

ERCOT: Data centers balloon demand

Large load requests increased by nearly 150 gigawatts recently

By Lana Ferguson
STAFF WRITER

ROUND ROCK — The size of ERCOT's large load interconnection requests — the majority of which are data centers wanting to connect to the grid — soared by nearly 150 gigawatts to 410 gigawatts in just two weeks, a symptom of Texas becoming a

hub for data centers and other high-tech industries.

On Tuesday, ERCOT officials discussed the massive uptick in requests, the agency's recently published "state of the grid" report and more at its third annual Innovation Summit at Kalahari Resorts' convention center in Round Rock. Large loads are customers requesting a new or expanded interconnection, where its total peak demand at a single site would be at least 75 megawatts.

Hundreds of people in various roles tied to the energy industry

were in attendance for panels, attended by industry executives and experts from across the globe.

The first session included a discussion between ERCOT President and CEO Pablo Vegas and National Energy System Operator CEO Fintan Slye on "powering progress."

Vegas, who has led ERCOT since 2022, reflected on the evolving grid and energy market in Texas.

"The ERCOT grid today is vastly different from the ERCOT grid of even 5 years ago and cer-

tainly more than 20 years ago," he said. "I think that's one of the characteristics of the conversation today about the grid itself is just how rapidly evolving and changing it has become."

Vegas called ERCOT an "energy island," which can afford both benefits like the ability to change and move quickly in response to needs.

The needs are noticeably increasing — and fast, according to the last data from ERCOT.

The agency said peak demand could reach 145 GW by 2030, and it currently has about 453 GW of

requests to connect to the grid. ERCOT's all-time peak demand was 85 GW in August 2023.

Notably, ERCOT reported its large load interconnection queue now sits at 410 GW, about 87% of which are data centers. That's a spike from closer to 300 GW just two weeks ago.

"That gives you an idea of how quickly things can change here inside ERCOT," Vegas said.

After his speech, Vegas told a group of reporters that the "significant jump in projects" were all from Oncor.

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Photos courtesy of Inti St. Clair/White Hat

Atten Hill homebuyers gain access to Horseshoe Bay's golf courses, including the Apple Rock Golf Course.

Hill Country community is gaining traction

Small but growing group of Houston buyers investing in Atten Hill

By Marissa Luck
STAFF WRITER

The Houston region has no shortage of golf courses and waterfront communities, but for Houston homebuyer Jeff Green, Horseshoe Bay in the Texas Hill Country stood out.

Green and his wife recently became some of the first buyers in a new 114-acre community rising in Horseshoe Bay, a resort town about 215 miles from Houston known for its golf courses and amenities on Lake LBJ.

They're among a small but growing group of early Houston buyers investing in Atten Hill, a gated luxury community under construction by Dallas-

based developer Crescent Real Estate.

The early sales offer a glimpse into how Houston's second-home buyers and retirees remain active despite broader economic headwinds in the real estate market.

Since quietly launching sales in late 2024, Crescent has sold eight properties, including seven to buyers from Houston.

As infrastructure work nears completion, the developer is stepping up efforts to attract high-end buyers across the Texas Triangle and is gaining traction in Houston.

"What Houstonians see is that within a three- or four hour radius, there is nothing

Atten Hill continues on B11



Atten Hill residents also will be able to access a private lakeside lounge on Lake LBJ in Horseshoe Bay.

Cuban: If you're not using AI, you're 'behind'

Entrepreneur speaks on new technology's growing popularity

By Trevor Bach
STAFF WRITER

Roughly three years after the transformational artificial intelligence bot ChatGPT first commanded the world's attention, one of Dallas' most famous — and famously opinionated — entrepreneurs has some blunt advice for North Texas' business community.

At an event in Irving on Tuesday, Mark Cuban warned that "if you're not using one of the large language models ... you're falling way behind." Cuban went on to draw an analogy between AI and other recent tech innovations, including personal computers and the internet, which also initially drew skepticism before becoming widely adopted.

The billionaire investor even recounted being called "an idiot" after founding Broadcast.com, the internet radio streaming he took over in the late 1990s and went on to sell to Yahoo for more than \$5 billion.

