

Observations and comments on Trestle Replacement presentation by Yves Zsutty, July 9, 2013
Notes by L. Ames, 7/10/13. [With my personal commentary denoted by square brackets.]

Presentation was hosted by Save Our Trails.

Ground rules set by SOT Chair Taisia McMahon were that questions could only be asked about the design choices presented.

>> Note: while a city representative took some notes, this was not an official “public presentation” where all comments are noted for the official record.

Presentation was at Dwell Church (formerly WG Baptist) on Minnesota at Hicks

Event lasted one hour (7 – 8 PM), and was attended by two-three dozen members of the public (plus Yves and assistant, and most of the SOT Board.) [Thank you, all, for attending!]

Yves stated that City Council directed Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) to remove the existing historic train trestle and to replace it with a steel bridge, and so they are working on plans to do so. In order not to lose a grant, the trestle destruction and replacement bridge construction has to take place during the period June – Oct 2014.

There was no mention of an outside architect or consultant: I don’t know where the source I quoted got its information.

Yves showed the bridge that’s been selected:

- * a basic steel structure, 220 feet long in a single span, 12 feet wide, with steel structure along the side: basically identical to the bridge over the Los Gatos Creek at Blackford Elementary (near Leigh).

- * Yves mentioned the arched bike bridge over the Guadalupe River at River Oaks: he said it was too expensive for our budget and we get only the base model.

- * Metal surface will be “weathered” (rusted) steel (a “patina”), decking will be concrete.

- * Bridge will be right down the middle of the right-of-way, with “gateway areas” at either end, and a rather awkward turn to connect to the planned extension of the Los Gatos Creek Trail at the northern end.

- * Given the geometry of the truss structure, there is no possibility for a bulb-out mid-stream for a viewing platform.

- * Stream is viewable only from the gateways at top-of-bank: little room to stop in the path on the bridge itself.

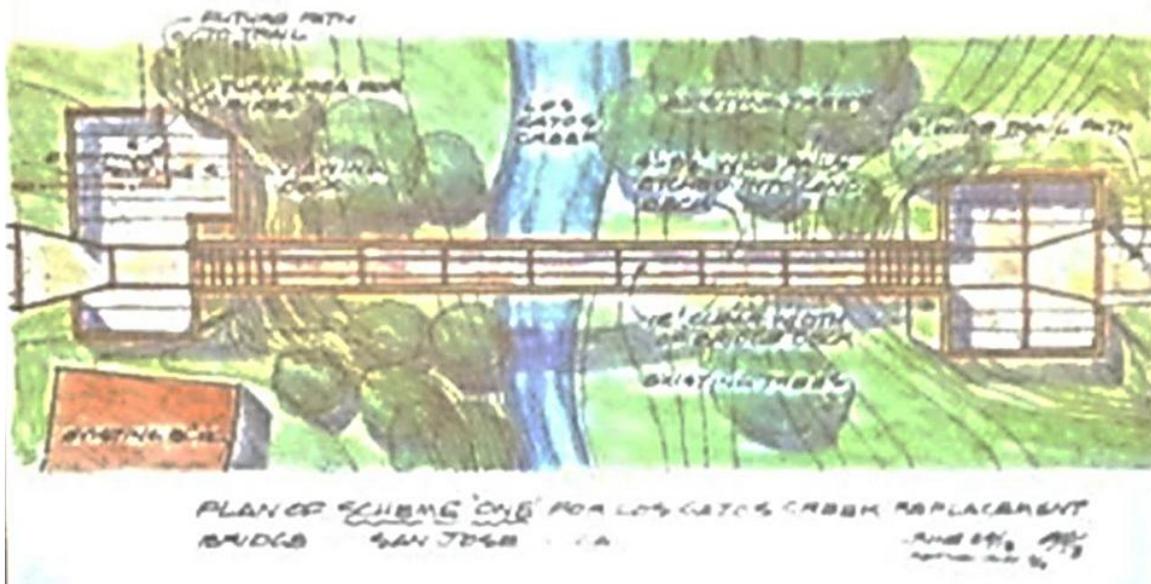
Yves then presented three alternative designs:

- * option 1 had square gateway areas walled with wire-mesh fencing and “railroad-like” scoring patterns in the concrete;

- * option 2 had square gateway areas walled with metal railing and (I recall) some type of linear pattern scored in the concrete;

- * option 3 had oval gateway areas walled with stone and “serpentine” patterns scored in the concrete.

