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OPINION

Ross Avenue project will make a safer way to bike downtown

A shared bicycle and pedestrian path on Ross Avenue will connect Lower Greenville to the Arts District.



Aerial view of people cycling, walking and jogging on a trail at White Rock Lake in Dallas on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (Smiley N. Pool / Staff Photographer)

By [Dallas Morning News Editorial](#)

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In Dallas, where drivers zoom past at breakneck speeds and car accidents happen every day, getting around on a bicycle or on foot often feels unsafe. We have an extensive trail network and good infrastructure for recreational cycling. But apart from a few shared lanes with wearing paint and treacherous potholes, the city lacks safe and well-connected cycling infrastructure on its streets.

It's exciting that a [project](#) to make Ross Avenue more welcoming to cyclists and pedestrians is moving forward. The project involves a nearly two-mile stretch of Ross from Lower Greenville to the Arts District under Interstate 345. One out of Ross' five lanes will be converted into a 10-to-12-foot shared bicycle and pedestrian path, set apart from motorists.

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Rebekah Kornblum is president of [Dallas Bicycle Coalition](#), a group she founded last April to organize cyclists to have a stronger voice in conversations about city projects like the bike plan. Often bike lanes don't connect to important population centers, but Kornblum said she is encouraged that this project is different. "Lower Greenville to the Arts District and downtown is a connection that we've needed for a really long time," Kornblum said.



Opinion

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Matt Havener has been cycling in Dallas since 2003 and often bikes to work. "We don't have a lot of infrastructure that I would want my kids to be riding on," Havener said.

Wide and mixed pedestrian bike paths like this project and the Katy Trail are valuable because they are very safe for less experienced riders because other cyclists can't speed, he said.

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The project will have two phases. The first phase is already funded by a \$3.8 million federal [Transportation Alternatives grant](#) that the city of Dallas got in 2020, and which includes the construction of the shared path on the north side of Ross Avenue, a center median and traffic signal improvements. The second phase includes a six-foot sidewalk on the south side and other improvements. An outer lane currently being used by motorists will be widened to 13 feet to accommodate buses and, in the future, potentially a streetcar. The second phase of the project is yet to be funded.

Related: Can Dallas become a more bike-friendly city?

Kristopher Johnson, senior engineer for the city of Dallas and manager of the project said that construction could start sometime in the first half of next year. Before then, his team will finalize a schematic for the project after hearing public input, get the project environmentally cleared and present it to the City Council for approval.

There was a public meeting about this project last week, but city officials are still accepting feedback [online](#) before Feb. 20. If you're interested in making Dallas a place that shares its roads better or have ideas to improve the project, make your voice heard.

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