

1012 Corridor Weekly

This Week's Headlines / Wed, July 08, 2009

DOTD causes traffic delays for OLOL's new medical center

The Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development is apparently causing traffic delays for Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center's new facility in Livingston Parish. At a community meeting Tuesday evening, CEO Scott Wester told a gathering of politicians and community leaders that DOTD has stalled necessary roadway permits to resolve problems that existed before the medical center bought the property. The agency wants Walker South Road widened from Interstate 12 to Buddy Ellis Road — that's the stretch leading to the medical center's proposed entrances — and the I-12 overpass leading into Walker widened. That alone could cost as much as \$30 million. The problem is that funds aren't currently appropriated to make the necessary infrastructure improvements, leaving OLOL to possibly foot the bill so hospital construction can move forward. "It's pulling teeth to get state officials to recognize what a gem this is," Wester says. "DOTD looks to us to solve problems with the road that existed even before we bought the property." To read the full story, click [here](#). — **Penny Font**

New and improved Twin Span opens tomorrow



Drivers can once again cruise over the Twin Span. Dignitaries will snip the ribbon on a portion of the I-10 bridge across Lake Pontchartrain today and traffic will return tomorrow morning. The first new bridge will accommodate eastbound traffic; later this month, the existing eastbound bridge will be reconfigured for westbound traffic, allowing construction teams room to position barge-mounted construction equipment to finish the second bridge and the approaches. Completion of the second bridge is scheduled for mid- to late-2011. Work began in August 2006 to build a bridge across the lake that was heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina. The storm surge knocked out 437 sections of the old eight-foot bridges and dropped 58 of them into the lake. The new structure is 30 feet above the water, with 12-foot shoulders and enhanced materials and construction techniques that should withstand future storms. The project — touted as the largest public works project in Louisiana history — cost \$803 million. Boh Bros. Construction Co. and TKM Joint Venture are ahead of schedule; the first new bridge wasn't slated to open until later this year.

Loop supporters will try to get critical funding next year

An attempt to get \$15 million from the Legislature to pay for the second phase of an environmental impact study for the Baton Rouge loop project failed this session, but backers plan to try again next year, *Daily Report* notes. The money for the first phase of the environmental impact study will run out in mid-2010. "This was not our only shot for getting funding," says Rannah Gray, a spokeswoman for the loop project. "As long as we get funding for the next tier before the first phase runs out, there will not be any delays that add to the cost of the project." Gray says the funding request fell victim to the budget issues that were the underlying theme of the session. While the Legislature isn't expected to be flush with cash next year, the fact that the loop is a priority for the Capital Region

Legislative Delegation, the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Mayor Kip Holden makes Gray optimistic. "This is a tough economic environment, and you've got to get in and fight for the projects that have merit," she says. "And all these groups feel that this project has it." In the meantime, Holden and others will look for other funding for the environmental impact study, such as federal dollars. And more public meetings and hearings are planned over the next few months, to narrow the loop down to a single corridor. —**Timothy Boone**

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Mary Landrieu: The horse's senator



Mary
Landrieu

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-New Orleans, has attached language to the Interior Appropriations Act to prohibit the Bureau of Land Management from using taxpayer dollars for the destruction of healthy, unadopted horses and burros, also known as donkeys. Landrieu is also pushing for a new comprehensive long-term plan for wild horse populations to be implemented by Sept. 30, 2010. Landrieu says that using taxpayer funds to slaughter healthy wild horses in the care of the bureau is "not acceptable" and it would be just as easy to coordinate with local, state and federal agencies to use these horses whenever possible. "There is simply no reason for the federal government to destroy these animals if viable alternatives exist," she says. Landrieu also supports another provision in the appropriations bill that would encourage all federal agencies that utilize horses in their operations to acquire a wild horse from the Bureau of Land Management prior to seeking another supplier. In addition, she's backing another measure that would force the bureau to develop an expedited process for providing wild horses to local and state police forces. To be certain, it's not Landrieu's first rodeo when it comes to championing issues for horse-lovers. Earlier this year, she introduced legislation to end the slaughtering of horses for food. The Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act, which is co-sponsored by 14 other senators, would specifically prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling or donation of horses and other equines for slaughtering for human consumption. In short, the proposed act would bring horse cruelty in line with other animal cruelty laws. If enacted, a person violating this law would be subjected to criminal and civil penalties, including being fined or imprisoned. — **Jeremy Alford**

Historic New Orleans golf course gets a \$4.5 million makeover



The historic Pontchartrain Park Golf Course is about to get a \$4.5 million makeover. The funding comes from the Long Term Community Recovery Program, a \$700 million pool of federal disaster-recovery money set aside by the Louisiana Recovery Authority and Office of Community Development to help local governments rebuild and implement long-term recovery plans. Built during the era of racial segregation after World War II, Pontchartrain Park was one of the first subdivisions developed by and for middle-class African-Americans. The Pontchartrain

Park Golf Course, central to the subdivision, was designed by the nation's first African-American golf-course architect, Joseph Bartholomew, Sr. The golf course always maintained accessibility to low- and moderate-income families by charging the lowest greens fees in the city. It also served as home to First Tee New Orleans, a youth development program that uses golf to teach life skills and character development to youth. After Hurricane Katrina, both the subdivision and its golf course were submerged in up to 10 feet of floodwaters. The \$4.5 million in disaster recovery funds will be used for grassing, grubbing, grading and shaping the features of the golf course; creating a new walkway along the lakeside; building a new play ground and new little league-sized baseball field; and the construction of a new facility for the First Tee program.

