



Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge

Austin, TX

The City of Austin & Texas Department of Transportation

Top: Aerial view of the Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge next to the historic Lamar Boulevard Bridge. Photo by Jay-Reese Contractors. Bottom: The Pfluger Circle, one of the bridge's access ramps. Photo by The Trail Foundation.

The Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge is a bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Colorado River in Austin, TX that connects the downtown area to the Auditorium Shores and Butler Park neighborhoods.

CONTEXT

- Bridge completed in 2001; extension completed in 2011.
- Urban setting.
- South.
- \$7 million initial construction, \$3.5 million for extension.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE BRIDGE

- Provided residents with a safe, dedicated pedestrian and bicycle bridge to cross the Colorado River and enjoy the waterfront in Austin, TX.

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT DRIVER?

The Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge was constructed to meet the need for a facility to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to safely cross the Colorado River/Lady Bird Lake without affecting the historic Lamar Boulevard Bridge. The Lamar Boulevard Bridge, constructed in the 1940s, has narrow sidewalks and carries high volumes of traffic on four travel lanes. However, it was an important link to Austin's trail systems, with the nearest alternative river crossing a mile away in either direction. Pedestrians who used the bridge were forced to walk single-file, and bicyclists often dismounted for the crossing to avoid cycling on busy, narrow travel lanes. Many near misses and two tragic accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists spurred the Austin community to demand safer facilities.

The City of Austin and the Texas Department of Transportation conducted **bicycle and pedestrian assessments** and held public **stakeholder engagement** meetings and **design charrettes** to explore the alternative of a separate bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists about 200 feet east of the Lamar Boulevard Bridge.



View of the downtown Austin skyline from the Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge. Photo by Fine Art America.

After selecting the final design, construction began in May 2000 and the bridge was completed in June 2001. The bridge was named the James D. Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge in honor of the Austin-area architect who designed the trail system on both sides of Town Lake. In 2011, the City of Austin completed an extension of the bridge over Cesar Chavez Street (a high-traffic artery) to allow cyclists and pedestrians to avoid the busy thoroughfare traffic.

HOW DID THIS CONNECT THE COMMUNITY?

The bridge also connects the north and south sides of the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail. The trail creates a complete circuit around Lady Bird Lake, one of the oldest urban hike and

bike paths in Texas, and the longest trail designed for non-motorized traffic in Austin. Therefore, it was important that the pedestrian and bicycle bridge be designed using **Context Sensitive Solutions** to connect with the area's landscape and patterns of movement. The bridge's design features observation decks and benches so that users can enjoy the view of downtown Austin and the waterfront.



A pedestrian stops and enjoys a book on one of the bridge's observation decks. Photo by the City of Austin.

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS?



RESTORE

In addition to the increase in safety and accessibility between the two banks of the river, the new bridge has spurred a major increase in the number of people who choose to walk, run, or bike across the river. Previously, the city of Austin estimated that an average of 1,000 users a day crossed the Lamar Bridge before the Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge was constructed. Now, the Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge has improved access to Austin's extensive trail network and upwards of 5,000 users cross the bridge each day.

For more information: <https://thetrailfoundation.org/portfolio/pfluger-bridge-circle/>