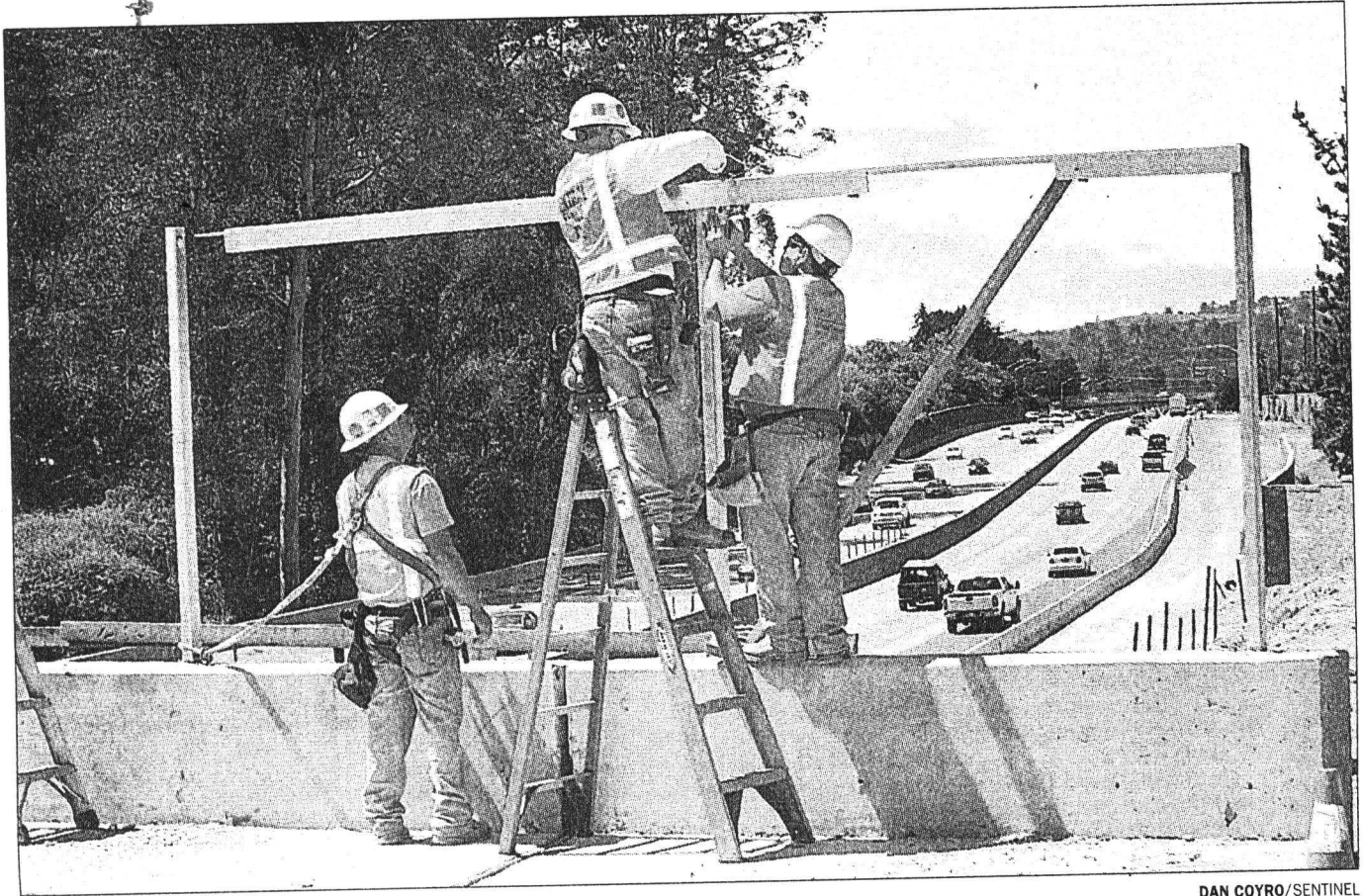


# Fixed Bridge

New La Fonda Avenue span set to open Saturday with public celebration



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Workers construct the fencing Tuesday on the nearly complete La Fonda Avenue bridge, which is scheduled to open Saturday.

