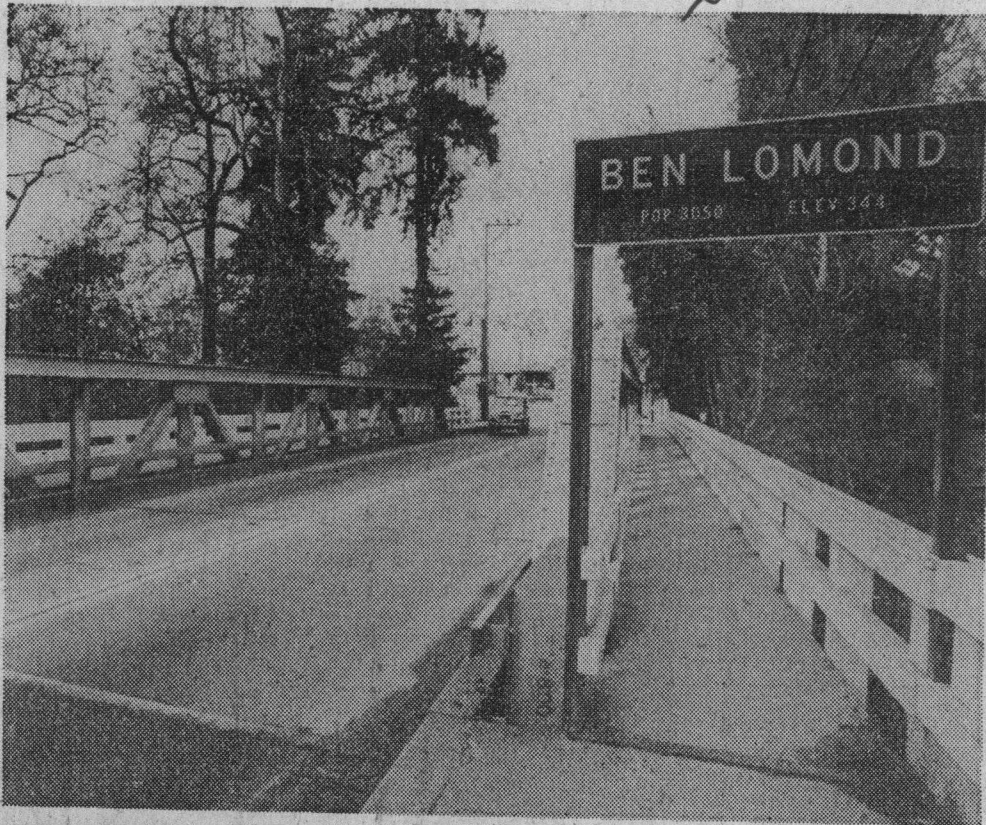


Budgets

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This is the Ben Lomond bridge which Caltrans says must be replaced or it may have to be closed to ensure public safety.

Caltrans Plans To Replace BL Bridge

1/28/79

The Highway 9 bridge at the south entrance to Ben Lomond must be replaced or it may be closed.

That's the assessment of Caltrans, which is proposing replacement of the 43-year-old bridge because it is deteriorating. If it isn't replaced, it may have to be closed "to protect public safety," according to Caltrans.

Traffic then would have to be re-routed off Highway 9 and onto Glen Arbor Road for several miles, Caltrans reported.

These statements were made in a negative declaration and initial environmental study prepared by Caltrans and available at the Santa Cruz Main Library and libraries in Ben Lomond, Felton and Boulder Creek.

The negative declaration states there will be no significant effect on the environment if Caltrans goes through with its plans to replace the bridge between July 1979 and July 1980.

If there aren't any significant comments from citizens or no requests for a public hearing regarding the bridge replacement, then Caltrans will proceed with designing the bridge and requesting approval from the Federal Highway Administration.

Caltrans is proposing to get the \$605,000 needed for the bridge replacement from the Federal Special Bridge Replacement Program.

The negative declaration report on the proposed Ben Lomond bridge replacement also indicates Caltrans has plans to replace other bridges in the San Lorenzo Valley and widen Highway 9.

The report states Caltrans is preparing initial environmental studies on replacing the bridge at the north end of Ben Lomond, on replacing the Fall Creek Bridge in Felton and on widening the shoulders along Highway 9 from Mount Hermon Road in Felton to Glen Arbor Road.

The proposed widening would allow continuous four-foot wide shoulders on both sides of Highway 9 from Felton to Ben Lomond. Caltrans reported that it plans to work with the county and the community on the possibility of making these shoulders into bike paths.

The report further indicates that Caltrans is investigating the feasibility of widening the Brackney Bridges on Highway 9 at the border of Felton and Ben Lomond.

But the chief subject of the report is the replacement of the Ben Lomond bridge.

The proposed bridge would be wider and about 2½-feet higher than the present structure, according to Caltrans.

It would contain two 12-foot lanes, two five-foot sidewalks and a center median ranging from zero to 10 feet wide.

The project also includes a

left-turn onto Ben Lomond's Mill Street.

The bridge would be wide enough to eventually contain bike paths. The report notes that Caltrans will work with the community and the county on the possibility of installing bike paths.

"The project is necessary because the timber frame end spans and the center truss span

of this bridge are deteriorating," the report states.

"If this condition is not corrected, the deterioration will eventually require closure of the bridge to protect public safety," it adds.

The present load capacity of the bridge is below the maximum legal weight, the report notes. But, it states, there have been no accidents caused by

the bridge's deteriorating condition.

The only alternative to replacing the bridge would be to repair it. But this would cost as much or more as replacing the entire bridge, the report states.

The bridge replacement would require the removal of nine trees, three dying trees and some saplings, but Caltrans plans to replace the trees.