

Parkway segment opens in Palm Bay, more coming



The city of Palm Bay and Brevard County held a ribbon cutting for the first phase of the St. Johns Heritage Parkway and a groundbreaking for the next phase. Video by Malcolm Denmark 1/13/15

Rick Neale, **FLORIDA TODAY** 7:59 p.m. EST January 13, 2015



(Photo: MALCOLM DENMARK/FLORIDA TODAY)

PALM BAY – Early in his career as an engineering consultant, Brevard County Public Works Director John Denninghoff helped write the initial 1993 feasibility study for an unfunded, faraway-future road project: the St. Johns Heritage Parkway.

More than 20 years later, the first 2.5-mile portion of this western beltway looping around congested Palm Bay has finally opened to traffic. And when finished —someday — the road will link with new Interstate 95 interchanges near Melbourne International Airport and Micco Road near Grant-Valkaria.

"When it is open and we get it from Malabar Road to an interchange on I-95 up at Ellis Road, we're going to take about 13,000, 14,000 trips a day off of I-95," Denninghoff said Tuesday during a road ribbon-cutting

ceremony.



[FLORIDATODAY](#)

[Palm Bay parkway expansion a highway to heaven](#)

<http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2014/06/08/palm-bay-parkway-expansion-highway-heaven/10216533/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>

"If you think that's not significant, that's about 20 percent of existing traffic that's on I-95 right now. So it's a substantial road improvement. It's not just an evacuation (route). It's not just a new corridor. It is serving the people who live and work in Brevard County each and every day," Denninghoff said.

About 150 people attended the St. Johns Heritage Parkway ceremony at the western terminus of Emerson Boulevard. Organizers set up a portable stage, tent, lighting and video monitors on the fresh asphalt.

The city of Palm Bay completed the first portion of parkway, which leads southward to Malabar Road just east of Heritage High. Construction kicked off in October 2012. Cost was \$13.4 million, including \$7.5 million in federal dollars, a \$4 million state grant and city transportation impact fees, said Elia Twigg, Palm Bay public works director.

Minutes after the ribbon-cutting, dignitaries grabbed shovels and gathered around a mound of brown dirt for a groundbreaking ceremony for the next section of roadway. This 3.1-mile segment will extend the parkway to U.S. 192. Managed by Brevard County, construction should cost \$12.2 million and last 720 days.

"If you look that way, that's the next connection," Palm Bay Mayor William Capote told the crowd, pointing northward with his left hand. "And that brings the hope to this community. The hope of prosperity. And that is the reality.

"We have arrived, Palm Bay. And we're making a statement in the southern end of Brevard County," Capote said.

The 45 mph parkway is expected to alleviate northwest Palm Bay traffic jams and improve vehicle access to the airport, Orlando and points elsewhere.

Dozens of grazing cows, buzzing insects and barbed wire fences lined the uninhabited pastureland along the parkway Tuesday afternoon. A few pedestrians strolled along the new sidewalk, which is dotted with occasional "Caution: Alligators May Be Present" warning signs.

"The big benefit that just happens because of this road is positive economic development," County Commissioner Andy Anderson said. "This is going to serve as not only as a corridor for people who live in Palm Bay and work in Melbourne, to get to work a little bit faster, save a few more dollars in gas and child care.

"But hopefully now and in the future, we'll have a little bit more land to build and attract new businesses," Anderson said.

Contact Neale at 321-242-3638, rneale@floridatoday.com or follow @RickNeale1 on Twitter. See other stories by FLORIDA TODAY's Rick Neale at <http://tinyurl.com/ossge3b>.

In stages

The St. Johns Heritage Parkway is being built in segments:

Northern I-95 interchange at Ellis Road: Construction scheduled in July 2016 for \$44.4 million

U.S. 192 to Ellis Road: Right-of-way acquisition underway for \$13 million project

Palm Bay city limits to U.S. 192: Ranger Construction awarded \$12.2 million, 720-day construction contract

Malabar Road to Emerson Drive: \$12.1 million roadway opened Tuesday during ribbon-cutting ceremony

Emerson Drive to the C-54 Canal: Design work and permitting complete

Southern I-95 interchange (north of Micco Road): Construction scheduled in 2016 for \$28.8 million

Source: *Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization*

Read or Share this story: <http://on.flatoday.com/1IjXyP>



MBA IN 1 YEAR

100% Online | No GMAT | IACBE Accredited

LYNN UNIVERSITY [LEARN MORE](#)

 Distinguished School

Recognized by Apple® as a distinguished school for innovation, leadership and education excellence.

MORE STORIES



Cape expects to be world's busiest spaceport in 2015

[\(/story/tech/science/space/2015/01/13/usaf-says-cape-will-be-busiest-spaceport-in-2015/21695955/\)](http://story/tech/science/space/2015/01/13/usaf-says-cape-will-be-busiest-spaceport-in-2015/21695955/)

[\(/story/tech/science/space/2015/01/13/usaf-says-cape-will-be-busiest-spaceport-in-2015/21695955/\)](http://story/tech/science/space/2015/01/13/usaf-says-cape-will-be-busiest-spaceport-in-2015/21695955/)

Jan. 13, 2015, 3:06 p.m.



5K memorializing Viera High student runs its course

[\(/story/news/local/2015/01/13/memorializing-viera-high-student-runs-course/21699539/\)](http://story/news/local/2015/01/13/memorializing-viera-high-student-runs-course/21699539/)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/01/13/memorializing-viera-high-student-runs-course/21699539/\)](http://story/news/local/2015/01/13/memorializing-viera-high-student-runs-course/21699539/)

Jan. 13, 2015, 2:52 p.m.



West Melbourne furniture store reopens after fire

[\(/story/news/local/2015/01/13/two-alarm-fire-hits-furniture-store/21680461/\)](http://story/news/local/2015/01/13/two-alarm-fire-hits-furniture-store/21680461/)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/01/13/two-alarm-fire-hits-furniture-store/21680461/\)](http://story/news/local/2015/01/13/two-alarm-fire-hits-furniture-store/21680461/)

Jan. 13, 2015, 2:50 p.m.