"There was always a group of people that were first, and always a group of people that were naysayers," he continued. "And the people that were first typically ended up getting further ahead. I think it's the same with AI today."

The wealthy "Shark Tank" star and former Dallas Mavericks majority owner made the comments during Convergence AI Dallas, a two-day AI and business conference hosted by the Dallas Regional Chamber at the Irving Convention Center. The event sold out, with around 1,200 registered guests, Dana Jennings, a DRC executive, told Hearst Newspapers.

AI continues on B11

Classic Austin Healey stored since 1970 heads to Houston auction

The phrase "barn find" describes a vintage or collector vehicle that has been hidden from public view for decades. Cars lost to time, tucked away



Jesus Garcia

BEHIND THE WHEEL

museum.

Each barn find story is unique, which adds to its intrigue and fascination. This story involves a 1950s British sports car hidden in a garage since 1970. But unlike other



Jesus R. Garcia/For the Houston Chronicle

This 1956 Austin Healey stored for decades in a Houston garage will go up for auction this weekend.

barn find stories, this car traveled the country while collecting dust.

The star of this story is a sunny yellow 1956 Austin Healey 100-4 with a red interior

1956 AUSTIN HEALEY

Engine: 2.7 L

Transmission: 4-speed manual
0 to 60: 11 seconds

Starting price: \$3,280 estimate

and matching convertible top. In its heyday, this smart little sports car would set you back about \$3,000 during the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration. Debuting in 1952 for the 1953 model year, Austin Healey called the sports car "100-4" as a reference to being capable of reaching over 100 mph — fast at the time — and its four-cylinder engine.

1956 was also a transitional year for the "Big Healey" because it received an update to its powertrain, and 100-4s built

from 1955-1956 are known as BN2, a second generation. The BN2s had improved suspension, braking and a four-speed manual transmission over the former three-speed gearbox, allowing the stylish two-seater to reach a top speed of 109 mph.

Austin Healey 100-4s are more than just a pretty face to park at a country club; they have a racing pedigree. Shortly after going into production, Austin Healey put the 100-4 to the ultimate test at the 1953 24 Hours of Le Mans, entering two modified cars and finishing the race in 12th and 14th place. The publicity from their respectable achievement created a sales opportunity for Austin Healey, selling conversion kits to 100-4 owners who want-

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ATTEN HILL

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that matches the depth and quality of amenities that Horseshoe Bay has to offer, when you look at golf or water centric or outdoor communities,” said Jeff Dyer, senior vice president at Crescent Real Estate.

The 92-home community is under construction atop a hill overlooking Lake LBJ, with lots ranging from \$600,000 to \$2 million. It's the first luxury residential community to be developed in Horseshoe Bay in more than a decade, according to Crescent. Legacy International is marketing the community.

Crescent recently hosted a marketing event at La Griglia in Houston's Montrose neighborhood, offering attendees an all-expenses-paid trip to experience Horseshoe Bay first-hand before committing to a purchase. Dyer said the event garnered several additional prospective Houston buyers.

Beyond Atten Hill, the Lake LBJ area has long drawn second-home buyers from Houston, Austin and Dallas-Fort Worth, said Bruce Jones, broker with Lake Homes Realty, who lives near Lake LBJ and is not affiliated with Atten Hill.

Demand from homebuyers in the Texas Triangle surged during the pandemic, when the prominence of remote work made it easier to live outside the city, Jones said. That activity later slowed, and now the market is following typical seasonal trends, he said.

Buyers are often attracted to Lake LBJ because it maintains a con-



Courtesy of Inti St. Clair/White Hat

With 92 homes, Atten Hill will be the first luxury residential community developed in Horseshoe Bay in a decade. Shown is a members-only pool in the Horseshoe Bay Resort.

stant water level year-round, unlike many other Texas lakes that fluctuate with rainfall, Jones said.

Although Atten Hill won't be directly on the lake, homebuyers in the community will have access to a private lakeside lounge at the Horseshoe Bay Yacht Club.

For each Atten Hill buyer, Crescent is also covering the \$210,000 initiation fee for the resort's highest-tier club. That tier includes access to Summit Rock, a highly regarded Jack Nicklaus golf course that ranked No. 31 by Golf Digest in 2025.

