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### The New Look of the Katy Freeway

To enhance the visual experience for both the traveling public and the surrounding neighborhoods along the Katy Freeway, the Houston District of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) launched an extensive effort to develop a plan to meld modern-day mobility with aesthetic principles to restore some of the area's natural beauty along Texas roadways. The result was the **Green Ribbon Project** (GRP), a new corridor aesthetics and landscape master plan to be implemented along major Houston freeways, including IH 10 from the City of Katy to the interchange at IH 610. Throughout the Houston District area, TxDOT has already implemented a series of programs designed to transform some of the concrete-dominated landscapes into ribbons of green.



▲ Digital rendering of the new Westgreen Intersection depicting the landscape and hardscape treatments to be incorporated along Katy Freeway (based on ten-year maturity).



Visit [http://www.katyfreeway.org/Green\\_Ribbon.pdf](http://www.katyfreeway.org/Green_Ribbon.pdf) to review the nine goals the GRP identified to guide aesthetic improvements and establish design guidelines for the hardscape and landscape treatments along Houston freeways.

The **GRP identified nine primary goals** to guide aesthetic improvements and established design guidelines for hardscape and landscape treatments along Houston freeways. Additionally, specific objectives, as listed on page 2 sidebar, were developed for the IH 10/Katy Freeway Corridor. The GRP is also seen as a tool by which stakeholders and the Houston District can work together for the improvement and beautification of the highway system. In keeping with the objective to establish and/or encourage programs, TxDOT has formed partnerships with various stakeholders along the IH 10 corridor for the purpose of customizing the aesthetics treatments in their



## Freeway Katy Freeway Aesthetic Plan Objectives

- Promote a design theme that is appropriate and consistently applied.
- Highlight intersections as "gateways" to the cities and villages.
- Develop pedestrian and/or bike facilities adjacent to the freeway where possible.
- Establish and/or encourage programs for city/village/district participation in landscape beautification efforts adjacent to the freeway.
- Utilize existing plantings where possible.
- Utilize existing and created ponds to provide a pleasant and attractive visual element.
- Provide natural landscape areas along the freeway where minimal maintenance is required.
- Enhance and/or reestablish the natural landscape with native species appropriate to the ecosystem.
- Identify development zones within the corridor that emphasize or reinforce its individual aesthetic and historic character.
- Reduce negative impacts of signs, signals, light poles, etc. through architectural treatment. Provide design concepts for element such as bridges, signs, signals and lights that are consistent in their use of color, material and basic form.

respective districts/areas. In particular, TxDOT is working with the Memorial Villages (including Spring Valley, Hedwig Village, the City of Bunker Hill, Hunters Creek Village, Hilshire Village and Piney Point Village), Metro National (property management for Memorial City Mall and Hospital), the Energy Corridor, the City of Katy and the West Loop Management District to tailor the landscaping and hardscape features in proximity to their respective areas. Additionally, the Houston District is working with Harris County precinct 3 to develop a number of pocket parks at various detention ponds along the corridor.

## Future Landscaping

The benefits of plantings along the freeway are invaluable. The recommended planting concepts established for the Green Ribbon Project reinforce the goal of having trees/shrubs planted along the highways wherever appropriate. Plantings along the Katy Freeway will improve the freeway environment for area residents and visitors alike. They will provide a positive, aesthetically pleasing image for TxDOT and the surrounding cities. Additionally plants absorb carbon dioxide, release oxygen and assist in the absorption of runoff water. There will be more than 75,000 trees planted in the IH 10 corridor. The plantings include native pines, oaks, hollies, sweetgums, cypress, elms, maples, sycamore, and other species. The plantings may also include some non-natives along the edge that provide interest and color (*palms, oleanders, pampas grass, crepe myrtle, etc.*). Trees of different sizes, spacing and species over time will establish a canopy along the corridor and create a natural sound barrier. Additionally, grass zones are planned for areas where trees cannot be planted and detention pond slopes will be reforested down to the basin.



"The recommended planting concepts established for the Green Ribbon Project reinforce the goal of having trees/shrubs planted along the highways wherever appropriate."



