

Fort Hamer Bridge to open in September, 5K race taking place Saturday morning

- By: Rick Adams
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PARRISH, FL - Some folks will get their first up close and personal look at the beautiful new Fort Hamer Bridge during the 5K run on Saturday morning, and for everyone else you'll have to wait until the official opening of the bridge in September.

"I'm happy, its going to be a great thing for this area," said Bill Sailor, a Parrish resident. The opening of the new Fort Hamer bridge can't come fast enough for Sailor and his wife Kathy. It's something they and their neighbors in Parrish have been looking forward to for years. Their long wait will soon be over.

"Very excited, we have a lot of clients who live over in the UTC area, so for me living in Parrish this will be another way to get over there instead of I-75," said Kathy Sailor.

The nearly 33 million dollar north to south bridge crosses over the Manatee River connecting Fort Hamer Road to Upper Manatee River Road.

County officials say in addition to this bridge easing traffic congestion from nearby I-75 and U.S. 301, there will be many other benefits.

"We're estimating more than 17,000 cars a day once the bridge opens in September," said Nick Azzara. "With all that new vehicular traffic into Parrish across from Lakewood Ranch into Parrish, it's going to create new opportunities for retail and dining."

On Saturday morning more than 2600 runners and walkers will have a nice tour of the bridge during the Fort Hamer 5K and 10K Bridge Run. The events will also include a kids race and an after party. Organizers say participants are especially excited about this race because they get to be the first ones to cross the bridge.

"I've talked to runners and they really love it and they seem to like a bridge run as more than anything else they can do," said Ben Jordan, one of the race organizers.

The 5K/10K race here at the new Fort Hamer Bridge gets underway at 7:30 on Saturday morning and the bridge officially opens for traffic on September 23rd.