For Green and his wife, Dixie, their future Atten Hill home will serve as a getaway from their primary residence near Hous-

ton's Memorial Park. The couple wanted to be closer to their son in the Austin area, and to University of Texas football games. They were also drawn to Atten Hill because of its amenities and its access to outdoor activities, including a newly opened gun club nearby.

Green said that Atten Hill reminds him of the early days of Carlton Woods, a luxury golf course community in The Woodlands developed in the 1990s. He recalled a childhood friend's father buying into Carlton Woods early on, and he aspired to do something similar one day.

"It's different, but it's going to be a special place," Green said.



DTJ Designs

A rendering of a home in Atten Hill. Canyon Creek Homes, Modern Homestead and Seven Custom Homes have been selected as the community's preferred builders.

AI

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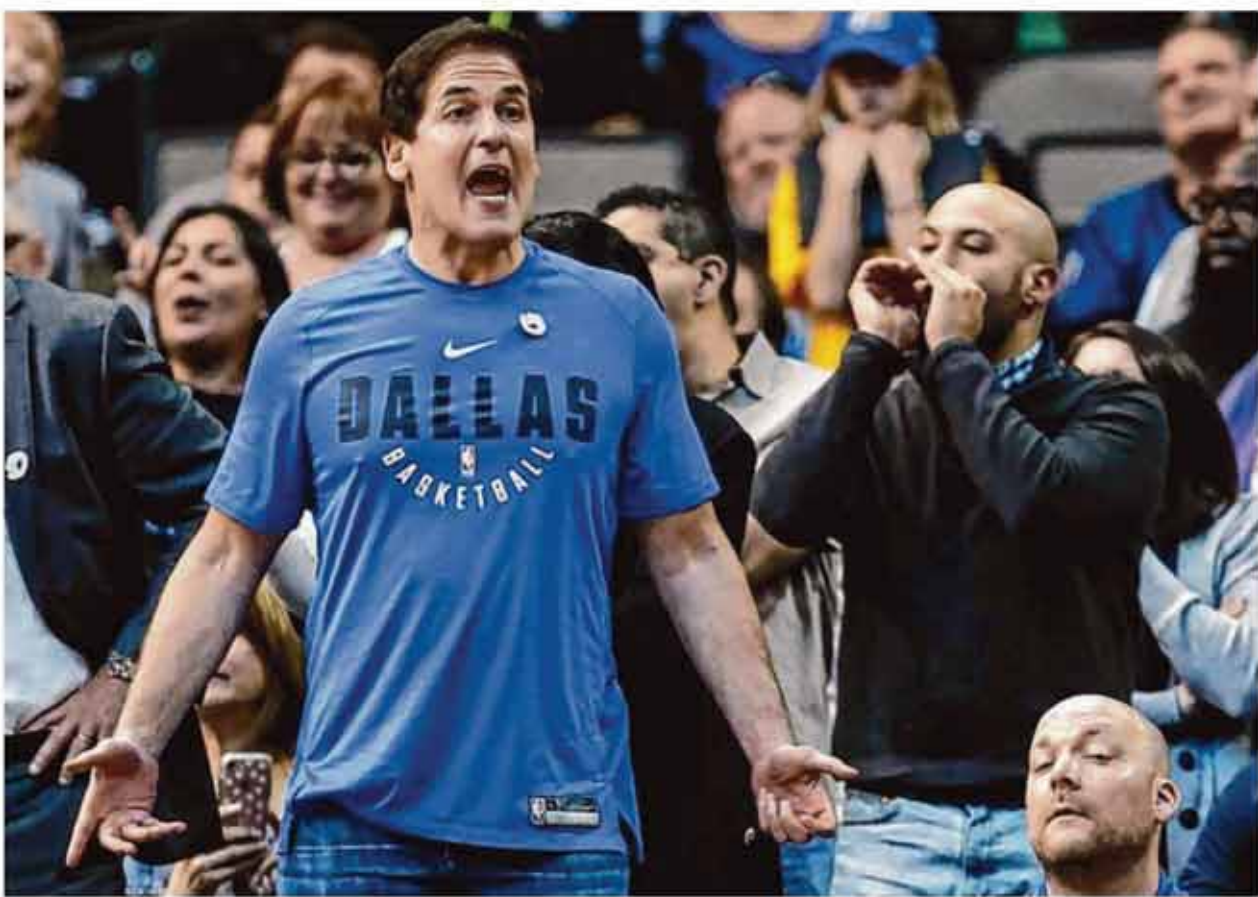
The high-energy confab included multiple panels and talks — topics included AI and Y'all Street, AI's impact on the workforce and federal government regulation — as well as promotional booths and technical demonstrations, with sponsors that ranged from Accenture and Aecom to the T.D. Jakes Foundation and SMU's new Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Now in its third year, the event's high attendance also hinted at the growing popularity of AI. A couple years ago, recalled Dave Evans, a managing partner at Sentiero Advisors, a Dallas-based AI-focused venture capital fund, it felt impossible to walk a few feet at the event without bumping into someone he already knew.

