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Crowds roll in for bridge bash

Thousands celebrate answer to their commuting problems with Folsom Lake Crossing

By Don Chaddock, The Telegraph



Philip Wood/The Telegraph

Larry Lacy, left, Porter Lacy, Caden Self and Dawn Lacy take in opening day of Folsom Lake Crossing Saturday from the bridge's bike lane. Larry worked on the bridge initially when demolition was being done, and Dawn said now that the bridge is open, it will cut down on some of her 40-minute commute time.

"We were busy," said Nicole Bass, an associate with Jamba Juice. "We ran out of smoothies. We were really popular today."

Susan Nowotenski, of Lincoln, said the bridge would help her weekly commute into Folsom to visit family.

"The celebration was fun," she said. "We're also celebrating my birthday. This bridge cuts my drive here and will make my ride easier."

Michelle Hutchison, of Folsom, said the bridge would be beneficial.

"I'm really grateful," she said. "It's going to help out town and open our old town. When you think about driving to old Folsom, you think about the congestion. I hope the businesses do well."

Jerry Bernau, of Folsom, said the celebration was a wonderful way to showcase the community.

"This is great," he said. "I'm seeing people I haven't seen in 10 years. This is what Folsom is all about. How many thousands of people did we have here today?"

The bridge is expected to handle 22,000 cars per day but is built to handle up to 40,000. Folsom Lake Crossing may be accessed on East Natoma Street and Folsom Auburn Road. The price tag for the bridge was \$139 million and took two years to complete from the ground breaking to opening day.

Thousands from the region showed up to celebrate the opening of Folsom's newest bridge on Saturday.

After politicians finished their speeches and the ribbon was cut, the bridge was opened to foot and bicycle traffic while the Dam Road Closed band performed and vendors sold everything from hot dogs to smoothies.

For Michael Frazer, of Folsom, it was a familiar sight.

"I was in the same position when Lake Natoma Crossing opened in 1999," he said. "Just hanging out on the bridge. I'm a Folsom native."

He was looking forward to the bridge cutting down his drive time.

"I think it's pretty sweet. It's going to be cool for traffic. It definitely was not good when they closed down the dam road," he said.

The dam road was closed following the terror attacks in 2001, clogging Folsom's streets with cars.

By 1 p.m., many of the food vendors were closing.