

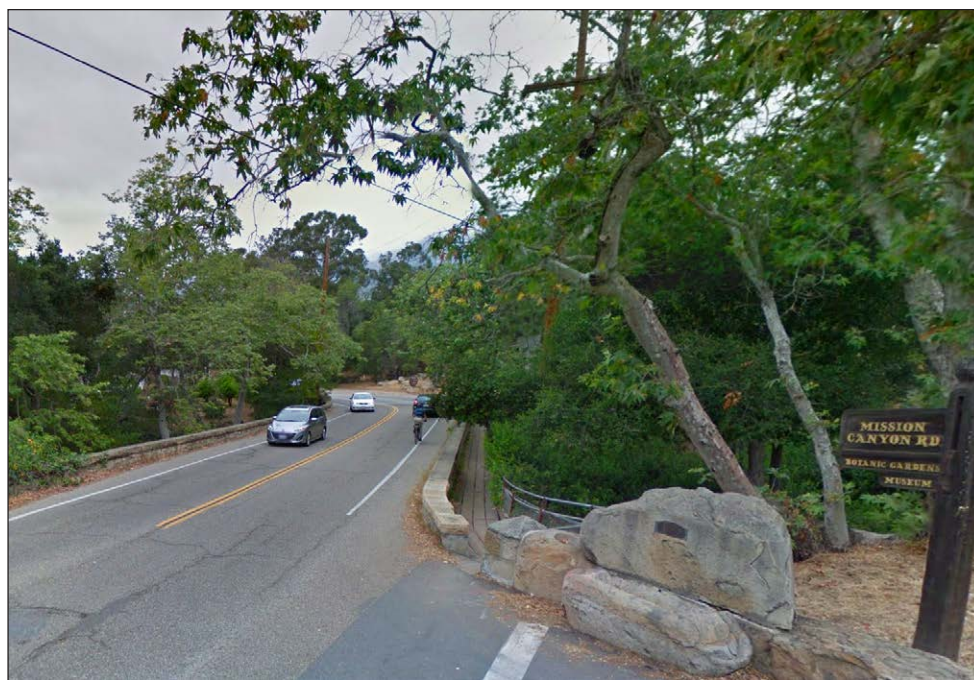
Mission Canyon Road and Bridge Planning Continues Latest on Roadway, Bicycle, Pedestrian Improvement Project

by Erika Sharghi

Santa Barbara residents and tourists alike are drawn to Mission Park to enjoy the beauty of the Rose Garden and the rich history that surrounds the Old Mission. Those with a penchant for nature will also find their way to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, while hikers and bikers traverse the Mission Canyon corridor to the Botanic Garden and points beyond. As much as this area embodies the heart and soul of Santa Barbara history, it is sorely deficient in meeting current safety standards to protect all who pass through the corridor.

Since 2011 a consortium of concerned community residents and organizations, led by the Mission Heritage Trail Association (MHTA, formerly Concerned Citizens for Safe Passage), have promoted the cause for safer pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle circulation in the corridor that extends from East Los Olivos and Laguna Street adjacent to the Old Mission/Mission Park, crosses the Mission Canyon Road Bridge, and continues north on Mission Canyon Road to Foothill Road. To garner community support, broad public feedback, and address concerns, MHTA coordinated numerous working group sessions and corridor walkabouts, prepared presentations, and worked closely with the city and County of Santa Barbara in organizing public workshops. What emerged was a segmented conceptual design plan (funded by a Caltrans grant), for proposed traffic and safety improvements of the corridor. In 2015, the concept plan was reviewed by the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors for inclusion in their respective Capital Improvement Program for 2016. Labeled “Mission Park to Mission Canyon Multimodal Improvements Plan,” a detailed description is available at <https://tinyurl.com/MultiModalMHTA>.

In partnership with the county, the City of Santa Barbara adopted an element of the plan as a project. The project would provide for a continuous accessible pedestrian path and bike lane on the west side of the Mis-



Non-standard pathways and physical constraints force pedestrians to enter and/or cross Mission Canyon Road several times. Physical constraints include historic structures, stone walls, and the bridge “bottleneck” over Mission Creek.

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sion Canyon corridor. The path would extend from the East Los Olivos/ Laguna Street intersection adjacent to The Old Mission, cross Mission Creek by way of a new foot bridge running parallel and west of the Bridge, and continue to the Las Encinas Road/Mission Canyon Road intersection.