▲ Samples of various trees to be planted along the Katy Freeway Corridor



## Using Architectural Elements to Enhance Freeway Aesthetics

The hardscape design includes aesthetic treatment of columns, retaining walls, bridge railings, pavers, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, lighting structures along the freeway, noise and traffic barriers, and sign and signal structures. Distinctive treatments are applied to architectural elements used consistently throughout the corridor to create harmony and rhythm without seeming obvious or overdone. Textured surfaces and color are used to catch the eye and provide visual interest. The primary texture utilized throughout the corridor is horizontal grooving. Earth tones have been selected as a basic palette to be applied consistently throughout the corridor. Additionally an array of accents colors have been selected to aid in reinforcing the identity of key districts and areas along the corridor.



An additional architectural complement integrated into the design is the recurring five point star as an identifying symbol along the corridor because of its universal appeal and acceptance as a symbol of Texas. The embossed "Texas Star" at strategic locations, such as at major intersections reinforces the identity of the Katy Freeway as a unique segment of IH 10.

Lighting of the corridor is also an extremely important aesthetic issue. The successful application of lighting goes beyond improving visibility, it reassures drivers and pedestrians of the safety of the corridor and it offers visual interest along the way. Along the Katy Freeway, high mast and underpass lighting has been integrated into the design.

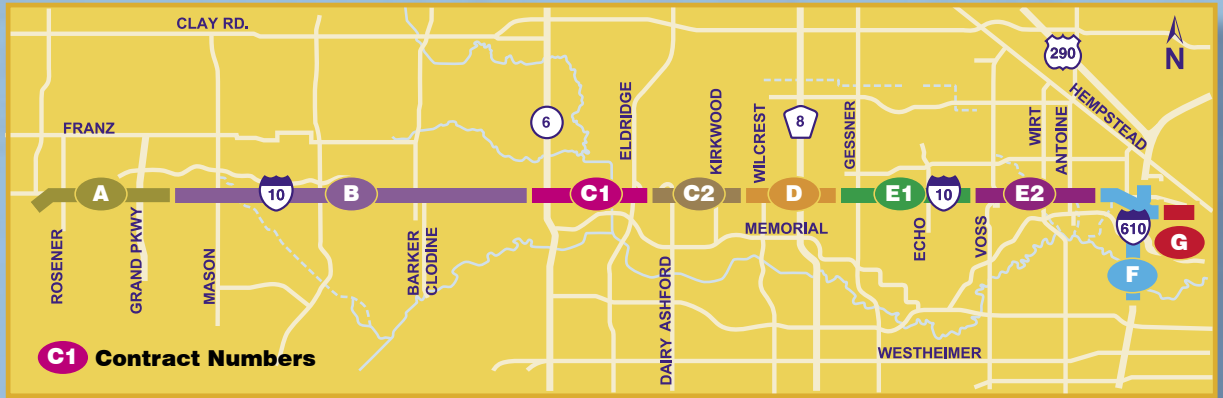


For more information on the landscape and aesthetic enhancements planned for the new Katy Freeway visit the Katy Freeway website at:

[http://www.katyfreeway.org/aesthetics/corridor\\_aesthetic.html](http://www.katyfreeway.org/aesthetics/corridor_aesthetic.html)



"An additional architectural complement integrated into the design is the recurring five point star as an identifying symbol along the corridor because of its universal appeal and acceptance as a symbol of Texas."



### Construction Program Status

At the moment, TxDOT has four active contracts underway as part of the Katy Freeway Reconstruction Program which are:

- 1) **Contract A**—from Harris-Fort Bend County Line to east of Grand Parkway/SH 99 (*Contractor: Balfour-Beatty Construction*)
- 2) **Contract B**—between Grand Parkway and SH 6 (*Contractor: Williams Brothers Construction of Houston-WB*)
- 3) **Contract D** - the IH 10/Beltway 8 Interchange (*Contractor: Williams Brothers Construction of Houston-WB*)
- 4) **Contract F**—the IH 10/IH 610 Interchange (*Contractor: Williams Brothers Construction of Houston-WB*)



Check out the Katy Freeway Website for more pictures of the on-going construction along the Katy Freeway at [http://www.katyfreeway.org/construction\\_photos/construction\\_photos\\_main.html](http://www.katyfreeway.org/construction_photos/construction_photos_main.html)



▲ An aerial view of the IH 10 westbound mainlane bridge at SH 99.



▲ Recently completed IH 10 westbound mainlanes east of Park Ten (looking west)

### Contract A Update

**Contract A** continues to progress on schedule. Significant work is being done at several locations. This quarter, work has started on the 2,496-foot long bridge over US 90 and Katy Fort-Bend Road, marking the beginning of IH 10 eastbound mainlanes construction. At SH 99, the westbound frontage road ramps to and from SH 99 were closed to facilitate the construction of the new westbound mainlanes bridge over SH 99. Work also continues to progress along the IH 10 eastbound and westbound frontage roads.

