



Above the Trinity River, Playing and Talking and Eating and Sitting on a Bridge Meant for Cars

By [Robert Wilonsky](#) Sun., Oct. 23 2011 at 9:48 AM

First there was [a Better Block](#); then, [a Better Boulevard](#); then, just yesterday, a Better Bridge. Of all the efforts to temporarily transform a piece of the city into something other than what it is, yesterday's brief installation atop [the Cedar Crest Bridge](#), which connects Oak Cliff to South Dallas (where it turns into Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard), was the most simple -- no kids' activities, no pop-up shops. There was the requisite food truck (SsahmBBQ), but not much else: donated seating, potted plants, chess tables, a bird's-nest "bandshell" made by [Wanda Dye's UTA architectural students](#), a sax man wandering the scene.

But in some ways, it was the most successful, because this installation -- again, a collaboration between Jason Roberts and Andrew Howard and the city, this time with HNTB and Half Associates along for the ride -- shut down traffic an entire half of a bridge over the Great Trinity Forest and the river itself. Organizers didn't need to schlep out shade coverings; the canopy provided its own; the crowd was a mix of young and old, black and white, bike riders and a man riding a horse; and there was no need for entertainment save for the graciously provided binoculars spread across the span of bridge occupied by the event. The boy and [Brother Bill Holston](#), there to offer info about the nature scenes beneath, spent a long while trying to decipher the word spray-painted on the truck sunk into the Trinity: "Dirk" or, um, something else?

Council members who strolled the scene -- Dwaine Caraway, Pauline Medrano, Carolyn Davis, Linda Koop, Angela Hunt -- were enamored of the project; they envisioned block parties, concerts, using it as a space to bridge the gap, as it were, between neighborhoods that simply drive past each other without a second glance. They spoke of the opportunities for economic development as the base of the bridge, from both directions, and of how this reminded them of Austin -- something, you know, *scenic*.

Hunt demanded of Half and HNTB folks: "Why can't we do this *now*?" And why must it cost millions to shut down half a little-used bridge? Word is, at the council's retreat on Friday there was one common grumble: Engineers are holding impeding progress when it comes to the so-called quick wins along the Trinity (and elsewhere, for that matter). But Half's Lenny Hughes insisted to Hunt: "My time line to make this happen is one year." A HNTB rep said: More like a year and a half, maybe two. Hunt, who can't figure out why it would take more than a month and a half, said she'd hold them to that.

[The Continental's hike-and-bike makeover](#) is due to begin shortly after the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge opens in March; at least, that was the last thing we heard -- I'll double-check in the morning. But perched next to Calatrava's bridge, the Continental won't have the scenic views provided by the Cedar Crest Bridge -- trees, river, sunken truck. An old friend from New York -- Matt Zoller Seitz, [maybe you've heard of him](#) -- stopped by yesterday, quite the pleasant surprise. And I asked him: "Does this remind you of anything?" He said: [The High Line](#), a little bit. Which is *exactly* what Roberts and Howard and Dye were going for.