



Dallas' Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge has its arch topped off

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Jenni Stolarski has been tracking the progress of the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge over the years on her drives downtown, sometimes snapping photos of the progress on her [cellphone](#) as she drives over the Continental Avenue bridge.

On Saturday morning, she made a point to watch the bridge's arch be topped off in person, along with more than 40 Dallas residents and state and city officials who lined a field along Singleton Boulevard as the 150-ton piece was raised into place.

"We've been hearing that this is going to happen for years now," said Stolarski, 40, of [Oak Cliff](#). "This makes it feel like it's really going to happen, that there's not just a bunch of cranes down there."

The bridge, designed by famed architect [Santiago Calatrava](#), is one of three planned signature bridges over the Trinity River as part of the Trinity River Corridor Project. While the two other planned bridges still lack funding, the Margaret Hunt Hill span is on track for completion in late 2011.

The sun hung high between the two unconnected arch pieces as the crane started hoisting the piece at 8 a.m. Many onlookers took pictures with cameras and cellphones and tracked the arch's slow progress with binoculars as it was fit into place around 9 a.m.

Iron workers could be seen at the top of each arch beam as the top piece was lowered into place, waiting to bolt the steel together.

Texas Department of Transportation construction engineer Duane Milligan, who is overseeing the project for the state, said the process went smoothly. Workers will spend the next several months welding together the seams of the individual arch pieces, he said.

Fred and Mary Ellen Holt showed up at 6:30 a.m. to watch the final piece be lifted into place.

"It's been a nice drama to watch unfold," said Holt, 81. "We've been watching them build it step by step, and we're here for the last one."

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, Dallas [Mayor Tom Leppert](#) and City Council members also attended.

Hutchison said the bridge will become a focal point for the rest of the Trinity River project.

"It's a historic event for the people committed to this project and for the city," Hutchison said. "It's something that will make the skyline uniquely Dallas."

Progress on the \$117 million bridge has not been without obstacles. The first design was unveiled in the late 1990s with an expected completion in 2005. Those designs proved too expensive, and redesigns took years to finish.

The 40-story arch is the most striking aspect of the bridge, which will include dozens of steel cables. The six-lane bridge will cross the Trinity River from downtown to Singleton Boulevard in West Dallas.

"It'll be nice to have something new in the skyline besides Reunion Tower," said Amanda Pounds, 36. "It already looks iconic from Oak Cliff, and it's not even finished yet."