



The new bridge on North Riverside Drive crosses Loop 820, providing a key connection. Star-Telegram/Gordon Dickson

New bridge over 820 is a time-saver

❶ The Riverside Drive span helps commuters and workers in the area.

By Gordon Dickson
gdickson@star-telegram.com

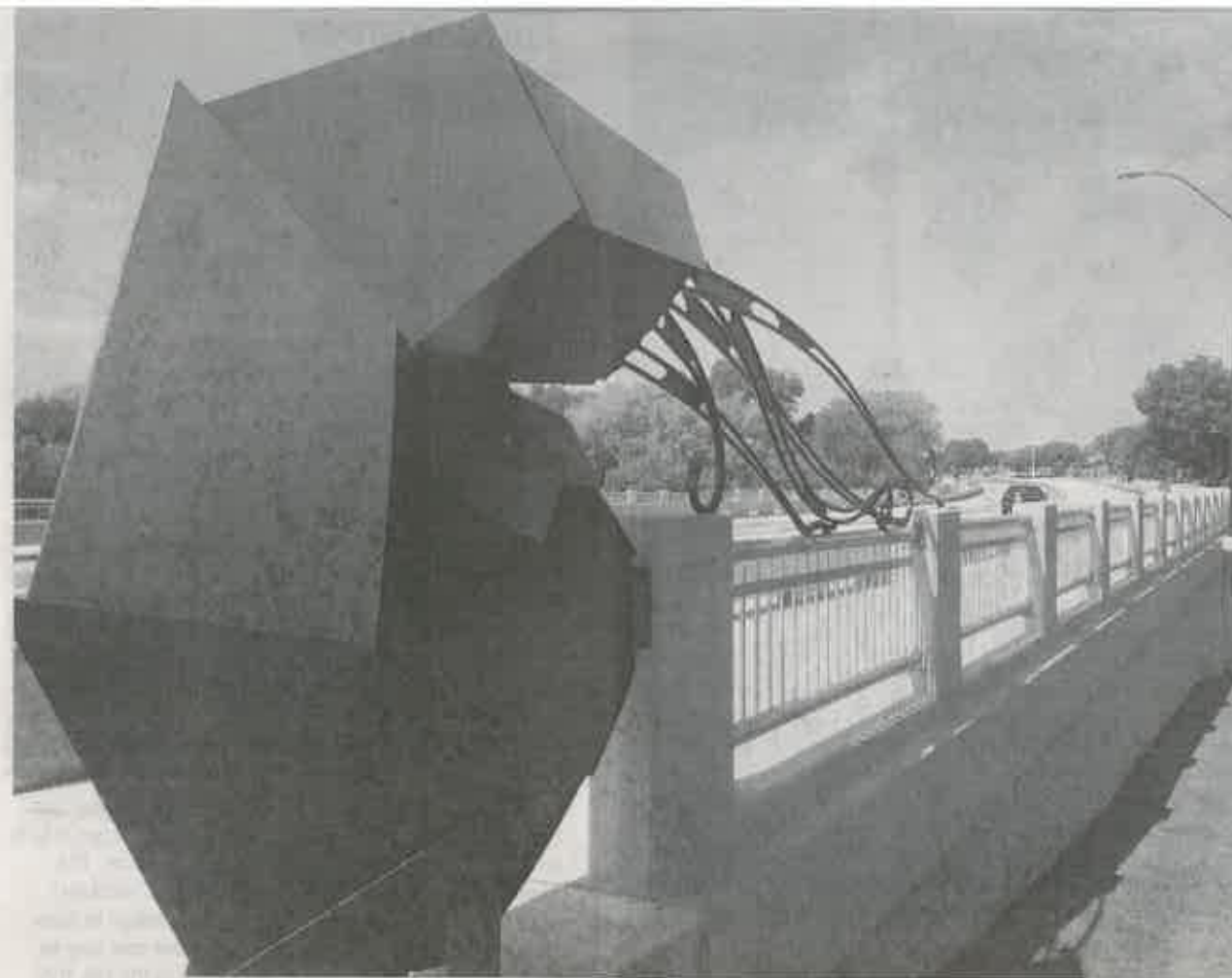
FORT WORTH — A new commuting option has opened for motorists tired of sitting in traffic on Interstate 35W or oth-

er north-south roads in north Fort Worth.

A new bridge on North Riverside Drive over Loop 820 opened last week after more than a year of construction. With the completion of that bridge and a companion structure just to the north over Big Fossil Creek, North

Riverside Drive is now part of a continuous 11-mile corridor stretching from Meacham Boulevard to beyond Texas 170. Although most of the road is known as North Riverside Drive, portions to the north are labeled Old Denton Road, and a small

More on BRIDGE, 4B



A piece of public art adorns the new smaller bridge over Big Fossil Creek.

Star-Telegram/Gordon Dickson

Bridge

Continued from 1B

piece on the southern end is Mercantile Drive.

The key was getting the bridge built over Loop 820, city officials said. The bridge spans over Loop 820 but isn't accessible to or from the freeway. Instead, it simply connects the Mercantile industrial area to the vast residential and retail areas north of the loop.

"We've been waiting for that overpass to open just so we could bypass the whole mess," said Bill Luce, who works in the engineering department at UTC Aerospace Systems on the south side of Loop 820. Luce and his colleagues say the bridge saves several minutes of

travel time, because they no longer have to take a 2-mile-plus detour to North Beach Street to grab a bite to eat on the north side of Loop 820.

"We primarily use it at lunch," Luce said. "We work on the south side of that bridge, and for lunch we go to the north side of 820."

The four-lane bridge was built by Bluebonnet Contractors at the request of Fort Worth. The city incorporated landscaping on both ends of the structure. It also built a pair of roundabouts at North Riverside Drive's intersections with Northern Cross Boulevard and Fossil Creek Boulevard as an efficient and aesthetically pleasing alternative to four-way stops.

Bluebonnet Contractors was one of the main contractors in the \$2.5 billion

North Tarrant Express project, which included a massive makeover of Loop 820, and was able to incorporate the North Riverside Drive bridge into those larger plans.

The bridge over Loop 820 cost about \$16 million, North Tarrant Express spokesman Robert Hinkle said. The city then chipped in about \$4 million for the smaller bridge over Big Fossil Creek, as well as sidewalks and lighting.

"This bridge, although not a part of the original corridor design, is a vital north-south connector that will give drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists direct access from one side of the highway to the other," said Fort Worth Councilman Danny Scarth, whose district includes the area. "With the growth in businesses and residences on both sides of the North

Tarrant Express, connectivity is paramount."

Scarth also estimated that at least 5,000 people work in the industrial area south of Loop 820, including a great many who live north of the loop and likely will use the North Riverside Drive bridge frequently to get to and from their homes.

In the neighborhoods north of Loop 820, the completion of the bridge marks the end of a long, sometimes painful period. Many residents of areas such as Stone Glen had grown accustomed to having their own green space near Big Fossil Creek, and until about five to seven years ago weren't aware the city planned to eventually put in a North Riverside corridor through the area.

Gordon Dickson, 817-390-7796
Twitter: @gdickson