



Project: **Little Blue Parkway**
Location: **Independence, Mo.**
Client: **City of Independence, Mo.**

Little Blue Parkway Project Realizing a Dream

Little Blue Parkway curves through Independence along the Little Blue River and stretches for 8.5 miles from U.S. 24 south, past Interstate 70 to U.S. 40. Burns & McDonnell designed portions of the project, completing the final 7-mile stretch from 39th Street to U.S. 24.

Known for its trails that were a conduit for pioneers during the nation's westward expansion, the city of Independence had a vision spanning decades for a modern day trail to spawn growth and development along the Little Blue River.

"The parkway provides new access through the Little Blue Valley, a largely undeveloped area in northeastern Independence that is prime for commercial and residential investments," says Kim Curry, an associate civil engineer at Burns & McDonnell.

Using stimulus money and federal highway funds, the Burns & McDonnell project was constructed in seven phases over five years and now provides faster, safer, cross-town access and links state and interstate highway systems.

"The coolest thing was helping the city realize its dream," Curry says. Burns & McDonnell designed water infrastructure parallel to the road

construction, sidewalks and a shared-use path to enhance existing trail systems in the area. The firm's team also eliminated an at-grade railroad crossing. The crossing, near 39th Street and Selsa Road, was once home to the train depot where trains often fell prey to Jesse James, the Midwest's most famous railroad bandit and bank robber. The corridor, from the intersection of 39th Street north to R.D. Mize Road, provides a transition from the four-lane urban arterial to the four-lane divided rural roadway.

The project required horizontal and vertical alignments to accommodate railroad grade separation and two stream crossings regulated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Burns & McDonnell team designed a bridge that lifted the parkway more than 30 feet above the existing railroad track and Selsa Road, using a wick drain system to speed up consolidation of roadway embankments through the Little Blue River valley.

As part of maintaining local connectivity, engineers designed an extension of 37th Terrace expands emergency access to Centerpoint Medical Center. By including 37th Terrace and the Selsa Road relocation, the Burns & McDonnell team preserved local access and added the potential for more economic development around the medical center.

For more information, contact Kim Curry, 816-822-3477.