

DESIGN DISTRICT/VICTORY PARK

# Freeway creates a gulf

By BRANDON FORMBY

Transportation Writer  
bformby@dallasnews.com

Around Interstate 35E just north of downtown, redevelopment, a sports arena and an influx of residents in recent decades have prompted resurgence in the Design District and brought Victory Park to life.

But that doesn't mean it's easy to get from one neighborhood to the other — especially for bicyclists and pedestrians who see the highway and city streets under it as hostile barriers that leave two of the city's running and biking trails unconnected.

"Right now you're separated by that gulf," said Bo Kice, a Victory Park resident and avid bicyclist. "You're competing with cars trying to get on and off the freeways."

The Texas Department of Transportation's landmark CityMAP report released this month offered several solutions that Kice says would better connect neighborhoods adjacent to downtown to each other.

Chief among those options: con-

verting vehicle lanes on city thoroughfares that run under the highway into wider sidewalks and adding protected bike lanes.

"That would be perfect," Kice said. "Then you've solved the missing link between West Dallas and Trinity Groves and Victory Park and downtown."

TxDOT already has a \$100 million plan in the works for fixing the entrances, exits and interchanges along the stretch of I-35E often called Lowest Stemmons Freeway. So CityMAP focused on better connecting the two neighborhoods around the freeway.

"I would love something to makes it easier and more pleasant," said Bobby Gibbs, a Design District resident who alternates between running on the Trinity Strand Trail, which begins in his neighborhood, and the Katy Trail, which ends in Victory Park on the other side of the highway.

CityMAP notes that a nonprofit called the Circuit Trail Conservancy has put together a plan to add con-

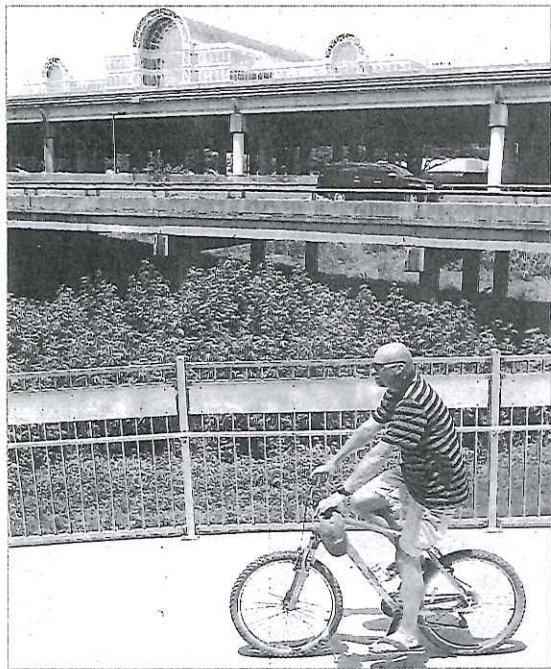
nections between fragmented trail segments that would create a 50-mile loop around the urban core. The cost: \$43 million. About \$20 million would be for a 1-mile link over I-35E that would connect the two trails.

Gibbs said such a bridge would probably get people from the ever-popular Katy Trail to start using the newer and lesser-known Trinity Strand Trail. But he'll probably stick with using Hi Line Drive to get from the Design District to Victory Park. City streets typically have better shade and fewer inclines than a bridge over an interstate.

Kice worries the trail connection plan will end up mired in politics because about \$20 million of its funding would come from City Hall. That's why he likes the idea of adding bike lanes and widening sidewalks on existing streets.

"It doesn't have to be space-aged," he said. "Just dedicate something to bikers and pedestrians."

Twitter:@brandonformby



Andy Jacobsohn/Staff Photographer

A cyclist rides along the Trinity Strand Trail's eastern terminus with I-35E near Oak Lawn Avenue in the Design District neighborhood.