But this year, Evans told Hearst Newspapers that he felt like every face was new.

"It's surprising, but it's also awesome," he said. "We've grown beyond being that more kind of cottage group of 'AI people,' if you will, and it's kind of expanded out."

Cuban's talk marked



Ron Jenkins

Mark Cuban warned that "if you're not using one of the large language models ... you're falling way behind" during an appearance at the Convergence AI Dallas business conference.

the event's keynote address. The entrepreneur was interviewed by Alex Kantrowitz, a veteran business journalist and CNBC contributor who founded Big Technology, a tech-focused newsletter.

Early in the talk, Kantrowitz needled Cuban about a recent comment

the businessman made that seemed to disparage AI's capabilities by comparing it to "a hungover intern."

But Cuban sought to reframe that comment, clarifying he was only referring to the more narrow capabilities of AI agents, the personalized systems

people can now build to interact with AI on their behalf.

"When you put together an agent ... it does all the tedious work that you don't want to do, and all the stuff that you hope to get to at some point but you just don't have the time to get to," Cuban

said. "You can let the (human) intern stay out later, come to work later, because this agent's going to work 24-7."

Later in the talk, Cuban, who revealed that he has his own AI agent hooked up in his car, emphasized that he saw AI as "a great democratizer

of knowledge" — with a key divergence emerging between people who were using the technology to enhance their own knowledge and productivity and those who were using it to essentially avoid doing work.

"Those people who are using AI to learn, those people who are curious and just want to keep on learning more — AI is phenomenal. You will always have an edge," he said. "If you're just using it so you don't have to do the work and it's your junk intern, you're going to struggle."

Cuban also extended the divergence idea to the corporate world, arguing that firms that don't embrace AI were essentially condemning themselves to irrelevance. "When it's all said and done over the next three years, there's going to be two types of companies," he said. "Those who are great at AI, and those who are out of business."

"If the CEO doesn't understand that," Cuban said at another point, "she's not going to be the CEO very long. And if they still keep that CEO who's not using AI to get ahead, you tell me so I can start a company to kick their ass."

The line drew laughs and then loud applause.

ERCOT

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"It looks like there were some pent up projects that had not yet gotten into the queue," he said. "They all kind of landed in a one-week period."

In an email to Hearst Newspapers, Oncor spokesperson Kerri Dunn said the company periodically formally requests new study assignments for large loads wanting to connect to its system.

"To ensure ERCOT has appropriate visibility during this process development, we recently developed an extended scope of our requests," Dunn said. "On-

cor will continue to provide updated interconnection requests as appropriate."

As demand increases, so have supplies.

Multiple generation records were set by renewable energy sources in recent weeks: Solar's new all-time is 33 GW, and batteries dispatched more than 10GW.

Vegas and other panelists also spoke on the Batch Study framework ERCOT is shifting to for its large load interconnection study process. Those require large loads, like hyperscalers, be included in the agency's stability and reliability assessments before being energized — part of the increasing trend of data

centers and other large energy users "bring your own generation" approach to energizing before being able to connect. Meanwhile, the uncertainty of regional build out means some projects in development may not come to fruition.

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Elias Valverde II/Dallas Morning News

The size of ERCOT's large load interconnection requests soared by nearly 150 gigawatts in two weeks.

Perot Foundation, the United Way of Metropolitan

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