

City will replace hazardous bridges

By MARIA GAURA

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SANTA CRUZ — Taking advantage of money from a federal bridge replacement program, the Santa Cruz Public Works Department is working on plans to replace three outdated and hazardous bridges within the next two years.

The bridge facing demolition soonest is the East Cliff Drive railroad bridge, cresting the hill above the mouth of the San Lorenzo River. Construction could begin this fall and continue for eight to 10 months.

The second bridge scheduled for rebuilding is the Riverside Avenue bridge, part of the main traffic artery leading to the Beach Flats area; and the third is the West Cliff Drive railroad bridge, across the street from the Dream Inn where West Cliff intersects Beach Street.

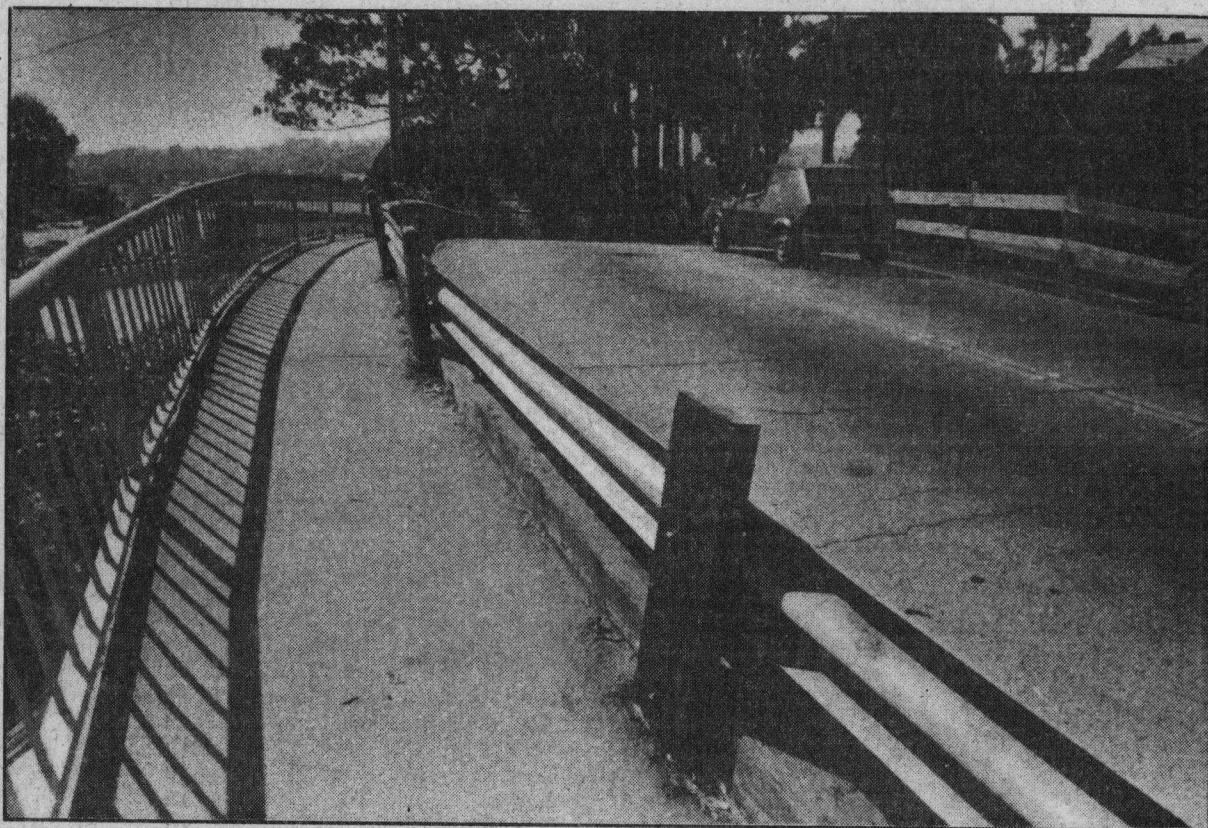
Planning for the Riverside and West Cliff bridges is in progress, and construction may begin in the 1988-89 fiscal year.

Built in 1925, the East Cliff bridge now serves as a main crosstown corridor for city traffic as well as an access route to Seabright Beach. The bridge is built of wood, with two narrow lanes, cracked pavement, a blind corner and rickety wooden railings on one side.

Plans for a new bridge include a textured cement structure, wider lanes with better sight lines and sturdy railings. Even with some widening the bridge will not be broad enough for bike lanes, but it will make bicycling over the bridge less risky.

Cost of the new bridge is estimated at \$1.2 million. Federal grants will cover 80 percent. Another 10 percent of the cost will be shouldered by Southern Pacific Railroad, which will cede ownership of the bridge to the city once the project begins. The city would pay the rest.

Not everyone is happy with the plans for the new bridge. At public presentations before the River Task Force and the City Zoning Board many people criti-



Photos by Scott Lituchy

In replacing the East Cliff bridge, the city hopes to remove the blind curve.

cized the plans, calling the cement structure ugly and "just not Santa Cruz." Plans to remove a row of eucalyptus trees from the river side of the bridge have also come under attack.

