

FedEx opens employee screening facility, pedestrian bridge over Democrat

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A newly completed pedestrian bridge over Democrat makes an esthetic statement while providing FedEx hub workers a convenient, comfortable walk to security screening.

Upon closer inspection, the perforated aluminum panels covering the bridge's exterior bring to mind the hidden arrow in FedEx's familiar logo.

The bridge and 30,500-square-foot screening facility were pressed into service Monday night for the first time, FedEx spokesman Jim McCluskey said.

The improvements, part of the two-year-old expansion of the FedEx Express world hub, are scheduled to be dedicated in a dayside event at 9 a.m. today.

A new two-story sorting building of 125,102 square feet won't be finished until later this year, in time for peak shipping season this fall.

FedEx hasn't disclosed spending on the improvements, but a building permit application in early 2010 estimated the value at \$28 million. Work began in April 2011.

At least a year before construction began, architects and engineers were planning the screening facility and a bridge leading to it from employee parking on the north side of Democrat.

"We as architects see the project as a gateway to the hub," said architect Peter Warren, who served as project manager for Askew Nixon Ferguson. "This bridge engages the street more than any other structure."

About 40 triangular aluminum panels help reduce heat gain and air-conditioning loads inside the climate-controlled bridge and make it more comfortable for pedestrians, Warren said.

The bridge's 290-foot-long superstructure was hoisted into place last November, setting the stage for interior and exterior finishes. Its 220-foot span between support piers clears five lanes of traffic, and cantilevered ends extend well beyond the piers.

Its open-ended design affords views into the hub as workers approach from the parking lot, Warren said.

Flintco LLC is general contractor for the bridge and screening building, and Linkous Construction Co. Inc. is general contractor for the sorting facility.

Askew Nixon Ferguson architects and Allen & Hoshall engineers led design and engineering.

The second sorting facility will boost package-handling capacity by 24,000 packages an hour, to 180,000 an hour.

The sorting and screening facilities are in line to receive Leadership in Energy Efficient Design certification because of energy- and resource-saving features.

The bridge incorporates energy-efficient design and construction principles but is listed as an accessory to the screening building, Warren said.

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