting details on Covid and vaccination activity follow this link to the [Texas Covid Dashboard](#)

COVID VIRUS & VACCINES IN TEXAS

The new variants to the COVID virus continue to frustrate efforts to halt the spread of the virus in Texas. COVID cases in Texas now number over 2.6 million confirmed cases statewide, with 413,000 of those in Harris County. The death toll stands just under 52,000 across the state. Now everyone 12 years or older are approved to receive the vaccines. Texas has now administered over 26 million doses of the vaccine and our vaccination rate of 60% statewide of at least one dose and just over 43% being fully vaccinated. While these are just statistics, remember these cases and fatalities are friends, neighbors, and loved ones. Choosing vaccinations are and should be a personal and individual choice, though data seems to indicate a significantly reduced mortality rate for those vaccinated. Please make an informed choice for you and your family and do your best to avoid being a contributor to the ongoing challenges we face fighting the spread of COVID.

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](#)

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, District 126

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.

College Student Accomplishments

I think it's important to recognize the accomplishments of our kids as they work hard extending their secondary education in colleges and universities. If you have a child that has reached a significant milestone, such as making the Dean's or President's List, receiving Faculty Honors, or received their undergraduate or postgraduate degree, send us an email with their name and address, details on the accomplishment, and the institution they are enrolled in, so that we may send them a congratulatory letter. You may email it to District126.Harless@House.Texas.Gov with the subject of "College Accomplishment" and we'd be happy to recognize them.

Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP)

The Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP) was created to provide higher education financial assistance to promising students from the State of Texas who are committed to education and service to their state and nation. The TASSP encourages students to complete a baccalaureate degree and participate in the Texas Guard or become a commissioned officer within the U.S. Military post-college. Each year, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor may appoint two students each, and each state senator and state representative may appoint one student to receive a TASSP award. I usually try to save my nomination for a deserving young applicant from within my District (however these nominations are not restricted to individuals within a Representative's district), and I'm happy to say that this year I was able to nominate Tanner Hecker. He is an outstanding young man with a bright future and I'm happy that I was able to do my part to support him.

If you know of someone who may be interested in receiving a TASSP nomination, you can visit the following website to learn more about eligibility requirements and how to receive a nomination: <http://www.hhloans.com/index.cfm?ObjectID=8FB593C7-EE1E-7872-00A8808886543AEE>

In The District

Pearl Fincher Museum of fine Arts

Program Offerings

The "Pearl" has so much more than just the physical gallery to offer the community. Their programs expand to include at-home instruction and virtual tours of exhibits. Be sure and check out those that interest you.

Pearl at Home

Our Pearl at Home art projects are designed for family fun, for adults and children ages 5 and up, and can be completed with easily-accessible art materials or items found around the home. This program is partially funded by support from the AT&T Foundation. From quilt work, to sculptures, and painting these projects are sure to delight the individual or the family.

These are intended as a starting point for your imagination – feel free to add your creative spin! Share your work with us on social media using #pearlathome.

Pearl At Home Website

Pearl Virtual Tour Programs

VIRTUAL TOUR VIDEOS

Take a stroll through our galleries from the comfort of your own home!
Enjoy our newest Virtual Tour

Vistas & Voyages, Photographer Don Pine, narrator

[Click for Virtual Tour Video:](#)

The John Cooper School: Fused Glass Fish

[Click for Virtual Tour Video:](#)

Stitched: Contemporary Quilt Art from the International Quilt Festival Collection

[Part 1 Tour](#) • [Part 2 Tour](#) • [Part 3 Tour](#) • [Part 4 Tour](#)

Lesley Humphrey: Saved by a Horse

[Click for Virtual Tour Video](#)

Precinct 4 Commissioner Capital Project Status Update

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

- **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 – **goal to complete study in the second**

quarter of 2022

- Construction Timeline: TBD
- Construction Cost **Estimate: \$11.2 million**
-
- **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 – **goal to complete study in the fourth quarter of 2021**
 - Construction Timeline: TBD
 - Construction Cost **Estimate: \$10 million**
- **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 **Estimate: \$4 million**
- **Cypress North Houston Road** (*being pursued in two phases*)
 - **Cypress North Houston Road between Jones Road and Perry Road**
 - Summary: Planned improvements include widening 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.
 - Status: Design phase
 - Construction Timeline: **Current goal is to advertise the project for bid in the fourth quarter of this year.**
 - Construction Cost **Estimate: \$7.5 million**
 - **Cypress North Houston Road Segment 2 between Perry Road and FM 1960**
 - Summary: Planned improvements include extending Cypress North Houston Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation FM 1960.
 - Status: Design Phase
 - 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: **Current goal is to advertise the project for bid in the second quarter of 2022.**
- Construction Cost **Estimate: \$7.9 million**

- **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 – **goal to complete the design phase in the fourth quarter of this year.**
- Construction Timeline: TBD
- Construction Cost **Estimate: \$19.8 million**

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

- Summary: Planned traffic signalization of intersection as warranted.
- Status: **Awaiting signal materials delivery.**
- Construction Timeline: Goal to begin construction in third quarter of 2021 (barring any unforeseen circumstances).
- Construction Cost **Estimate: \$305k**

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

Greater Tomball Area



Chamber of Commerce

Tomball Government Affairs
Committee

Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce
Transportation\Government Affairs
Committee

CY-FAIR HOUSTON
Chamber of Commerce

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

Houston NW Chamber Website

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

Visit our House of Representative Website:

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