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Work begins on \$5.6 million New River Greenway

Recreational trail is moving to make way for a wider Interstate 595

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A recreational trail is jumping to the other side of the North New River Canal to make way for a wider Interstate 595.

Workers last week began digging a path for the new \$5.6 million New River Greenway that eventually will allow people to skate, stroll or bike between Markham Park in Sunrise and the Secret Woods Nature Center off State Road 84 in Dania Beach, just west of I-95.

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

The county consistently ranks near the top of lists of the most dangerous places to walk or ride a bike, and officials hope to create a way people can safely move about the county without relying on a car.

Most areas have relied on abandoned railroad tracks or old riverbeds for their greenways, but Broward has neither. Instead, planners must negotiate numerous easements with the Department of Transportation and other agencies to use their rights of way.

In the case of the New River Greenway, an existing trail runs along the south side of the canal between 136th Avenue and Pine Island Road.

But it can't be incorporated into the greenway because the westbound lanes of I-595 and S.R. 84 will shift next to the canal bank when the highway is widened. So the trail is moving to the north side of the canal.

Although major road work on I-595 won't begin until this fall, some jobs related to the mammoth \$1.2 billion project, such as relocating the trail, moving utilities and constructing noise walls, must start earlier, said I-595 project spokeswoman Laila Haddad.

The new greenway will be 12 feet wide and paved with concrete. Concrete was chosen over asphalt because officials believe it will hold up longer and be easier to maintain.



"Concrete is going to be better for biking and (roller blading)," said Mark Horowitz, bicycle and pedestrian coordinator for the Broward County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Construction of the first leg between 136th Avenue and University Drive should be finished in six months.

A start date hasn't been set for the second leg, which will take the greenway to the south side of I-595 between University Drive and Davie Road, then jump back to the north side of I-595 and continue along the south side of the canal en route to Secret Woods Park.

Although the county wanted to build overpasses so people could avoid the busy roads that the greenway will cross, officials decided against it for two reasons.

First, the South Florida Water Management District wanted the overpasses built as close as possible to the property line between the canal and residents' back yards north of I-595.

Second, the bridges would have been up to 200 feet long, extending well beyond the intersections.

"We recognized that they really wouldn't be used by somebody on the cross street who wants to get access to the path," Horowitz said. "Even though it looked good, it just wasn't practical."

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