According to civil engineer Jim Feeney, the trees must be removed to make room for a hillside walkway that will connect the river levee path with East Cliff Drive.

The plans have so far been reviewed by the city

zoning board, the River Task Force and the Parks and Recreation Department. The plans will next be presented to the city council and go back to Caltrans for final review. After that, preparations for construction may begin.

The cement span of the 57-year-old Riverside Bridge looks sturdy and spacious, with four traffic lanes and two sidewalks, but the bridge was doomed by structural damage from the storms of 1982-83.

Rebuilding the Riverside span will also take eight to 10 months, but because the bridge serves as the main tourist route to and from the Boardwalk area, the city faces severe traffic problems.

City traffic engineers are considering diverting beach traffic in a loop down Front Street, but no plan has been finalized yet.

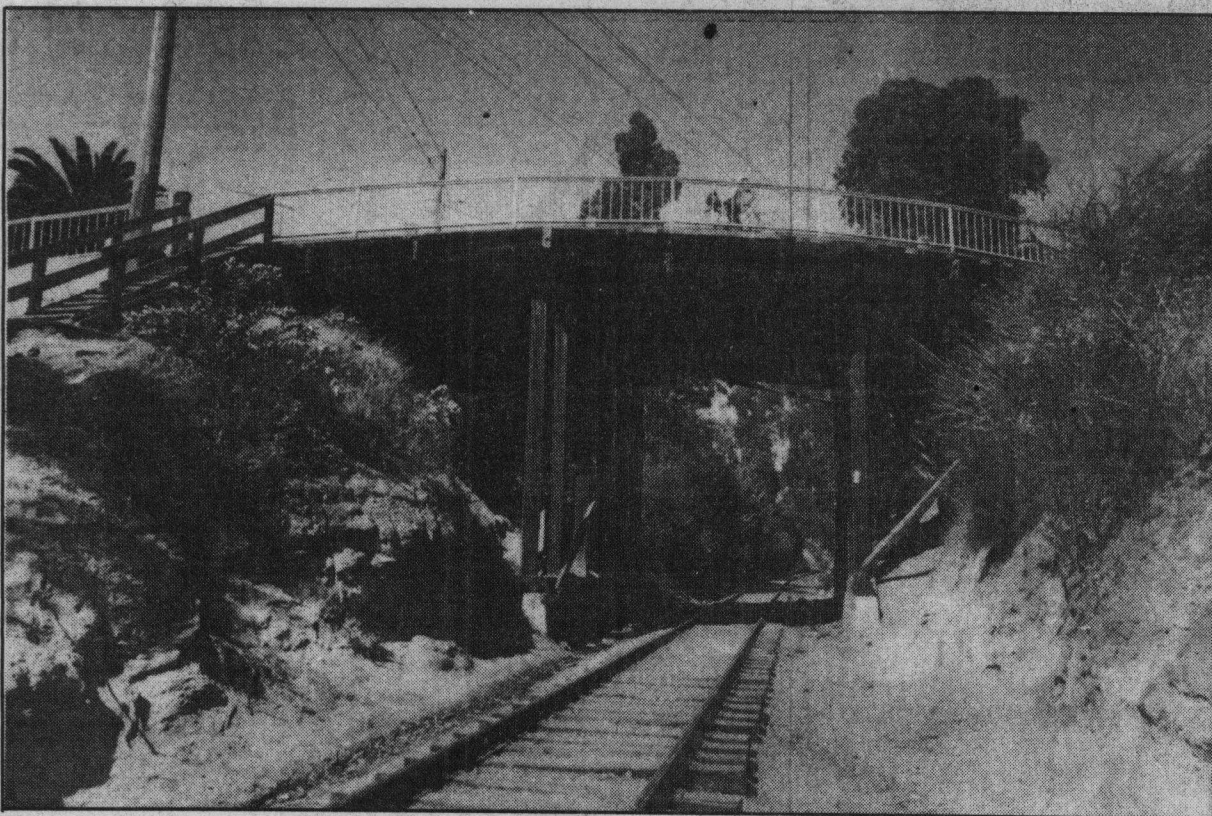
So far, Public Works has reviewed several proposals from engineering firms, and will recommend that the City Council hire the San Francisco firm of Parsons and Brinckerhoff to do the job.

The project is estimated at \$1.7 million, and federal grants will cover 80 percent of the cost. The city would pay the rest.

The West Cliff Drive railroad bridge is a picturesque if rickety structure near West Cliff Drive and Beach Street.

The bridge is considered a historic landmark because of its age and the construction of its wooden trestle. Planning to demolish the bridge could be considerably complicated by the structure's landmark status.

The public works department is now beginning a field review for revamping the structure, and has estimated a \$957,000 cost for the project. As with the other bridges, 80 percent of the cost will be carried by federal grants.



The East Cliff railroad bridge is the first of three to be demolished.