



St. Johns Heritage Parkway opens in Brevard County

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PALM BAY, Fla. -

Brevard County leaders on Tuesday officially opened a highly anticipated roadway that is expected to alleviate traffic in southern Brevard County.

The St. Johns Heritage Parkway project has been watched closely by folks who live or work in Palm Bay, West Melbourne and Melbourne.

"It's time for this road to open," said Phillip Coombs.

Coombs lives in Palm Bay and knows what it's like to hit a traffic jam around Central Florida's second largest city.

"It gets so congested out here when people are going to work in the morning around rush hour," said Coombs. "It gets ridiculous."

But he hopes that'll change now that the first phase of the parkway is finished.

Once all the way finished, the 22-mile-long parkway will loop around Interstate 95 north of U.S. 192 and south of Grant Road.

Officials think the beltway will help with traffic problems as well as serve as a north-south evacuation route.

"I thought about hurricanes," said Joe Krastel. "Where I live I'd have to jump on 95, go up to 192, or stay on 95 and go forever. Here, this is great, you can evacuate the whole west section of Palm Bay and get right down to the extension on Emerson."

However, getting to this point didn't happen overnight.

It took some key federal grants, and city, county and state funds to get here.

Brevard County Commissioner Andy Anderson says it's been over 20 years in the making and he's excited to see the first section of the \$23 million project finally finished.

"I didn't have gray hairs when I started this project. Now I have a little bit of gray, but it's worth it," said Anderson.

The second phase of the parkway is expected to be completed by 2017.



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