Funding for the project was secured under the Highway Bridge Program (HBP) by the City of Santa Barbara and will be administered by Caltrans. Although the project is subject to HBP guidelines for funding, it is not strictly bound by the original concept plan that was previously adopted by the city. However, as the project progresses through the next phase of feasibility and environmental impact studies, the public will be advised of any recommended changes for continued feedback as to preserve the historical aspects of the Bridge and its surroundings.

Under the HBP, once it is determined that a bridge is significantly important and is unsafe because of structural deficiencies,

physical deterioration, or functional obsolescence, it qualifies for rehabilitation under the HBP. The Mission Canyon Road Bridge meets the rehabilitation criteria.

It is significantly important as a primary evacuation route from Mission Canyon during times of emergencies and serves as a major entry/exit route for the City of Santa Barbara. Additionally, according to the National Bridge Inspection Standards that Caltrans follows, inspections of the bridge found it to be structurally sound but functionally obsolete. It was deemed substandard due to inadequate bridge width and the roadway’s curvature approaches to the Bridge.

Initially, to accomplish improvements in traffic safety, roadway realignment, and construction of pedestrian facilities, two stone walls near the bridge were identified for relocation. Specifically, it included a segment of the monastery wall approaching the

Road Planning (cont. p.2)

Road Planning (cont. from p.1)

bridge from the south and a segment of the stegosaurus wall north of the bridge. These walls would not be “lost” to proposed changes. Rather, these segments would be shifted inward at an angle to allow for a continuous west-side pedestrian walkway extending from the Old Mission to the proposed west pedestrian footbridge and then to the pedestrian walkway that would run along the stegosaurus wall.

From what started out as a concept will now be approached from a design and engineering feasibility perspective that may

provide new solutions to a complex corridor where finding the right balance between preserving Santa Barbara’s historical resources and providing for a safe passage for all can be achieved.

To date, the City of Santa Barbara is in the process of formulating the project team. It will include county representation and hiring the necessary experts and consultants in engineering, historical, and landscape architect acumen. Optimistically, they hope the positions are filled by end of March. We will continue to update our members as this project unfolds.

Trailhead Problems Multiply Solutions Few

by Barbara Lindemann

Longtime readers of the MCA newsletter may sigh and say, “not Tunnel Road parking problems again!” Yes, because the number of hikers has increased exponentially in the past several years.

At noon on a warm Saturday in March, a resident counted 147 cars parked along Tunnel Road between Montrose and the trailhead. The attraction is great: Water is flowing down Seven Falls, the hills are green, the ceanothus and other wildflowers are blooming. Young families, tourists, old couples, large groups of students, mountain bikers, joggers — many people from the neighborhood and from far away (and their dogs) enjoy this beautiful front-country trail.

Over the winter months residents near the trailhead discussed the many problems associated with this heavy trail use. Although most hikers control and pick up after their dogs, bring water along, and carry out their trash, there are inevitably the few who create problems. Trash, including condoms, is dumped on property beside the parked cars; occasionally people sleep overnight parked beside the road; dog and human feces are found on private property; hikers take water from garden hoses, or knock on the door to request water or use of the bathroom; people talk loudly on their cell phones, play car radios loudly for long periods, make up a noisy crowd while waiting for the rest of their group to arrive at the trailhead. Not to mention that cars searching for a parking place drive up to the end of the road and turn around, often using private driveways.

Your Mission Canyon Association has discussed these issues at monthly meetings and with our former supervisor Salud Carbajal and new Supervisor Das Williams. The

irreducible fact is that the public trail by law is open to the public, even on Red Flag days when parking above Montrose Road is prohibited.

The easier solutions have been done: an additional mutt-mitt station installed by the trash cans before the gate; “no parking” sign poles re-erected that had been knocked down; notices on the hiking websites posted to remind people to park inside the white line and to show respect for the peace and privacy of the residents. MCA board members keep the mutt-mitt case filled (400 a week now get used, compared to 200 a month one year ago), and many residents routinely pick up trash while hiking.

In response to our many requests for better parking enforcement, supervisor Carbajal last spring managed to add to the Sheriff’s Office budget two sheriff’s technician positions. These would be safety officers, most likely people retired from public safety positions, who would patrol in the county with the authority to issue parking tickets. Your MCA Board believes that regular patrolling on an unpredictable schedule would do a lot to end careless and lawless parking, such as beside fire hydrants. Unfortunately, Supervisor Williams fears that these positions, not yet filled, will be frozen given the county’s current budget shortfall.

