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First leg of bike trail open along I-595 Construction under way on second leg east of Davie Road

By Michael Turnbull, Sun Sentinel

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Outdoor enthusiasts now have a smoother, wider surface to Rollerblade or bike in the least likely of all places - next to Interstate 595.

The first phase of the \$5.9 million New River Greenway is complete between University Drive and Southwest 136th Avenue.

A 12-foot wide concrete trail was built on the north side of the canal that runs along I-595, replacing an older asphalt trail along the south side of the canal. It connects to an existing trail that continues west from 136th Avenue to Markham Park in Sunrise.

Crews for the \$1.8 billion I-595 reconstruction project had to relocate the trail because the westbound lanes of I-595 and State Road 84 are being shifted next to the canal bank as the expressway is widened.

The greenway is part of a network of trails and bike paths planned by Broward County.

If you're looking for a place to rest or get out of the sun along the greenway, you'll have to wait a few more months. County officials intend to landscape the greenway and install benches and shelters to make it more inviting for bicyclists, joggers and in-line skaters.

Some bicyclists are disappointed they will have to deal with traffic to cross busy streets such as University Drive and Pine Island Road.

"I was looking forward to biking it and not having to go through traffic at the intersections," said Stuart O'Gorman, who lives next to I-595 in Plantation. "Riding on the old path was horrible because of that. Now it is a new path with same old problems."

No overpasses are planned to carry any sections of the trail over cross streets, said Paul Lampley, the Florida Department of Transportation's I-595 construction manager.

The overpasses would have been up to 200 feet long to rise high enough over the cross streets for traffic to pass underneath. The bridges also would have posed a challenge in dealing with the Americans with Disabilities Act and required separate, zig-zagging ramps or elevators on either side of the bridges, Lampley said.

Work is under way on the second phase of the greenway between Davie Road and the Secret Woods Nature Center off S.R. 84 in Dania Beach, just west of I-95. It should be completed in about a year.

So what are officials going to do about the "missing" piece of the trail between University Drive and Davie Road?

There isn't room to continue or build the trail along the canal east of University, so officials had to look at options to put bike lanes somewhere south of I-595.

One alternative would have extended the bike lanes along Nova Drive through the Nova Southeastern University campus about a mile south of I-595.

Instead, Lampley said bike lanes and a sidewalk will be built along eastbound S.R. 84 to fill in that missing piece of the trail between University Drive and Davie Road.

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