

# The Connector

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## Walkway over Lake Murray Dam is popular with public

By Bob Kudelka

Mary Lou Stinson enjoyed the morning lake breeze as she pushed a stroller carrying her 4-year-old son, James, along the new pedestrian walkway across SC 6 at the Lake Murray Dam in Lexington County.

"It's just fantastic," Stinson said, looking out across the lake. "It reminds of whenever we go to Charleston, we walk over the bridge. Just to have a safe place to walk with scenery is great."

The walkway is part of the SCDOT's project that widened portions of SC 6 and SC 60, completed this spring.

While motorists were enjoying the added lanes and smoother travel, the 1.5-mile, 8-foot-wide walkway along the lake was an instant hit with pedestrians.

"If you ride out there in the morning, there will be easily 20 people scattered about," District 1 DEA Thad Brunson said, two weeks after it opened in April. "No one envisioned the number of people that would be out there walking. It's turned out to be the Ravenel Bridge of Columbia."

The pedestrian walkway on the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge over the Cooper River in Charleston has been extremely popular since the bridge opened in 2005.

The SC 6/SC 60 project began in January 2005 to widen a 7.5 mile-portion from two to five lanes, with the segment across the dam widened from two to four. Intersection improvements, including a challenging one at SC 6/60, were also included.

The widening project was needed to handle high-growth

areas on both the Irmo and Lexington sides of the dam.

"I've had nothing but positive comments from the public on the benefit of the road and how well traffic moves now," Brunson said. "Now it's like, 'Where did all the cars go?' They're still there, it's just that five lanes can move them a lot quicker than two lanes."

Robert Dickinson, who was project manager and now is District 1 Maintenance Engineer, said the project overcame many utility conflicts that come with widening a project in an urban area. Engineers needed to relocate water, gas and sewer mains.

"We're very pleased with the final product," Dickinson said. "To me, I was more excited about this project being completed than any other project. I think the whole corridor is a really good addition to the area. I just think it's great."

There were some delicate aspects of the project: the relocation of a pair of 75-ton stone monuments built in 1930. The two monuments had to be hooked to a crane and moved from the path of the SC 6 widening.

Due to their historical significance and potential adverse effects that the widening project would have on the gates, SCDOT coordinated with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History and historical groups.

Both monuments were moved successfully and continue to be historical landmarks at both sides of the dam.

Another difficult part of the project was the intersection at SC 6/60, which had to be raised 3 feet.

"That was complicated, and we worked very close with the contractor to keep traffic going as best we could," Dickinson



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

The SC 6 and SC 60 project included widening the roadway over the Lake Murray dam to four lanes.

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Frank and Kim Koenig of Chapin enjoy a run across the Lake Murray Dam. The pedestrian walkway over the dam has been popular with the public.

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#### DAM from page 1

“There was no way around the delays, but for the most part people were understanding and relatively patient.”

The contractor on the SC 6 portion was C. Ray Miles Construction Co., of Lugoff. US Group Inc. of Columbia handled SC 60.

As part of the collaborative efforts between the South Carolina State Infrastructure Bank, SCDOT and SCANA Corporation, the project to stabilize the Saluda River Dam by SCEG established the roadway location that now makes up the northbound lanes, building it up with a stone base. Then, the SCDOT’s road contractor took over, bring it to final grade and paved it, Dickinson said.

The idea to include a walkway across the dam came in part from the Department’s directive, approved by the Commission, to include bicycle/pedestrian accommodations in the Department’s planning, design, construction and operating activities. The route was identified by COATS (Columbia Area Long Range Transportation Plan) as an area where such facilities could have high usage.

“How much we could fit on the top of dam was what we wrestled with, but it fit the criteria and we felt like it was a great opportunity,” said Brian Keys, former program manager early in the project’s development and now Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning, Location and Design.

Sidewalk and bicycle accommodations were built throughout the project.

Keys said the SC 6/SC 60 project’s goal was to better link

two communities: the town of Lexington and the town of Irmo.

“We’ve connected the two communities with these facilities,” Keys said.

On a Friday morning in May, the walkway was being enjoyed by joggers and walkers of all ages.

“I love it,” said Don Moore, who walked with his wife, Mary. “For years, I’ve said we ought to have a way to walk across the dam safely. I’m glad they took the time to make it part of the project.”

“It’s wonderful,” Mary Moore said. “You all did a great job.”

Carol Bruce, of Columbia, uses the walkway five times a week.

“I was walking, off and on, a little bit but this really inspired me because it’s a great place to walk,” Bruce said. “The atmosphere is great and you get a little fresh air.”

N.A. Patterson of Irmo said it was her first time on the walkway.

“I’m flabbergasted,” she said. “It’s so tranquil – it’s very nice.”

“I love going across it,” said jogger Joanne Wactor of Columbia. “It’s like being down in Charleston.”

Michael Young of Irmo said the relatively flat walkway is much easier for walking than in his hilly neighborhood.

George Fagan, of nearby Coldstream, likes the “ambiance,” noting that he had just spotted an eagle. He also appreciates the 3-foot high jersey barrier that separates vehicles from walkers.

“You feel safe,” Fagan said. “This is the best thing Columbia has done in a number of years. It’s everything you want to have to be encouraged to exercise.”

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

The project included improvements to the intersection of SC 6 and SC 60. The interchange had to be raised 3 feet.



Mary Moore, right, and her husband, Don, enjoy a walk across the dam. They are two of many local residents who are frequently enjoy the stroll alongside Lake Murray.



The project also includes accommodations for bicyclists. Bicyclists can use the bike lane on the right shoulder of the road or share the walkway with pedestrians.