I-10: Ten Things to Know in New Orleans this Week (Sept. 27, 2016)

1. A streetcar named Rampart
   After more than a year and a half of construction, frustration and traffic tie-ups on North Rampart Street, the long-awaited Rampart streetcar will begin service Sunday, Oct. 2. The renamed Loyola-Rampart line will run from Elysian Fields Avenue in Faubourg Marigny to Union Passenger Terminal on Loyola Avenue. In response to locals’ concerns about transferring to the streetcar at Elysian Fields from the traditional St. Claude Avenue/North Rampart Street bus, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority will run express buses back and forth from Canal Street to Elysian Fields.

   Several other public transit lines will change routes and hours on Oct. 2 as well. For a full list, including maps, visit www.norta.com.

2. Quote of the week
   “We knew it would be focused partly on entertainment, on what to do tonight or tomorrow night or next weekend. But because we were in New Orleans, entertainment was not what it is in other places — it was, and is, the deep culture of the city, its music and its food and its arts and its spirit. We intended to mirror that culture to itself. And finally, we intended to be a positive voice in the public conversation about our city, to help shape the future.” — Gambit's first editor/publisher Gary Esolen, who died Sept. 19 at 75. For more on Esolen’s legacy, see “Politics” (p. 11).

3. Frack off: Helis pulls out of St. Tammany
   After almost three years of contention, Helis Oil & Gas abruptly dropped plans for fracking, aka hydraulic fracturing, in St. Tammany Parish near Mandeville, saying, ‘The project has been terminated due to a lack of commercial viability.’ A test well that had been dug will be permanently abandoned, according to Helis spokesman Greg Beuerman.
Fracking has grown at a rapid rate; it was responsible for only 2 percent of oil and gas production in the U.S. in 2000, but now accounts for more than half, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. It remains a controversial practice, with many cities and environmental groups opposing it.

The Helis project was opposed by the city of Abita Springs as well as Tulane University Environmental Law Clinic, the Sierra Club, the Gulf Restoration Network, the Louisiana Environmental Action Network and several citizen groups on the Northshore.

4. Jeff Parish on board with ride-hailing services
In April 2015, the Jefferson Parish Council quashed a proposal that would have allowed app-based ride-hailing services such as Lyft and Uber to operate in the parish. Last week, however, council members unanimously approved new regulations that will open the door for ride-hailing in Jeff Parish (despite the fact that the services have quietly been operating in unincorporated areas and recently began picking up fares at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport in Kenner).

Ride-hailing services have been available in New Orleans since spring 2015, and earlier this month the city of Gretna made them legal. Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Eric Skrmetta wrote to council members, saying a statewide law may be on the docket in the 2017 legislative session to make uniform regulations for ride-hailing services across all of Louisiana’s 64 parishes.

5. JBE heads to D.C. for third time for flood relief
Gov. John Bel Edwards traveled to Washington D.C. for the third time in as many weeks to discuss federal relief for the Louisiana floods of August. Edwards met most recently with U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy; on a previous visit, he met with President Barack Obama.

Edwards has run into opposition amid a larger budget battle over the end of the federal budget year. If no new funding measure is agreed to by Sept. 30, the federal government will shut down all routine operations, as it did in October 2013. Instead of the $2.6 billion Edwards sought, a continuing resolution was introduced that would fund $500 million in disaster relief. Moreover, Louisiana would have to split the money with Maryland and West Virginia, which have dealt with devastating floods of their own.

"Make no mistake, this is a down payment from the federal government on our recovery needs," Edwards said in a statement Sept. 22. "And I am hopeful and optimistic that the final CR [continuing resolution] will include this assistance."

6. CAC renovation plans include office rentals
The Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) announced last week it will begin renovations and add as a tenant The Domain Companies, the New York- and New Orleans-based developer behind South Market District, Ace Hotel and other local projects. The renovations begin Oct. 1.

The third and fourth floors of the CAC will become The Shop, an office hub for "technology, arts and cultural-based businesses." The Idea Village will be a tenant of The Shop, which is expected to open in early 2017. The Shop, referred to as a "co-working space," will include 40,000 square feet of space and accommodate 350-400 people. "The mission of The Shop is to bring members of the creative class into our building as their tenants," said CAC Executive Director Neil Barclay in a prepared statement.

Other renovation plans include expanding first-floor gallery space and improving performance spaces. The CAC will present project details Oct. 6.

7. Esplanade Mall sold; will be managed by California company
Kenner’s Esplanade Mall, whose fortunes have waned since Hurricane Katrina, was sold last week by Simon Properties, which has owned it since 2007. The new operator will be a California-based mall company, Pacific Retail Capital Partners (PRCP), which manages 10 other malls across the U.S.
In a statement, Jefferson Parish Councilman Ben Zahn said, "The parish president [Mike Yenni], mayor [Mike Sigur] and I... have been displeased with the operation of the mall for some time."

The Esplanade, as it was known, was a major shopping destination for Jefferson Parish when it originally opened in 1983, and has nearly 5,000 parking spaces and more than 910,000 square feet of retail space, according to PRCP.

8. Night Out Against Crime Oct. 18
The 33rd annual Kelly Marrione National Night Out Against Crime is set for Tuesday, Oct. 18, with an official kickoff at 5:30 p.m. at A.L. Davis Park (2600 LaSalle St.) in Central City. Other gatherings will be held in all eight New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) districts.

Last year, more than 200 indoor and outdoor parties were held in the city, according to an NOPD news release. To register your neighborhood's event or ask for barricades, visit www.nola.gov/nopd/night-out.

Marrione was a 28-year veteran of the NOPD who was killed in July 2003.

9. More bad news for Louisiana women
In advance of October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Washington D.C.-based Violence Policy Center (VPC) issued a report saying Louisiana ranks second in the country (behind Alaska) in the rate of women murdered by men. Using 2014 data from the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report, VPC found 2.15 out of 100,000 Louisiana women were murdered by men.

Nationwide, the report said, nine of 10 murdered women knew their killers and 13 times as many were killed by someone they knew as opposed to a stranger.

10. Red Hot Chili Peppers, Ariana Grande coming in 2017
The Red Hot Chili Peppers announced a stop at Smoothie King Center (SKC) Jan. 10, 2017, with New Orleans' own Trombone Shorty opening. Also at SKC later in the year. pop princess Ariana Grande, with her 'Dangerous Woman Tour' stopping in town April 11. Tickets to both shows are on sale now.

Speaking of...

![Commentary: A month of bad insults](image1)
Commentary: A month of bad insults
May 31, 2016

![Senate candidate Fayard: I'll take only 65 percent of my salary if elected](image2)
Senate candidate Fayard: I'll take only 65 percent of my salary if elected
May 31, 2016

![Commentary: 'not getting much worse'](image3)
Commentary: 'not getting much worse'
May 23, 2016

More »