Land bank revitalizing property in Lafayette

Got some old property just laying around in Lafayette? Consider selling or donating it to the Lafayette Land Revitalization Authority. The not-for-profit land bank is on a mission to return properties throughout Lafayette back to productive use. The mission of LLRA is "to identify and secure properties throughout the community that can be developed and/or rehabilitated into safe, affordable and well-designed housing; developed into commercial properties that better utilize the existing infrastructure and support sustainable neighborhoods; or held in reserve for long-term economic development and commerce." The LLRA will purchase and accept donations of nominated properties, including but not limited to those properties, vacant or developed, that are blighted, abandoned, nuisanced, or foreclosed. "Lafayette is a great city. We have all of the pieces in place — the technology, the infrastructure, the culture, our location — to be one of the top cities in the nation," says Nathan Thornton, president of the LLRA board of directors and senior counselor at the Louisiana Small Business Development Center. "By supporting ongoing economic development throughout the city, LLRA hopes to aid city-parish government and local business in developing and executing programs that will reduce crime, improve commerce, and enhance our overall quality of life." For more information, click [here](#).

Louisiana gives site selectors a new tool



Louisiana is making it easier for site selectors to find a location. Louisiana Economic Development and Entergy Louisiana Economic Development have launched the Site Selection Center, a comprehensive Web-based database to help businesses looking for new locations or opportunities to expand their operations. Combining detailed demographic and business data with GIS mapping technology, the site allows business executives, consultants and engineers to zoom in on high-resolution aerial photographs of potential sites in Louisiana. It also provides details about state incentives, transportation routes, community demographics and information about surrounding businesses. "With more than 400 available properties listed, the Site Selection Center will significantly improve Louisiana's business recruitment capabilities," says LED Secretary Stephen Moret. "We are launching a state-of-the-art resource that makes Louisiana more competitive and makes it easier to attract investment in communities throughout our state."

CEOs will share their strategies at the Louisiana CEO Forum

Top CEOs along the 10/12 corridor will share their strategies for a strong economic future at *10/12 Magazine's Louisiana CEO Forum*, held in conjunction with the 27th Annual BizTech Expo, the Gulf South's largest business show. The forum is set for 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. Oct. 8 at the Baton Rouge River Center's Exhibition Hall II. Featured speakers are **Stirling Properties CEO Marty Mayer**, The Powell Group CEO Nanette Noland, Stine Lumber CEO Dennis Stine, Frantzen, Voelker & Conway Investments CEO David Voelker and Acadian Ambulance CEO Richard Zuschlag. The BizTech Expo, presented by *The Greater Baton Rouge Business Report*, takes place Oct. 7-8 at the River Center. More than 200 companies are expected to exhibit the latest products and

services for business. Other special events and seminars are being planned for both days of the show. For information on tickets and exhibit space, go to businessreportexpo.com or call Kelly Hurtado at 225-928-1700.

Livingston Parish assessor wins national award



Jeff Taylor

The Livingston Parish Assessor's Office is the first in Louisiana to be a finalist for a national award. Taylor's office was among the top contenders for the International Association of Assessing Officers' Distinguished Assessment Jurisdiction Award, which honors the most-improved or most-outstanding assessor's offices in the association. IAAO board member John Cunningham, who nominated Livingston for the award, noted the office has fewer employees than recommended for the size of the parish. Even so, the Livingston Parish Assessor's Office improved valuation methods, upgraded technology to manage data, upped the collection rate to 97% and was one of the first assessors in Louisiana to post tax rolls online. Also, more than two-thirds of its employees are certified. "The accomplishments of this office under its current leader, Jeff Taylor, have been nothing short of phenomenal," Cunningham wrote in his nomination.

Poll: News coverage of pop star's death is too much

Enough with the news of Michael Jackson's death, *10/12* poll respondents say. An overwhelming 90% of those who took part in the poll the media has given too much attention to the pop star's demise. Just 2% say the coverage has been minimal. The remaining 7% indicated the talking heads, pundits and scribes have it just right. **This week's question:** Do you think the jury will convict former Congressman William Jefferson?

Faces to Know: Eric Lewis



Eric Lewis

This entrepreneur once worked for the likes of Bechtel, Texas Instruments, Raytheon and McKesson. Now he leads a team of experts in business development, project management, governmental affairs, and workforce development as managing partner and director of business development at Sable International. A strong community advocate, Lewis is president of the Baton Rouge Black Chamber of Commerce. He has served on the Dean's Advisory Council for LSU's E.J. Ourso College of Business, Advisory Board of YWCA, the Advisory Board of Desire Street Academy, Riz-Up Louisiana, Forum 35 and the Baton Rouge Branch of the NAACP.

Places to be on the corridor

:: **Thursday:** The East and West St. Tammany chambers of commerce host a grand opening celebration of the new St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Complex, 300 Brownswitch Road, from 5-7 p.m.

:: **Friday:** The Chamber Southwest Louisiana hosts a town hall meeting with Gov. Bobby Jindal at 11:30 a.m. at Treasures of Marilyn's.

:: **July 16:** The Greater Baton Rouge Association of Realtors hosts a grand opening for its new office building from 4-7 p.m.

Viewpoint: Our dirty little war



J.R. Ball

What with our preoccupation with the dumbing down of higher education, the Legislature's acceptance of pathetic public education, the state's fiscal follies and the Tigers reaching the pinnacle of the college baseball world [for the sixth time], you might have missed the fact that Baton Rouge is at war, writes *Baton Rouge Business Report* Executive Editor J.R. Ball. You read it right: War! For those behind on the times, a little more than two years ago Mayor Kip Holden declared "an all-out war" on littering in our trash-strewn parish. This, of course, is akin to France declaring war on Germany while the Nazis are goose-stepping their way down the Champs-Élysées and Hitler is doing a victory jig on the terrace at Trocadéro. To put it bluntly, Baton Rouge is filthy—and has been for decades. To read the rest of the column, click [here](#).

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