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Water District Adds Two 'Smart' Poles to Trinity Trails

These two donated poles include an emergency call box, video cameras, and other features that can enhance the safety of trail users.

TRWD

Fort Worth resident Jesca Arnold knows all too well about the dangers that can lurk on the Trinity Trails. In 2017, she was attacked by a naked man on a bike near the Clearfork Trailhead after dark.

Jesca says she tried calling 911 as the man was approaching her, but he was able to grab the phone out of her hand and throw it into the river before dispatch could ping her location. Devastated by this incident, Jesca went public with the details of her attack to try and get some closure. However, four years later, another woman was reportedly assaulted in a similar location and in a similar way. This is when Jesca said “enough is enough.”

With her mission clear, Jesca recruited her father Don Arnold to help create and form the non-profit, SAFE + Happy Trails. Once formed, this father and daughter team began doing research into what could be done to make walking, biking, and running on the trails safer.

The Arnolds were aware of the emergency call stations used on many college campuses, but they also discovered how much technology had advanced since they were first implemented.

Don says he and Jesca found that several cities across the United States are using surveillance cameras, some of them mounted on light poles, in their crime fighting efforts. Some of them have even been integrated with other tech such as facial recognition and gunshot detection.

Last month, this duo’s efforts helped culminate in a donation of two “smart” poles to the Tarrant Regional Water District. These “smart” poles or light standards, which are worth about \$35K a piece, could actually be the key to offering residents more safety while on the

trails.

“Smart” poles all include an emergency call box, video cameras, and an optional gunshot detector, as well as solar-powered lights. After doing research on two companies that make “smart” poles, the Arnolds along with the aid of tech consultant Jack Sigler, selected ClearWorld, which offered SAFE + Happy Trails a buy one, get one free deal.

The smart poles include a 600-watt solar hybrid system, a 60 watt LED light, and the install kits and preparation for the attachment of security cameras. Gunshot detection equipment will be included on only one of the poles in the pilot project.

The TRWD will make the final decision on how many of these poles to install, if at all. The vision of SAFE + Happy Trails is to place them periodically throughout the system. The two “smart” poles already in place will be monitored by the Fort Worth Police Department.

These poles have been installed just as the TRWD is conducting studies on another pilot program which could add solar lighting to a portion of the 72 miles that make up the Trinity Trails.

“The goal is for it not to happen to someone else,” Jesca said in a release. “Hopefully it will make it a lot easier to get help or prevent something from happening all together. It will benefit everybody.”

Darrell Beason, TRWD’s chief operations officer, said since SAFE + Happy Trails did the initial research on the smart pole technology, the group saved the TRWD time and money.

“It’s remarkable for a non-profit to step up and assume

the risk on a pilot project,” Beason said.

Although these two test poles have been placed along Shannon’s Point, near where Jesca was attacked, she still lives with the physical and mental scars from the incident. To this day, Jesca still suffers from memory and balance loss, along with chronic spinal pain and migraines.

Despite having lasting effects from this incident, Jesca says she hopes the smart poles will be helpful to people in less traumatic situations, like those falling off a bike or stumbling along the trail. Her non-profit's website also states SAFE + Happy Trails works “so you can RUN FOR FUN and NOT from fear!”

“If I’m the one person who has to face this in order that others are spared the same thing, I can accept that,” Jesca said.

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