Highways

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SANTA CRUZ — The moment many Santa Cruz commuters have waited two years for will arrive Saturday with the opening of the new La Fonda Avenue bridge over Highway 1.

Completion of an improved crosstown connection between the Prospect Heights neighborhood and Harbor High School — part of the \$21 million lane widening project on Highway 1 — will be celebrated with a party on the bridge deck. The public is invited.

"This is a milestone for the project," said Karena Pushnik of the Regional Transportation Commission of Santa Cruz County, the project manager. "It's really a celebration of the community's patience, the schools' patience. The neighbors have been especially patient."

SEE BRIDGE ON A2



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

No one is more thrilled than Robyn McCool that the La Fonda Avenue bridge is nearly complete. She lives on La Fonda Avenue next to the bridge.

# BRIDGE

Continued from A1

The old La Fonda bridge was torn down and rebuilt to accommodate the new auxiliary lanes under construction between Soquel Drive and Morrissey Boulevard, which are designed to help ease the bottleneck congestion on what transportation officials say is the second busiest stretch of highway in the county. (The busiest section is between Bay/Porter and 41st Avenue.)

The auxiliary lanes are meant to funnel drivers between the on-ramps and off-ramps of the two exits, freeing up the highway for through traffic.

An estimated 98,000 vehicles travel the one-mile corridor each day, according to the Regional Transportation Commission.

The new lanes are expected to be complete "later in the fall," Pushnik said.

The new La Fonda bridge features 6-foot-wide bike lanes in both directions along with 6-foot-wide sidewalks on both sides. Previously, the bridge had a narrow sidewalk on only one side and no bike lanes.

Not only is the new bridge bigger, but it's stronger, built to current seismic standards, Pushnik said.

Taking down a well-traveled bridge, used by 3,000

## IF YOU GO

NEW LA FONDA  
AVENUE BRIDGE  
OPENING

**WHEN:** 10:30 a.m. to noon  
Saturday

### BRIDGE DETAILS

**COST:** About \$8 million, part of \$21 million auxiliary lanes project on Highway 1

**TRAFFIC:** 3,000 cars each day

- 187 feet long
- 6-foot-wide bike lanes
- 6-foot-wide sidewalks

cars each day, doesn't come without an imposition to residents and commuters.

For two years, drivers have had to take detours around Morrissey Boulevard and Soquel Drive to get between the two areas of town. Kids who bike or walk to DeLaveaga Elementary School or Harbor High have had to find new ways to get to school or take the shuttle provided by the Regional Transportation Commission.

However, few people probably have endured what Robyn McCool experienced while the bridge was under construction.

McCool, 38, lives in a La Fonda Avenue home next to the bridge, and has put up with the ear-piercing sounds that come from



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

**Workers put the final touches on the La Fonda Avenue bridge in preparation for Saturday's opening.**

heavy equipment and machinery starting up around 6 a.m. each day and not shutting down until 4 or 5 p.m.

At times, crews have worked during the night to avoid impacting highway traffic with major developments such as the bridge demolition.

McCool said the construction crews have been extremely polite even when dirt and dust go flying into her yard, which has made the project a bit more bearable.

"It's been really loud, really loud," McCool said.

"Sometimes when they're doing certain things, the whole house rattles.

"A few times they were doing so much we had to go stay at a friend's house. It's been a long project."

Construction has been funded through Prop 1B, the transportation bond approved by voters statewide in 2006.

Funds were distributed throughout California for projects demonstrating the greatest congestion relief.

Follow Sentinel reporter Shanna McCord at [Twitter.com/scnews-mom](https://twitter.com/scnews-mom)