Also under discussion is the placement of a porta-potty with a drinking water holding tank, or a permanent composting toilet outhouse. Such a facility would need to be placed where it would be less troublesome to residents than the current situation, and where it can be easily serviced.

Your MCA Board continues to weigh the merits of suggested solutions, and we are assured of the support of our new county supervisor, Das Williams.

Short-Term Rentals in the Canyon

A quick search on Airbnb, the popular home sharing website used by travelers around the world, returned more than 40 listings in Mission Canyon. Ranging in price from about \$100/night for a room to over \$1,000/night for an entire house, the short-term rentals advertise “a quiet escape in Santa Barbara,” walking distance to the Mission and Botanical Garden,” and perhaps ocean and mountain views.

While the City of Santa Barbara regulates short-term rentals, which are rentals for 30 days or less, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors has been unable to decide if they should promulgate their own rules regarding short-term rentals. When the issue last came before the supervisors, owners on both sides of the issue so overwhelmed the supervisors that they had to extend the meeting and ultimately table the discussion. The supervisors are currently gathering more information and welcome residents to call and voice their concerns.

Regardless of any action by the supervisors, the reality is that short-term rentals are likely to be a part of life in Mission Canyon for the foreseeable future. First, even if the supervisors decide to regulate short-term rentals, any regulations are going to be difficult to enforce because property addresses are rarely advertised and neighbors are reluctant to turn in their neighbors. Second, many of those who rent out rooms in their homes do so because they need the money to pay their property taxes and mortgage and would rather bend the rules than lose their home.

Going back to the Airbnb advertisements, I was struck by how many of the listings emphasized rules like “no parties,” no street parking,” “no-smoking inside and out,” and “no pets.” One listing even noted that residents in Mission Canyon tend to keep their windows open and therefore it is important that anyone who rents keep conversations inside the house as much as possible. Another said that Mission Canyon is a family neighborhood and late night noise is not allowed. Noting the narrow streets in Mission Canyon and blind curves may also help slow-down those drivers unfamiliar with the area while encouraging off-street parking as much as possible.

Regardless of any action by the Board of Supervisors, these common-sense rules, along with careful scrutiny by landlords of prospective tenants, could alleviate many of the concerns residents of Mission Canyon have with short-term rentals.—*Jason Saltoun-Ebin*

Tanks a Lot

Not a few people have commented on the two large water storage tanks in my backyard, which were quite visible from the road before the vines twined up the fence. A series of tanks actually populated my learning experience in rainwater harvesting.

In 2015, when the drought started to bite, my wife and I decided to collect rain from our roof to water the plants in our yard. I bought a couple of 60-gallon rain barrels at Home Improvement Center; they were not very expensive and easy to install. However, I quickly learned that even one of the measly rains of that year produced vastly more water than the barrels could hold. In addition, getting the water from the barrels to the plants was an issue, and 60 gallons is just a little bit better than spit in watering a garden.

At the beginning of that winter season, I bought four larger Bushman rain barrels (pictured) at Aqua-Flo. They hold a total of 800 gallons and cost \$350 apiece. Installation was more challenging: I needed to build concrete pads (water is very heavy), and getting the water from the gutters and downspouts into the tanks required some piping. The results were better than the year before but still far from satisfactory. Even the small rains we had that winter filled the barrels in no time at all, and the rest spilled over. I needed to experiment with pumps to get the water from the barrels uphill into the garden, and the collected water was just barely enough for one month in the summer. Yikes!

It dawned on me that I should figure out how much water can be collected from a roof. Easy calculations are available on the web: One inch of rain on 1,000 square feet of roof produces about 600 gallons of water! So, even a fairly dry winter with, say, five inches of total rain produces a fair amount of water. To deal with that, rain barrels are not effective; water needs to be collected in larger storage tanks.

I bought two 2,500-gallon plastic tanks (through the web), about \$1,000/tank + delivery. This time, installation was a significant challenge. I constructed a massive concrete pad on the highest spot of my property for the tanks, buried a two-inch plastic pipe from the tanks to the house, linked the rain barrels at the house together so that water flows freely from one to the others, and put a sump pump into one of the barrels. The pump automatically turns on when there is water and pushes the water through the buried pipe up the hill into the tanks. From the



PHOTO: Karl Hutterer

tanks, I can draw the water via a regular garden hose, using gravity flow.

