

Honorable Mayor Sam Liccardo and
Members of the Council, City of San José
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sent via email on <date>:

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re: Agenda items 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7 on May 19th Agenda

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

Please preserve and restore the “Willow Glen Trestle” to be the pedestrian bridge that connects the Three Creeks Trail to the Los Gatos Creek Trail.

[write your own letter, in your own words]

[briefly, say why you want to see the trestle saved, and how it is important to you]

Specific request:

[Note: agenda items were recently renumbered]

- Agenda item 4.7: Please accept the recommendation of the San José Historic Landmarks Commission and grant the trestle official city landmark status.
- Agenda item 4.4: Please reject the EIR that recommends the prefab steel “Project” bridge, and direct Staff to resubmit the EIR with the “Retrofit” Alternative as the preferred alternative. Direct Staff to work with the public to collect ideas for improving the retrofit designs.
- Agenda item 4.5(a): Please accept the recommendation to rescind Resolution 76904, which approved the original IS/MND plans for the prefab bridge.
- Agenda item 4.5(b): Please do NOT approve the contract with Gordon N Ball for the demolition of the trestle.

[you can add facts and informational tidbits as you find appropriate:

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) discusses the restoration of the trestle (called the “Retrofit Alternative”) and also plans for demolishing our trestle and replacing it with a new prefabricated steel-truss bridge (called the “Project Alternative”).

We request that you vote for the Retrofit Alternative.

[Read the entire EIR: the “Executive Summary” is not representative of the analyses within.]
The body of the EIR evaluates the trestle in great technical detail and finds:

Construction cost: Trestle: \$959,000; prefab steel: \$1,637,000

Estimated Maintenance Costs: Trestle: \$4,000/year; prefab steel: not budgeted

Construction time: Trestle: 5 months; prefab steel: 7 months

Estimated lifetime: Trestle: 30-50 years; prefab steel: 75 years (even without any maintenance?)

Flooding: Trestle: not a problem; prefab steel: not a problem. (“not significant” – During 100-year flood-event, with trestle, water level is over 10 feet below bank; with trestle removed, it is 7 inches lower. Calculations show that if a tree trunk snags on the trestle, the water level rises only a couple inches.)

Creosote: not a problem to habitat if left alone, but could be a concern if pilings are removed.

the EIR doesn’t discuss Fire thoroughly:

* Fire should not be a problem for the trestle: the restoration plans include a sprinkler system, alarms, and a fire-retardant treatment. Three fire stations are within 2 miles, and crews have easy access to full length of the trestle. Streambed maintenance to remove debris and trim back vegetation. The trestle has a “proven track record”: it’s still standing after 90+ years!

* Fire impact on the prefab steel is not discussed. Steel doesn’t burn, but it is well-known to firefighters, structural engineers, and architects that steel loses much of its strength when heated to brushfire temperatures. The EIR did not discuss the structural integrity of the prefab steel single-span truss design in case of brushfires. While it could be made safe, the plans do not include any sprinklers to suppress such brushfires, and there are no plans for channel maintenance or the trimming of nearby vegetation.

History:

Trestle is significant to us in our community: it played an important role in the very founding of the Town of Willow Glen.

Discussion on the prefab steel bridge notes that “[w]hile this does not salvage the trestle, aesthetics could be made pleasing. Staining the concrete deck to resemble the old track could be done. Also, railroad themed signs could be incorporated at the approaches.” –do you feel that fake designs and “railroad themed signs” are not a substitute for the real thing?

[Write the letter in your own words. Mix things up, add some personal thoughts. We don’t want the Mayor and Councilmembers to discount your letter as “just another form-letter”.]

[Thank the Mayor and Councilmembers, and say you look forward to their support in your effort to save an important piece your local history.]

[sign your name]

<and thank you, for writing your letter! ~Larry Ames and the Friends of the Willow Glen Trestle>