### Contract B Update

This quarter marked both the on-time completion and start of major milestones for **Contract B**. In late September, Williams Brothers shifted IH 10 eastbound traffic onto new pavement over the recently constructed Westgreen and Greenhouse Bridges and opened the new IH 10 eastbound entrance and exit ramps. The traffic switch onto the new IH 10 eastbound mainlanes along with the opening of the new urban intersections at Westgreen and Greenhouse marked the completion of the second major milestone.

In October WB started the time ticking on their third major milestone for the contract with the closure of the IH 10 westbound frontage road ramps that led to and from the IH 10 overpass at Fry Road. The ramps were closed to allow the contractor to begin construction of the new westbound mainlanes in the area. The closure of the Fry Road overpass ramps will be in effect for approximately 3 months in preparation for the total closure of the

Fry Road overpass for reconstruction of the intersection. Total closure of the Fry Road overpass is targeted to take place in January 2005 until April 2005. A diagram of the current Fry Road detours can be viewed on the Katy Freeway Program website at [http://www.katyfreeway.org/Fry\\_Detour/Fry\\_Road\\_Detour.html](http://www.katyfreeway.org/Fry_Detour/Fry_Road_Detour.html)

### Contract D Update

Contract D, the IH 10/Beltway 8 Interchange, is the most recently awarded contract of the four active Katy Freeway reconstruction projects. Work on the contract officially began October 1st and already the contractor demonstrates rapid progress, particular in the construction of the new detention pond in the southwest corner of the interchange and accelerated construction of the new westbound mainlanes.

In response to the frequent occurrence of flooding in the area, TxDOT has dedicated significant resources to incorporate an array of storm water drainage system enhancements as a part of the Katy Freeway Reconstrution Program, particularly in the IH 10/Beltway 8 Interchange area. In this area alone, there will be two new detention ponds, on the northwest and southwest corners of the intersections. TxDOT will also be installing enhanced capacity flood pumps and high technology flood level detection and warning devices. The proposed drainage system improvements along the corridor will aid in reducing flooding potential and improving water quality. More details regarding Contract D are available on the Katy Freeway website at [http://www.katyfreeway.org/Contract\\_D.html](http://www.katyfreeway.org/Contract_D.html)



▲ Construction crews excavating the detention pond located at the southwest corner of the IH 10/Beltway 8 Interchange.



### Upcoming Katy Freeway Projects

TxDOT will accept bids for the reconstruction of IH-10 between Eldridge and east of Kirkwood, Contract C2, on December 8, 2004. Like previous contracts, work is anticipated to begin within 30-60 days of the contracts award. Other contracts coming up for bid include:

- Contract E1 (Between Beltway 8 and Campbell)—January, 2005
- Contract E2 (Between Campbell and Silber)—February, 2005
- Contract C1 (Between SH 6 and Eldridge)—March, 2005

For more information on the upcoming contracts visit:

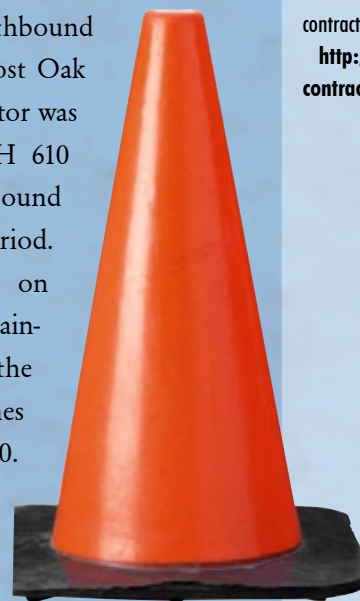
<http://www.katyfreeway.org/contracts.html>

### Contract F Update

Working together TxDOT and WB have managed to minimize the inconvenience to the traveling public by using minimal mainlanes closures, even with the complexity of work on this contract. The contractor completed the second major milestone on this contract ahead of schedule, marked by the shift of traffic onto the new IH 610 southbound mainlanes at Post Oak Blvd. Significant work has also been done on the IH 610 southbound bridge over Buffalo Bayou, the IH 10 eastbound to IH 610 southbound direct connector and North Post Oak bridge over IH 10. The contractor was also able to open the new IH 610 southbound to IH 10 westbound direct connector during this period. Additionally, work continues on the IH 610 southbound mainlanes bridge over IH 10 and the IH 610 southbound mainlanes and overpasses south of IH 10.



