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At slow and steady pace, T is starting to speed up

Closures for repairs making a difference

By Taylor Dolven
GLOBE STAFF

Just over a month ago, as the summer heat settled in on Greater Boston, Orange Line trains traveling between Community College and Sullivan Square stations were still going just 10 miles per hour. The nearly 4,000-foot-long crawl began plaguing riders more than a year ago.

But now, the stubborn delay is gone, along with dozens of others, as the agency makes unprecedented progress this summer toward its goal of ridding the system of slow zones by the end of

the year.

The gains in travel times are modest, with all lines having average train speeds below their historical maximums, according to data from TransitMatters, a public transportation advocacy organization that tracks how long it takes MBTA trains to do entire trips. But subway officials — and riders, too — said they are pleased with the improvements.

The track repairs to speed up trains — ripping up and replacing degraded old ties and rails — are made possible by shutdowns of parts of the system each month, as the T puts frustrated riders on even slower shuttle buses, with the longest shutdown so far coming

MBTA, Page A7

A win for Wu — for now — on shifting property tax

With compromise, House OK's temporary measure, but Senate approval questionable

By Niki Griswold
GLOBE STAFF

In a surprising boost to Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, the Massachusetts House on Tuesday approved her proposal to temporarily change the city's taxing authority by shifting more of the property tax burden onto commercial buildings while easing it for residential owners.

But with just one day left in the Legislature's formal session for the

year, the fate of the bill now rests with the Senate, whose leader expressed surprise at the last-minute development.

The lopsided vote in the House of 133 to 24 is more progress than many expected after the mayor's home rule petition received a skeptical reception from lawmakers at a hearing earlier in July. But a breakthrough came when Wu agreed to use her executive powers to make changes to some of the mea-

sure's components at a later date if the bill is ultimately passed.

But it may become a casualty of a bigger squabble between the House and Senate as they rush to come to agreements on multiple pieces of major legislation before the deadline. Senate President Karen Spilka said she couldn't comment on how the proposal might be received by her colleagues, but did not strike a very optimistic tone.

"We haven't debated, discussed, nor even seen the bill, the new, complex bill," Spilka said. "Anytime you re-

WU, Page A6

2024 PARIS OLYMPICS



LIONEL BONAVENTURE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Simone Biles (right) celebrated after she and her teammates took the gold in team gymnastics on Tuesday.

Back on top of the world again

Three years after withdrawing, Biles shows what she's always been made of

TARA SULLIVAN

PARIS — Maybe it seemed a cruel twist of fate, putting Simone Biles on the vault for the first event of Team USA's quest for a gold medal Tuesday night. For a lesser gymnast, or a lesser competitor, having to open on the very same event that led to a stunning withdrawal from Olympic team competition just three years ago could have meant the return to a personal nightmare, or worse, a repeat performance.

But Simone Biles is unlike any other gymnast the sport has ever seen. And Simone Biles is one of the most resilient competitors the sport has ever known.

Twist of fate? More like a karmic gift from the gymnastics gods.

Biles took on the vault the same way she has taken on everything since that stunning decision in Tokyo. She slayed it, doing the easier of her two patented vaults and still scoring a 14.9, the Americans' single best score of the night.

From that moment until her final one on the mat, when she anchored the team's last rotation on the floor exercise and scored a 14.666 to clinch the gold medal, she was in full control.

"After I finished the vault, I was like, 'Whew, no flashbacks or anything,'" Biles said. "It was relief, and then, 'Oh yeah, we're going to do this.'"

As soon as her body made its way back to earth from high above the vault, with a landing that was both strong and clean, her teammates

SULLIVAN, Page C3

US workers losing out on coverage for IVF

State mandates don't apply; Biden urged to rectify situation

By Tal Kopan
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — When Beth lost the pregnancy she had fought so hard for last year, the devastation was compounded by a thought she couldn't shake: There goes another \$6,000.

Despite Beth living in Massachusetts, a state that mandates insurance coverage for fertility treatments, the in vitro fertilization she had undertaken was not covered by her insurance be-

'Everyone deserves to have a family if they want to have a family.'

BETH, who works for the federal government and has had to pay for in vitro fertilization

cause her employer — the US government — is exempt from the state law. So as she grieved for the baby she had so desperately wanted, she also had to grapple with the stinging reality that if she wanted to try again, it would cost her again.

Despite Democrats' campaign pledges to protect IVF, the Biden administration has yet to mandate that federal employees get full coverage for their own families' fertility needs. Now, workers are pushing the administration to go further, arguing that the financial toll is an unnecessary burden.

"This is already such a personal and stressful and scary process to go through that to add financial considerations on top of it seems like unnecessary hardship," said Beth, a longtime civil servant who asked to be identified only by her first name due to the

IVF, Page A7



Boom hiss

Wednesday: Showers, warm.

High 80-85. Low 71-76.

Thursday: Humid and hot.

High 89-94. Low 73-78.

High tide: 8:37 a.m., 8:51 p.m.

Sunrise: 5:36 Sunset: 8:04

Weather and Comics, G6-7.
Obituaries, C9.

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Assassins reportedly kill Hamas leader

Ismail Haniyeh was slain in Tehran, Iran's Revolutionary Guard said. **A5.**

Hundreds gathered for the funeral of Jack Connors, the businessman and philanthropist, who died last week. **B1.**

A Boston company is finding success with autonomous boats, even as self-driving cars continue to struggle. **B5.**

The Sox picked up two relievers but were otherwise quiet as the trade deadline passed. **C1.**

In Boston, it's not hard to eat like you're at the Olympics, with a bunch of French bakeries and cafes to take you away. **G1.**

In small town, fears that hospital closure a matter of life, death

By Camilo Fonseca
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

AYER — Every day around lunchtime, Bert Gibson walks into the Cottage Restaurant, greets the owner, and orders a meal and a chocolate ice cream.

The 78-year-old veteran has frequented the same spot in the commercial center of this town for years. He's survived two heart attacks and, more recently, a quadruple-bypass surgery. So as he eats his steak-and-cheese sandwich, the fate of the nearby Nashoba Valley Medical Center weighs heavily on his mind.

"If Nashoba hospital wasn't there, I'd have been dead 40 years ago," he said.

Like many of his neighbors, he knows that the hospital's impending closure, which operator Steward Health Care announced last week, threatens to do more than lay off the hundreds of nurses and emergency staff who live nearby. He

STEWART, Page A6



DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/GLOBE STAFF

AN UNWELCOME RETURN — Just three weeks after the remnants of Hurricane Beryl blew through parts of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, more torrential rain — up to 8 inches in some spots — caused devastating floods across the region again. In Lyndonville, a home was partially collapsed into Mountain Brook. **B1.**



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