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Water Street Bridge Fact Sheet

By City of Santa Cruz Public Works Department

The Water Street Bridge. Dedicated March 28, 1997.

The Water Street Bridge Rehabilitation Project involved the removal and replacement of the northern half of the bridge and the earthquake retrofit of the southern portion of the bridge. The purpose of the project was to upgrade the bridge to current earthquake standards and to improve the flood capacity at the bridge.

The bridge actually consisted of three different bridges that were connected together. The northern portion consisted of two older concrete arch bridges that were constructed in 1908 and in 1914. In 1908, Union Traction Company built a three-hinge, reinforced concrete bridge that carried workers and visitors on trolley cars into the downtown area. In 1914, the city constructed another reinforced arch bridge next to it. The center piers of the older arch bridges restricted flood flows in the San Lorenzo River and needed to be removed. By 1967, the city had outgrown these two bridges and another bridge was built adjacent to the existing, doubling the traffic capacity. Since the newer, southern portion was constructed in 1967, it did not meet the earthquake standards now required for bridges and needed an earthquake retrofit.

The Water Street Bridge spans some 320 feet over the San Lorenzo River, is 94 feet wide and 30 feet high, and now provides a distinctive gateway into downtown Santa Cruz. The replacement of the northern half of the bridge was designed to match the aesthetics of the southern half of the bridge that was constructed in 1967. New, decorative street lights and pedestrian overlooks were included on both sides of the bridge. The bridge also includes a total of four travel lanes as well as bike lanes, sidewalks and railings, levee path undercrossings, gabion bank protection and landscaping.

The improvements to the bridge were designed by Boyle Engineering Corporation from Sacramento. Construction was performed by RGW Construction, Inc. from Fremont, and Construction Management Services were provided by the San Jose office of Parsons Brinckerhoff Construction Services.

The total cost of the project was approximately 5.9 million dollars. Construction commenced in May of 1996 and was completed in approximately ten months. The project was constructed under a restricted time schedule in order to meet State of California Department of Fish and Game permit requirements and under difficult river conditions.

Funding for the project was provided through the Federal Highway Bridge Rehabilitation/Replacement (HBRR) program. The Federal Highway Administration provided 80% of the eligible construction costs for the new, northerly portion of the bridge and 100% of the eligible costs for the earthquake retrofit of the southerly bridge. The City provided approximately 1 million dollars in necessary local matching funds from the Storm Water Fund.

Sources

- *This fact sheet originally appeared on the City of Santa Cruz's Web site.*
- *Photo from the City of Santa Cruz Public Works Department.*