

BARTLETT

Bartlett officially opens New Brownsville Road

By Michael Waddell, Special to The Daily Memphian

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(Left to right) Current Bartlett Director of Engineering John Horne, previous Director of Engineering Rick McClanahan, Mayor David Parsons, State Senator Brent Taylor and former Bartlett Mayor A. Keith McDonald at the ribbon-cutting for Bartlett's New Brownsville Road opening. (Michael Waddell/Special to The Daily Memphian)

More than 25 years in the making, a major new five-lane thoroughfare cutting through Bartlett is finally fully open.

On Thursday, Nov. 30, the suburb held an official ribbon-cutting near the intersection of Springhill Drive and New Brownsville, the christening of a 4-mile stretch of New Brownsville

Road. Numerous local and state officials came out on the cool fall morning to mark the occasion.

“This is an integral part of our northern road system. It’s something that’s been needed for a long time,” Mayor David Parsons said. “I’m just thankful to have it open.”

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The \$20 million road project runs from Austin Peay Highway to Kirby Whitten Road. New development along the roadway is already approved by the city, with construction set to get underway on at least two phases of the Joyce’s Gardens subdivision.

“It’s the biggest project I worked on in the 34 years I’ve been with the city,” said Rick McClanahan, former Bartlett director of engineering. “This project originally started as a TDOT (Tennessee Department of Transportation) project, which was one of the last ones they started working on. In 2012, they shifted it back to the local agencies.”

McClanahan retired at the end of 2022, and John Horne, the city’s new director of engineering, has since assumed oversight of the project.

The new road was 80% funded by federal dollars from TDOT, with a 20% local match. Ferrell Paving Inc. handled the work.

“For those folks coming off of Austin Peay trying to get this way, it will be a lot easier than weaving through Bartlett,” Alderman and Vice Mayor Jack Young said.

Former Bartlett Mayor A. Keith McDonald was heavily involved with the project over his political career.

Saint Francis and Bartlett High grow internship program

“I know that this project’s been in discussion 25 years because almost 26 years ago I became an alderman,” said McDonald, who also chaired many Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings during his tenure with the city. He cited delays from the state Department of Environment and Conservation among the challenges in the project.

“There is a lot of bureaucratic crap that has to go on to get a road built. I’m glad I lived long enough to see it,” McDonald said.

State Sen. Brent Taylor, R-Memphis, who attended the event, has worked with other state legislators to shorten the time needed for big transportation construction projects like New Brownsville Road. They passed the Transportation Modernization Act during the last General Assembly, and Gov. Bill Lee signed it into law in April.

“The average has been about 15 years, and it will be cut it down to about seven years,” Taylor said of the legislation.

Also in attendance on Thursday, Bank of Bartlett President Harold Byrd grew up near the area where the new road sits.

“It’s very touching to me because my brothers and dad and I drove tractors through here so many times. This all used to be rural and agricultural,” he said. “This is going to provide so many opportunities for the great city of Bartlett as we continue to grow.”

TOPICS

- BARTLETT
- NEW BROWNSVILLE ROAD
- BARTLETT MAYOR DAVID PARSONS
- STATE SEN. BRENT TAYLOR
- ROAD CONSTRUCTION

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