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North Tarrant Express project forces businesses to make room for wider freeway

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Numerous structures along Northeast Tarrant freeways are being razed to make room for the North Tarrant Express project. Among the businesses torn down on the ever-changing landscape are the Tri-Cities Professional Building in Bedford, in Euless and a Starbucks in Hurst.

Of the 399 parcels needed to widen Loop 820 and Texas 121/183, 390 have been acquired, said Robert Hinkle, spokesman for Tarrant Express Mobility Partners, which is overseeing the \$2.5 billion, 13.5-mile project.

Hinkle said the company expects to spend around \$200 million by the time it finishes acquiring right of way in March.

"Since there are a handful of parcels still in the acquisition stage, the exact [cost] will not be known for a few months,"

While city officials acknowledge that they will take multimillion-dollar hits in property and sales taxes, they could only expect to lose.

Bedford

Bill Syblon, Bedford's economic development director, said that a conservative estimate puts 15 percent of the city's share of the Texas 183 corridor.

"We also know that properties with structures being physically impacted by the widening represent 6 percent of Bedford's tax base," he said.

That's about \$174 million of Bedford's \$2.9 billion net taxable property values.

Syblon said that every business along the 6.3 miles of Airport Freeway in Bedford is affected by the project.

"That's more than 70, factoring in that many of these properties are multitenant," he said.

In addition to the Tri-Cities building, Bedford lost Razzoo's, Mexican Inn and the Tetco and Valero gas stations. Both were demolished. The Park Place Mercedes dealership also moved away, though the building remains.

"We've been talking with Capital Automotive, owner of the Park Place building, to help them identify other opportunities for the building," Syblon said.

The city also kept On The Border by granting some tax incentives that will help build a new restaurant behind the current location.

Other rescued businesses include a Jason's Deli, which moved to another spot in The Shops at Central Park; a motor store called Bikers Bay; Bedford Gold and Silver; and Craig's Collision, Syblon said.

Hurst

As buildings disappeared along 3.1 miles of right of way through Hurst, the city scrambled to prevent the businesses from leaving.

"We have indeed done everything within our power to keep our businesses located in Hurst and most have found new homes in the community," City Manager Allan Weegar said.

In all, 16 businesses were affected by the project, spokeswoman Ashleigh Whiteman said.

"Less than 1 percent of Hurst's property tax base is in the right of way," she said.

That property value, including all leveled buildings, represented about \$2.8 million in taxable value, according to the 21 District report, Whiteman said.

Hurst lost First Cash Advance, T-Mobile, Colonial Savings and a Subway sandwich shop. Just east of where Starbuck Burger King and CiCi's Pizza closed. The empty buildings will be razed within weeks.

Seven affected businesses are staying put, Whiteman said.

A McDonald's just east of CiCi's survived and now sports a banner proclaiming, "We're still here. We're not closing."

Just a bit farther east, Outback Steakhouse also survived but is losing 26 parking spaces.

Weegar said that, along with the challenges, the North Tarrant Express is bringing opportunities ahead of its 2015 con

Across Precinct Line Road from Hurst Town Center, new neighbors next to a QuikTrip gas station are creating buzz.

The site attracted not only an In-N-Out Burger, but also the Mexican Inn that lost its building in Bedford.

Eules

Mike Collins, director of planning and development, said Eules has worked with businesses to minimize right-of-way effects.

"The City Council is committed to assisting all of the businesses that are being impacted," he said. "We are working w on potential relocations. But, it would be premature to make any announcements."

Other than Billiards and Barstools, a Whataburger and an OC Burger, Collins knew of no other businesses that have c project.

Many businesses in the 1.3 miles of right of way through Eules are affected to lesser degrees, he said. Showplace L staying despite losing a lot of parking.

"In virtually all cases, we are dealing with impacts to required landscaping, parking and sign locations," Collins said. "v with the businesses to explore opportunities to modify their sites in order to continue to meet the site development stai all life safety standards."

North Richland Hills

A team of North Richland Hills employees and representatives of businesses along the city's 3.15 miles of the project ways to lessen the effects on commerce, spokeswoman Mary Peters said. They included changes in the sign ordinan business access and the coordination of construction work hours and business hours. In some cases, adjacent proper parking.

Nothing but relocation worked for a few businesses. Peters said that a strip center demolished at 8705 Bedford Eules Casual Male XL, Segway and FedEx stores.

"We were aware of the impacts on these businesses and have worked with each of them to find alternative locations in Hills," she said. "Casual Male and Segway have both relocated in NRH, while the FedEx chose a new location in Hurs

Peters said the city has not calculated the percentage of property tax base impacted by the acquisitions and is still wo and the project's owner to determine the impact on city facilities like City Hall and Richland Tennis Center.

"A possession and use agreement has been signed between the parties but the final value of the damages has not be Peters said.

Haltom City

The city lost Zimmerer Kubota & Equipment and may lose Unclaimed Freight in its 2.1 miles of right of way, City Manager Unclaimed Freight, which overlooks the project at 4850 Northeast Loop 820, will lose too many parking spaces, Muir said. "We are working with them to allow them to operate as long as they can until they can establish a new location," he said after several meetings with them and they are considering their options [to remain in Haltom City]."

Muir said that the city regrets losing businesses but said the losses will be offset by large amounts of vacant land opened up by new frontage roads.

"We will be constructing roads on the north and south sides to enhance access and improve mobility," he said. "We are in the stages of creating [tax increment finance districts] on the north and south sides to aid in development as well."

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