

# Water Street bridge project finished

3-26-97

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*Bridges*  
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SANTA CRUZ — The newly refurbished Water Street bridge will be dedicated Friday with a ceremony on the River Street side of the span beginning at 10 a.m.

The remodeled span, which actually was made up of three different bridges that had been connected, now meets current earthquake-safety standards, and its raised underbelly improves the site's flood capacity.

The cost of the yearlong project totaled \$5.9 million, most of which was covered by funds from the Federal Highway Administration. The city provided about \$1 million from its Storm Water Fund.

The refurbished bridge over the

San Lorenzo River is 320 feet long, 94 feet wide and 30 feet high. The northern half was removed and replaced during the project. The southern half was upgraded to meet earthquake-safety standards.

According to city officials, the Water Street bridge started life as a reinforced concrete bridge built in 1908 by the Union Traction Co. It was built to carry workers and visitors into the downtown area on trolley cars.

In 1914, the city built another reinforced arch bridge next to it, and the center piers of these older bridges are what restricted the San Lorenzo River during times it reached flood stage.

By 1967, the volume of traffic on the two bridges had become so

high that the city built another one next to them, doubling traffic capacity. This newer, southern portion did not meet earthquake standards, which is why it needed a retrofit in the past year, said city officials.

The restored bridge includes decorative street lights and pedestrian overlooks on both sides. It also has four vehicle lanes, in addition to bike lanes, sidewalks and railings. The two levee path undercrossings have been restored, and include new landscaping.

Next on the city's construction plate is the Soquel Avenue bridge, which will be raised and refurbished starting in May. The project is expected to take up to 18 months.