Option 1



[Personal opinion: I felt like a kid being told, “Johnny, you >will< go to Aunt Millie’s today. You >will< wear your blue pants; you >will< wear your striped shirt. Now, you are an empowered individual who is free to make your own decisions and I value your input: do you want to put your left shoe on first or the right one?”]

Questions from the audience (sorry, not necessarily in order):

- * Q: can we have better access to the creek itself? A: No. An agency (Fish & Wildlife?) threatens to fine the city \$30,000 a day if people can get into the water.
- * Q: can the trestle be saved? A: Council has directed us to remove it.
- * Q: can you see the water from the bridge gateways? A: Maybe, depending on how the tree canopies are arranged.
- * Q: can the access to the trail continuation be improved? Consider the turning radius of bike riders.
- * Q: can there be a pier or post in the channel so that the bridge can accommodate a mid-stream viewing area? (i.e., be two shorter bridges joined at a central viewing platform?) A: No. Don’t want any obstructions in the channel. PRNS has consulted SCVWD(?), and they say the less stream obstructions the better. [Which doesn’t mean that some obstructions are not allowed...]
- * Q: what about [some famous bridge] that has many mid-stream piers? A: that wouldn’t have been allowed in California by current standards.
- * Q: does the bridge have to be exactly aligned in the middle of the right-of-way? If slightly skewed, it could avoid a funny jog in the trail connection and thus improve access. A: No: bridge would be longer, and this was the max length. [Actually, that’s not true: the channel is narrower a little downstream at the northern end: a diagonal would be ~5-10 ft shorter.]
- * Q: what will seating look like? Can it be comfortable? -- it doesn’t have to be homeless-repellant and un-inviting.

* Q: can the old trestle wood be used to make seating? A: No, it's considered a toxic waste. [Note: sometimes it best just to leave things alone: removing the trestle pilings from the stream will stir up a lot of toxic debris; if left alone, their effects after 90+ years is minimal...]

* Q: the "rusted steel patina" is hard to keep clean of graffiti: can it be treated or some other surface used? A: No. anti-graffiti coatings wear off after three cleanings. Don't want to consider a painted-bridge alternative.

* Q: how about a viewing trail that loops from the southern gateway, around and under the bridge, and back up to the gateway? Folks will want to see the creek and the habitat: if not accommodated, they will jump the barriers and walk wherever – it's better to guide them in a benign direction. A: not allowed to build in creek channel. [Note: the City does not appear to make the distinction between a water-way (the width filled by water) and a canyon, gulch, or glen (the width between the "top-of-bank" or "rim"). Consider Alum Rock Park (or the Grand Canyon): the stream is a small width at the bottom: water never fills the canyon, and all sorts of trails and structures are allowable. Likewise here, even the 100-year flood level doesn't fill the width of the glen, leaving plenty of room for trails below top-of-bank and under the bridge. (By my old notes, the Corps of Engineers was only restricting development within the 2.3-year water level, although they liked structures to stay out of the 5-year flood level. By that standard, there is more than enough room for in-glen viewing areas!)]

* Q: if the City Council changes its mind and decides the historic trestle should be restored rather than replaced, what will PRNS do? A: work to restore the trestle. [So, that's the approach we need to take: work with individual Councilmembers to overturn their past action. It's disappointing that our Councilmember is not more supportive, but it takes only 6 votes on the Council to take action: we need to work with Councilmembers from other districts.]

Yves asked the audience a couple questions as well along the way:

* Q: what would we think if they made some sort of decorations that were reminiscent of the trestle: verticals and cross-beams? Would that be nice, or just a pale mocking reminder (not in those words)? A: not wanted.

* Q: of the alternatives 1, 2, and 3, how many prefer each? A: nearly evenly divided between the three choices.

* Q: rephrase: how many don't like any of them? A: nearly unanimous(!)

End of meeting. Some of the comments were recorded by the City, some others weren't. Yves thanks the audience for participating.

There's also a similar presentation at the Willow Glen Neighborhood Assoc. (WGNA) meeting July 17th, and a discussion at the 3rd public workshop for the 3 Creeks Trail July 24th.

Thank you, Tai and Save Our Trails, for hosting this event.

Thank you, all, for attending. Come to the next meeting, and invite your friends!

Follow us on Facebook ("Friends of WG Trestle") and on the web (www.WGTrestle.org).

~Larry Ames

Friends of the WG Trestle

Larry@WGTrestle.org