▲ Aerial view of construction of the new North Post Oak bridge.





## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Visit the *Katy Freeway* Web site for more FAQs on the program

**Q. How can I learn about current lane closures?**

**A.** To see the current list of lane closures, go to:

<http://www.katyfreeway.org/closures.html>. You can also subscribe to receive electronic notifications of major freeway closures via email on the website at: [http://www.newsrouter.com/NewsRouter\\_Uploads/56/default.asp?intAcc\\_ID=56](http://www.newsrouter.com/NewsRouter_Uploads/56/default.asp?intAcc_ID=56)

**Q. How long will Fry Road be closed and what are the alternatives for north/south access across the freeway?**

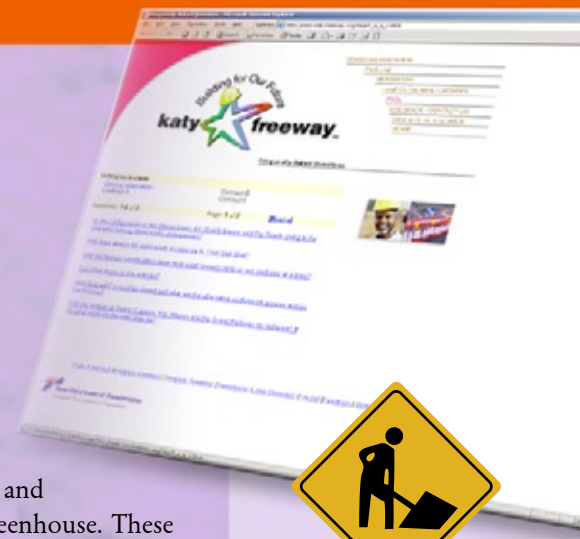
**A.** As part of the Katy Freeway Reconstruction Program, Fry Road will be closed from January 2005 thru April 2005. To accomplish the reconstruction of this intersection and maintain north/south access in the area, new intersections were built at Westgreen and Greenhouse. These two intersections are now open and provide north/south access across the freeway while the Fry Road overpass is closed for reconstruction.

**Q. Is it true that all of the IH 10 and Beltway 8 Interchange direct connector ramps will have to be rebuilt...if so what is the schedule for this?**

**A.** Yes, each of the existing direct connect ramps will be reconstructed at varying points during the reconstruction of the IH 10/Beltway 8 Interchange (Contract D), but they will NOT all be closed simultaneously. The work is phased to minimize impact to the driving public and official detours will be provided. It is also important to note that although the construction of Contract D began in October of this year, the first 2 years of construction are dedicated to the expansion of the mainlanes and frontage roads of IH 10. Construction of the direct connectors is not scheduled to begin until January 2006. Go to: [http://www.katyfreeway.org/ContractD\\_dc3.html](http://www.katyfreeway.org/ContractD_dc3.html) for more details on the construction schedule.

**Q. Will TxDOT route traffic onto neighborhood streets during freeway closures?**

**A.** No! TxDOT will announce and sign the appropriate detours for each closure required and all of the detours will be via state system roadways and frontage roads (ex., IH 10, the Beltway, SH 6, Grand Parkway and Old Katy Road). Traffic will not be detoured onto City streets nor will drivers be routed through residential neighborhoods.



## What's New!

Check out what's new on the Katy Freeway website. By clicking on the "What's New" button on the homepage, internet users can get a quick summary of major changes and new page links added to the webpage. Some of the most recent additions include:

- Information and graphics for the landscape and aesthetic elements planned for the new Katy Freeway
- Details regarding the new bike trail lanes
- The addition of a glossary of transportation terms
- Updated construction photos for Contracts A, B, D, and F

## Public Corner

The Katy Freeway Public Information Office has moved. The office is in the same building, but now in **Suite 500**. You are invited to visit with us to get information about the Program, to view construction plans, see the interchange models and more. For more information or to set up an appointment contact:

**Raquelle Wooten**

Katy Freeway Public Information Officer

11757 Katy Freeway, **Suite 500**

Houston, TX 77079

281-589-5924

[www.katyfreeway.org](http://www.katyfreeway.org)



▲ Visit the Katy Public Information Office to see the three full-scale models which depict the look of the new Katy Freeway.