A MetroLink train passes Thursday as walkers and bikers take a look at the new extension of the MetroBikeLink Trail in Swansea. A ribbon-cutting officially opened the 2.2-mile section.

MetroBikeLink Trail's new section opens in Swansea

BY JENNIFER A. BOWEN

The newest section of the MetroBikeLink Trail officially opened Thursday morning at the Swansea MetroLink Station with the cutting of a wide, red ribbon.

The 2.2-mile section of the trail cost $3.3 million and brings the total length of the trail to nearly 7 miles. The trail connects the Memorial Hospital MetroLink Station to Belleville's North End Park. The trail parallels the MetroLink tracks.

More than half of the $3.3 million for the trail was funded by the St. Clair County Transit District, 36 percent was funded by the Federal Transit Administration and the remaining money was contributed by the Metro East Park and Recreation District. It took 22,000 man hours to complete the 2.2-mile section.

"This project demonstrates just how effective our multi-modal system is in St. Clair County," said St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern. "We are seeing a diverse group using the trail system including recreational walkers in the early morning hours, bikers and walkers during the morning and evening commutes and families, students and individuals throughout the day. It is a great way to see a slice of life in Illinois along the trail system."

Future plans to expand the trail include extending the MetroBikeLink Trail west 3.5 miles to the Fairview Heights MetroLink Station and 3.5 miles east to the ShilohScott MetroLink Station.

"We are very happy to celebrate the opening of this section of the MetroBikeLink Trail," said John Nations, president and CEO of Metro Transit. "Since it parallels the MetroLink, users can now walk, run or cycle to our stations. It is a better, true multi-modal transportation system, and we look forward to continuing building an affordable transit system through the bi-state region."

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