

Aurora officials say new bridge to be built over Fox River a 'game changer'

 chicagotribune.com/suburbs/aurora-beacon-news/news/ct-abn-aurora-groundbreak-st-0517-story.html

Steve Lord

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Officials ceremonially broke ground Wednesday for a new pedestrian and bike bridge over the Fox River in [Aurora](#) that some officials are calling a “game changer” for that part of the city.

The 900-foot curved pedestrian and bicycle bridge will run from the corner of several city parking lots on the west bank into the southern edge of RiverEdge Park on the east bank of the Fox River. It will go over a natural island known as Blues Island in the river.

The bridge also will connect the Fox Valley Park District bike paths on each side of the river.

The bridge is part of the overall, almost \$14 million construction enhancements to the Aurora Transportation Center that includes a new traffic signal and entrance to the center and the Two Brothers Roundhouse, additional parking, relocation of the bus pulse point and some road work on Broadway.

Part of the project also will add onto the southern portion of RiverEdge Park, creating a southern entrance and a beer concession stand.

Because of the bridge, the city parking lots on the west side of the river now become usable for commuters to the Transportation Center, as well as for events at RiverEdge Park.

While officials did the ceremonial groundbreaking, Dan Feltman, a city of Aurora engineer who is project manager, said actual work will start June 15, when the city’s Illinois Department of Natural Resources permit begins.

Workers are already concentrating on trying to get the work on Broadway finished before the heavy part of the RiverEdge performance schedule begins.

Putting the bridge into the project is what made it eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding from the federal government. The city received about \$12 million for construction, and another \$2 million from the Kane County Forest Preserve District because the bridge connects the bike paths.

Ald. Tina Bohman, 1st Ward called the bridge “a game changer.”

It will connect the 1st Ward with the 6th Ward represented by Ald. Michael Saville.

“Twenty years ago we were standing on what used to be a junkyard,” Saville said. “See what a little vision can do?”

That junkyard was a brownfield that need substantial clean-up and remediation. It was former Mayor Tom Weisner who thought the clean-up site would make a good site for RiverEdge Park, not only making it a center for the arts, but a great example of reclaiming the land as well as the riverfront.

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