

## **New Pedestrian Bridge**

Perhaps you've noticed the new sidewalk that passes in front of the old Oasis Church. It leads to the recently installed pedestrian bridge that spans over the Norfolk Southern Rail Road tracks. The bridge arrived in three sections. It took detailed coordination between our exceptional contractor, the railroad and a large crane system four days to set them. Each section had to be lifted and carried over the tracks between train travel times. It is 287 feet long, ten feet wide and the center section is about thirty feet high over the train track. This new trail approach is ADA compliant and provides safe access across the railroad as it is a fully enclosed structure with fall protection and hand rails provided for the entire length.

The view from the bridge is exhilarating and beautiful. It's a wonderful place to safely watch trains go by. This access allows patrons to travel from Chamber trail head and/or Hwy 278/Hwy 61 area into McKoon Park, allowing safe passage to the city's existing sidewalk system and the availability to continue along the trail system to Orphan Brigade trail head ending at Sara Babb Park. Putting in the pedestrian bridge gets us one step closer to completing a connected walking/biking trail through Dallas.

Once completed and operating, a new flashing crosswalk will help get you across Merchants Drive and over to the Orphan Brigade Battlefield Trailhead Park. Push the button to activate the flashing lights, warning drivers that pedestrians or bicyclists are attempting to cross the street. The fast "on-demand" response minimizes crossing wait time for pedestrians and drivers because the beacons only flash while someone is crossing. The beacon's high visibility alerts drivers under all weather conditions. Quicker response and higher visibility make this crosswalk a safer place for pedestrians and cyclists to cross.

Development of Orphan Brigade Park in the Scott Smith Preserve is underway. This passive park is designed to protect and preserve the historical and natural assets in our area by creating green space, wildlife habitats and improving the environmental quality for the City and surrounding areas for generations. Currently, the paved trail is 1.3 miles in and back, but will eventually connect to Sara Babb, Dallas' premiere park.

Orphan Brigade Park boasts a 210-foot bridge that overlooks a natural wetland and greenspace conservation area. Once the trail is completed to Sara Babb Park, outdoor enthusiasts can take advantage of multi-use trails, a pavilion with picnic tables, educational / historical markers, memorial signage, restrooms and water fountains. The amenities will enable folks to enjoy the beautiful view of the protected grounds, observe wildlife and study the Civil War.

The park is 175+ acres and contains a portion of the land where the Battle of Dallas was fought. The trail will carry visitors through a battlefield where 170,000 soldiers skirmished in late May of 1864. These soldiers perfected the most sophisticated system of earthworks and used them

in battle for the first time. These historical trenches are located in Orphan Brigade Battlefield Park.

The City is starting on the Battlefield Trail Phase III Connector Trail by entering the scoping and concept phase of the final segment connecting the intersection of HWY61 and US278 to the Silver Comet Trail. The plan is for a bridge over US278. Once the scoping and concept phase is completed, the City can officially move the project into the engineering phase. Funding for this project will be a federal grant with a local match.

Why is this so important? The Silver Comet Trail is a major source of pedestrian and bike traffic through the county. The bridge and trail through Dallas will be able to be used by all kinds of people as it will be ADA accessible. It is also strategic to bring some of the 600,000 yearly Silver Comet Trail patrons from the trail into downtown Dallas to shop our delightful Main Street businesses and surrounding local stores to help bolster tourism and cultivate repeat guests.

We invite all walkers, joggers, runners, riders and outdoor enthusiasts to utilize The Silver Comet Trail, check out the Orphan Brigade Battlefield Park and Sara Babb Park, and of course visit downtown Dallas. We hope you are as excited as we are that the connectivity is in progress and we can't wait for everyone to enjoy exploring the completed trail.