

[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Community News](#) > [Dallas](#) > [Dallas Headlines](#)

[Comments](#) 21 | [Recommend](#)  1

Dallas lights Calatrava-designed Trinity bridge for first time

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In less of a ‘ta-da’ moment than a gradual crescendo, the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge lit up the Dallas skyline for the first time on Tuesday night.

[Mayor Mike Rawlings](#) warned the crowd that the lights would take a few minutes to sparkle before he pulled the lever.

“It’s not like turning the porch lights on,” he said.

Then, as brass musicians played, benefactors and curious onlookers watched a soft light spread across the bridge’s arches.

The bridge will open March 2 with a weekend-long celebration, including a street fair, a bike tour, and a fundraiser featuring singer [Lyle Lovett](#), the city announced Tuesday.

Designed by internationally recognized architect [Santiago Calatrava](#), the bridge will connect Woodall Rodgers [Freeway](#) downtown with Singleton Boulevard in West Dallas. It cost \$117 million in private and public funds and is expected to carry more than 41,000 vehicles each day, according to the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

The lights will be turned on nightly for two weeks, then tested occasionally until the official opening.

While Tuesday's ceremony marks the bridge's completion, it is the start of larger plans for the Trinity River corridor and West Dallas. With it comes hope that the structure will be more than a postcard image, that it will shine a light on often overlooked parts of the city — [Oak Cliff](#) and West Dallas — and the city's natural resource, the Trinity River.

"This bridge is not only significant for aesthetic reasons," Rawlings told the crowd. "It's important because it links two important parts of Dallas together."

Despite the chilly weather, Monica [Rodriguez](#), 20, of West Dallas brought her 1-year-old daughter Taylor to the ceremony. For Rodriguez, the bridge represents the possibility of more opportunities in her neighborhood, a chance to shake off negative perceptions and attract more businesses.

"Even though it's not open yet, I wanted her to see it get lit up," she said, between taking photos of her daughter. "She's going to grow up with this bridge." Laura Estrada, a 35-year resident of Oak Cliff and a member of the Trinity Trust, said she has grown attached to the tall structure as she's driven past it each day. "I've seen it go up," she said. "I feel like it's my bridge."

Gail Thomas, president and executive officer of the Trinity Trust, called the bridge “the first sign of achievement” for the Trinity River Corridor Project — a vision for a river where residents bike and run, where they gather at ball fields and desire to live.

“We have lived almost a century with our backs turned away from the river corridor,” she said. “If you build something really beautiful in the center of the city, people will turn their heads around and look again.”

Highlights of the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge Celebration

Friday, March 2

Trinity Trust fundraiser with headliner Lyle Lovett. Tickets cost \$200.

Three-day Bridge-O-Rama festival begins in West Dallas

Saturday, March 3

Trinity River Levee Run 5K and 10K

Street fair featuring vendors, fireworks and local bands

Sunday, March 4

Ribbon-cutting and blessing of the bridge

Bike tour of Trinity River bridges