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Trails expanding to connect with DART

Hutton Branch route will extend to rail station downtown

By **DIANNE SOLIS**
Staff Writer
dsolis@dallasnews.com

CARROLLTON — A new stretch of the Hutton Branch Trail is open in this creek-lined suburb, while construction is underway on a short extension to DART's Downtown Carrollton Station.

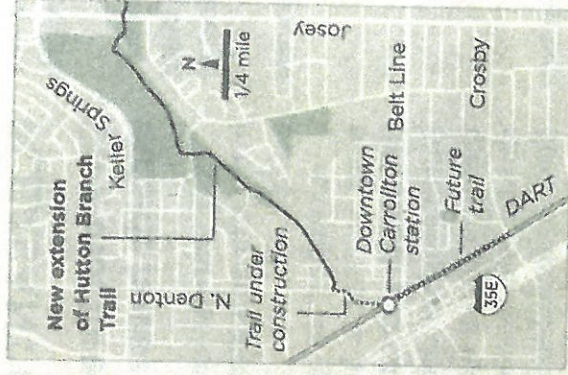
The latest addition extends the city's hike-and-bike trail system to about 11 miles of paved trail that is 10

to 12 feet wide.

"It is a safe environment and creates a lot of community," said Carrollton Mayor Matthew Marchant, a runner and biker who has coached his two young daughters on cycling on the trail. "They're a jewel of our park system."

Plans are to extend the trail system along the DART Green Line rail south to Crosby Road, just past the downtown retail, restaurant and entertainment area.

The city also plans to eventually connect the trail



Troy Oxford/Staff Artist

system with the Trinity

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Carrollton trail to reach Green Line rail stop

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Mills and North Carrollton/Frankford rail stations.

Dallas County will pay half of Carrollton's costs for the Hutton Branch Trail expansion, which now tally \$1.8 million. That figure will increase as the Hutton trail connection to the DART stop is finished.

The trails cost about \$1 million per mile to build, said Cesar Molina, Carrollton's engineering director. Basically, hike-and-bike trails "are big sidewalks, and they are expensive because our trails also cross creeks," Molina said.

The new stretch of the Hutton Branch Trail runs from Jonesey Lane on the east to North Denton Drive on the west. That's a few blocks north of the downtown Carrollton station.

The final piece of the Hutton Branch Trail will feature a 12-foot-wide pedestrian bridge as it crosses the creek and nears DART's year-old Downtown Carrollton Station, where retail stores, restaurants and a theater cluster around a gazebo area.

The city began work on the trail system in 2004.

All the effort is worth it be-

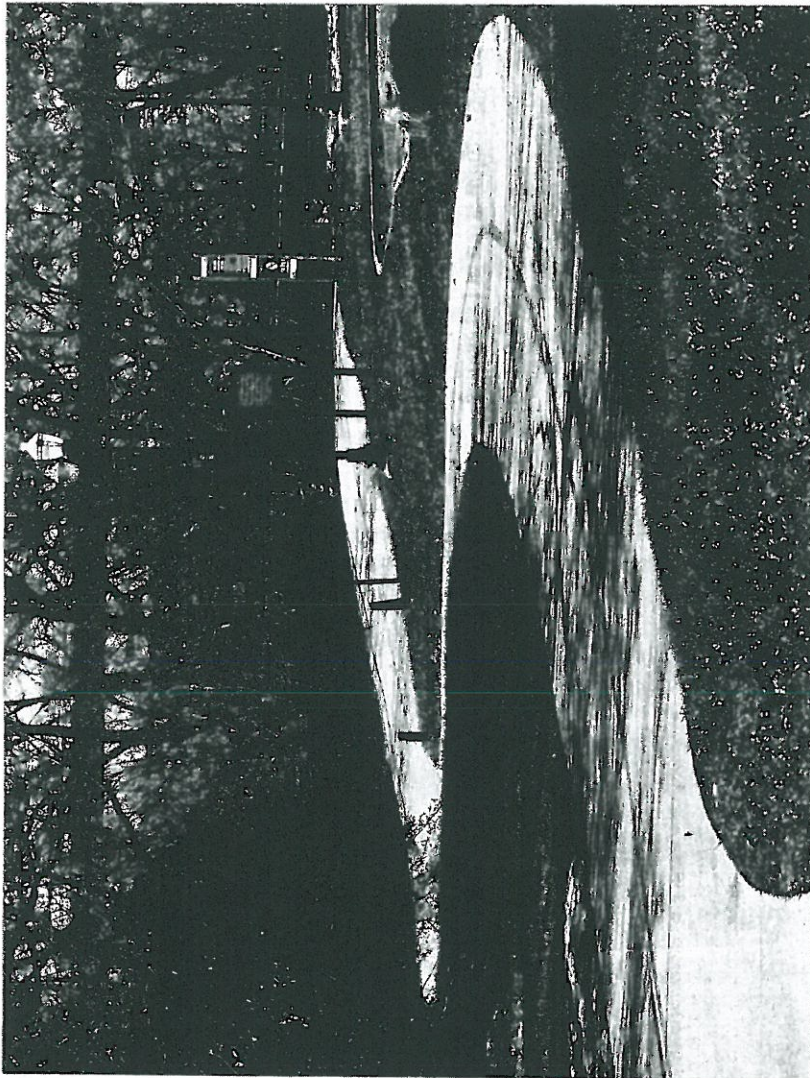
cause of the high use by so many different age groups, said Scott Whitaker, the city's recreation and parks director. "In Carrollton, it has gotten so much better just in the last five years," he said. "Some regulars use trails as an alternative to getting on the streets."

That's the point of the Regional Veloweb. That's what the North Central Texas Council of Governments calls the network of planned and existing trails for bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the region. The goal is to build an "interstate" of trails that connect in 10 counties and 117 cities.

The Carrollton trails are part of that master plan. Carrollton's trail system could connect with Irving's system, where the Campion Trails hug the Elm Fork of the Trinity River and run from the Las Colinas area to Valley Ranch.

Zac Trahan, the Dallas-based program director for the Texas Campaign for the Environment, praised the trail system as a way to reduce carbon emissions.

"It leads to more small-business success on those routes and a greater sense of



Ron Baselle/Staff Photographer

"Some regulars use trails as an alternative to getting on the streets," says Scott Whitaker, Carrollton's recreation and parks director. The city has been working on the Hutton Branch Trail since 2004. Its final stretch is under construction.

connection with our neighbors," Trahan said.

Suburbs like Carrollton, Richardson and Irving seem to be ahead of Dallas, especially with bicycle-friendly paths, Trahan said.

The most complete trail system in North Texas is in Richardson, according to Rick Loessberg, Dallas County's di-

rector of planning and development. "What they have done in a very short time is very impressive," he said.

Trails need to lead to destinations, and Richardson's trails feed into the busy Telecom Corridor, Loessberg said.

The virtues of trails swell with the different population

slices using them, from children to seniors to seasoned athletes to workers heading to jobs, trail proponents say.

"There are not too many recreational amenities that can be called one-size-fits-all," Loessberg said. "This is one."

Follow Dianne Solis on Twitter at @disolis.