



PRESERVATION ACTION COUNCIL OF SAN JOSE

Dedicated to Preserving San Jose's Architectural Heritage

March 12, 2015

John Davidson
Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement
200 E Santa Clara Street
San Jose CA 95113
Via email: john.davidson@sanjoseca.gov

Re: **Three Creeks Trail Pedestrian Bridge Project**

Dear John:

This year we are celebrating our 25th anniversary as an organization dedicated to preserving San José's architectural heritage through education, advocacy, and events. We aim to integrate a strong commitment to historic preservation into the land use and development decisions of the City of San José that affect historic resources, as well as into the private decisions of property owners and developers. We try to bring owners and developers together to create historically sensitive projects that make economic sense.

We have been concerned with the process used for this project from the beginning. The City made an arbitrary determination about the historic status of the trestle without complete documentation. This could potentially put all historic structures in the city at risk if the City determines what is not historic without following proper procedures.

The DEIR falls short in making its case as to why the trestle is not historic. We, and a large segment of the community, maintain the trestle is historic and therefore should be preserved and integrated into the trail system for current and future generations to use and enjoy.

Local historian, Jean Dresden, has done a great amount of research that documents why the trestle is historic and why the DEIR is flawed and inadequate in its portrayal of the historic status of the trestle. A small example of the available history that she has found and that was not included in the DEIR follows:

The presence of the Western Pacific Railroad alignment from Valbrick (Monterey Road) through Willow Glen was used as a bargaining chip with Southern Pacific Railroad about grade separations by San Jose City Manager Charles E. Goodwin throughout the 1920s. For example, in December 1925, the City of San Jose released a report from the Harland Bartholomew organization. This company prepared Planning documents for cities throughout the country. According to newspaper reports, the report contained a recommendation on two choices for the Southern Pacific railroad --elevate the tracks down 4th Street or use the pre-existing Western Pacific right-of-way through Willow Glen and build 8 grade separations. Southern Pacific did not respond in writing until May 1926 and rejected both alternatives but came back with an improved grade separation proposal for 5 grade separations. To put Southern Pacific's response in context, their original proposal on grade separations prior to the construction of the Western Pacific, and approved by the Railroad Commission, was for ONE grade separation at Santa Clara Street.

Negotiations intensified through 1926 and 1927. Looming over the unincorporated Willows neighborhood was the threat of the intensification of the Western Pacific alignment with Southern Pacific's mainline traffic (estimated at 90+ trains per day).

As proof of the role of the Western Pacific Railroad alignment in the outcome in September 1927 Willow Glen incorporation campaign, a letter to the editor of San Jose Mercury Herald explicitly suggested Southern Pacific would use the Western Pacific Railroad alignment if the Willows did not incorporate.

Notably, the San Jose Mercury Herald did not take a position on incorporation of the Willows or the two alignments (Southern Pacific's 1906 route or the Western Pacific route). The newspaper's only position was to get the train off 4th Street.

The Harland Bartholomew and Associates Archives are at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri:

<http://archon.wulib.wustl.edu/?p=collections/findingaid&id=523&q=&rootcontentid=266647#id266647>

The report is in Series 2 Box Vol55 Pt 3 Folder 1 San Jose, California

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIR. The above is just a small example of the rich history involving the trestle. This information and much more is available yet was not included in the DEIR. The lack of a complete history of the trestle and its importance to our community demands that the DEIR be recirculated so that the lacking documentation can be included. Without the addition of this and other available information the decision-makers cannot make an educated decision about the historic nature of the trestle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian K. Grayson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brian K. Grayson
Executive Director