

SC ^{Bridges} will investigate ⁷⁻¹¹⁻⁹⁴ saving wooden bridge

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SANTA CRUZ — Attempts to save the old wooden West Cliff Bridge will continue at least a few more months and with another \$17,000.

The Santa Cruz City Council voted to spend the money to study whether guard rails can be added to the historic bridge and to investigate traffic impacts of keeping the bridge as a one-way road.

If guard rails prove feasible, the city will decide whether to press its case for the state and federal funding for the bridge in October when state transportation officials consider funding.

The West Cliff Bridge is a vintage Howe truss structure, built in 1918 over the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. It connects the beach area with West Cliff Drive.

Listed in the Historic Highway Bridges of California as the only truss of its kind in the state, it is eligible for the National Historic Register.

The bridge was closed two years ago be-

cause it is no longer structurally adequate, its underpinnings hollowed from years of dry rot. After short-term repairs, it reopened to bicyclists and pedestrians.

The city Public Works Department was set to build a \$1 million concrete bridge in its place until preservationists persuaded the City Council to investigate whether the wooden one could be saved.

City staffers are dubious because Caltrans would have to make exceptions to its policy prohibiting timber bridges and relax rules regarding crash-safety rails, which are typically concrete or metal, not wooden, said City Manager Richard Wilson.

Even if Caltrans agrees and funds its share of the construction costs, the bridge could be only a one-way road because it is so narrow, he said.

Some residents like that solution or keeping the bridge simply as a crossing for bikes and pedestrians.

Several Westside residents argued, however, that the bridge's closing has added traffic on the already congested Mission Street.