

This note addresses some of the comments made about the Willow Glen Trestle in a recent guest editorial and several Letters to the Editor.

- * Trees and other debris washing down from upstream, if not caught by the trestle, could snag on any of several downstream bridges where the channel is narrower, less accessible, and more prone to flooding.

- * The trestle has been only superficially charred by all the brush and trash fires of the last 90 years -- and the restoration plans include a sprinkler system to suppress any future fires.

- * There are over 30,000 creosote-treated pilings in the San Francisco Bay. While about a half-dozen trestle pilings dip their toes in the creek, any contribution from them would be the proverbial "drop in the Bay".

- * According to the City-commissioned Engineering Report, maintenance and repairs of the trestle would average about \$4k/year, whereas the cheapest new bridge is nearly \$700k more costly than the fully restored trestle and trail connection. But as the City has allocated zero dollars for repair and maintenance of a new bridge, of course any trestle repairs would be more than nothing. Even including all the repairs over its anticipated half-century life, the trestle would still be a half-million dollars cheaper.

The trestle is sturdy – it carried fully loaded freight trains until not that long ago. Unlike a prefab bridge, it can accommodate amenities such as a mid-stream viewing area where folks could step out of the trail traffic and admire the views of the lush creek habitat and the downtown skyline.

The Councilmember's op-ed refers to four votes by SJ Council, but the City's acceptance of public comment has left much to be desired. They ignored written comments at the first Council meeting (even though receipt of the email was acknowledged); at the second meeting (for an item hidden on the Consent Calendar) they said they didn't "hear" anybody "speak" and that we'd had our chance at the first meeting; and at the third meeting, we were lectured about wasting Council time as we'd been granted two opportunities to comment. (At the fourth meeting, the Council ruled that they didn't have to consider public comment, and then proceeded to ignore it.)

While we appreciate the recent efforts of local groups, members of the community have been working for over a quarter century on incorporating the WG Trestle into a network of local trails, and for years we too have helped the City acquire funding.

- * The nearly \$2M grant the City is worried about was originally intended for land acquisition, and it can still be used for that purpose.

- * There are other grants available for restoring the trestle, and we in the community would be glad to help the city to apply.

As for the prematurely-purchased new bridge now sitting in storage: it can readily be repurposed elsewhere, where it would be useful and where it wouldn't destroy historic structures. One possibility: over the Guadalupe River Trail, as the current crossing near Capitol Avenue is inadequate and in need of replacement.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) might yet find a valid reason for replacing the historic trestle in Willow Glen with a modern prefabricated steel bridge, but the reasons given to-date are certainly not compelling.

The City already has the plans on how to quickly restore the trestle and adapt it to be a safe and beautiful trail connection. San Jose has precious few tangible reminders of its historic past: let us not needlessly rush to demolish yet another one.

~Larry Ames,
member of the Los Gatos Creek Streamside Park Committee (1984 - 2000)
and several historic preservation groups.

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