The meager rains of last winter produced more than enough water to fill the tanks, and the content of the tanks was sufficient for careful watering of my fruit trees and a few other plants throughout the summer. During the current wet winter, I could have filled my tanks several times over!

I have learned much about rainwater harvesting and have no doubt that there is much more to be learned. However, given long-term climate forecasts, it is clear that rainwater collected even during a dry winter can be very helpful and can make a difference in relieving the pressure on our public water system.

More information on rainwater harvesting can be found at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and at WaterWiseSB.org.—Karl Hutterer

Brush Chipping Day

Brush is growing in abundance this year after the much-needed rain. Fire dangers will grow equally. For instance, a hiker's car parked on the 1200 block of Tunnel Road caught fire on March 4 for unknown reasons. Neighbors report that lines of visitors' cars were backed up and down Tunnel as firefighters extinguished the Chevy Malibu. Defensible space will be more important this year.

Captain Fred Tan, County Fire's new vegetation management officer, has good news. The department will continue the brush removal chipping program this year here in Mission Canyon. They are hoping to begin chipping at the end of May as long as a fire emergency does not intervene, as it did last

year. Residents will be notified ahead of time by email, so it is a good idea to be sure your email is on file with the Mission Canyon Association and to start clearing your property so that you are ready to take advantage of this service.

Residents must bring their bundled trimmings out to the end of their driveway or to a cleared shoulder on the indicated roads. The trimmings must be clearly visible to the crew. Trimmings must be sensibly piled and off the roadways.

The requirements are:

- Three- to five-foot horizontal setback from fences, power poles, standing vegetation, structures, etc.
- Five feet of vertical clearance to low-hanging tree limbs
- Piles no higher than five feet
- Piles can be clearly distinguished from landscaping and vegetation.

MCA will be working with County Fire and residents to facilitate this operation. Stay in touch via email for more details and for specific dates and locations as the crews work through the canyon. Contact webmaster@missioncanyon.org to be added to the email list.—Laurie Guitteau

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The MCA Newsletter was prepared with the help of **Lee Anne Dollison**, graphics, production, and photography.

MCA's Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., at the S.B. Natural History Museum's MacVeagh House. All residents are welcome to attend.

[†]MHTA (Mission Heritage Trails Assoc.) has replaced Safe Passage

*Chair of committee



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Your MCA Newsletter Spring 2017

Road & Bridge Plans!
Brush Chipping Day Returns

MCA Dues Due April 1st (No Foolin') • And **Thank You** if you've already paid!

Ewww...What IS That?

An exotic, invasive beetle is causing increasingly extensive damage to Southern California's urban trees, native and riparian forests, and avocado groves. Santa Barbara County is working to educate the public in identification and management of the polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB for short) infestation that attacks hundreds of tree species but only successfully procreates in certain hosts, including California sycamore, coast live oak, avocado, and others.

Mary Bianchi directs the county's Cooperative Extension and is our horticulture advisor. In a recent presentation to the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council on the invasive bug, she offered the following University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources websites as the best resources for information: http://ucanr.edu/sites/socaloakpests/Polyphagous_Shot_Hole_Borer/ and at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/pshb/Resources/>.

The websites provide general information on the beetles and the fungal disease



The Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB)
PHOTO: Gevork Arakelian/LA County Dept. of Agriculture

they carry, the damage the fungus causes, and a full list of the trees at risk. Among the potential impacts are increased fire danger, safety hazards due to falling limbs, decreased property values, habitat loss, and loss of ecosystem services.

Take a look at the photos here. If your trees show signs of PSHB, more identifying photos are at the websites as well as information on how to identify and manage

the infestation and disease. A link to the reporting form is at the websites; and the link follows: <http://eskalenlab.ucr.edu/handouts/suspecttreereport.pdf>.

What do you do if you need to dispose of an infected tree? Sections titled "How to Handle Infested Plant Material" give guidelines on solarization (using solar energy to kill both the beetle and fungi) and composting so that adequate decomposition and pathogen control is achieved. If you have an infected tree, you can help contain this pest by disposing of infested wood properly to avoid spreading the beetle to other areas.

If you value your trees, you can help by inspecting them periodically (or have an arborist do so). Any suspicion of contagion can be reported to the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner Cathy Fisher and her office at cfisher@agcommissioner.com or (805) 681-4200.—Ray Smith