

**Regional Transportation Commission**

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**From:** J Lighthill [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 6, 2024 8:59 AM  
**To:** Regional Transportation Commission  
**Subject:** Item 29-community preference of bridge design

Dear Commissioners,

Please delay determining bridge design for the MBSST Aptos Creek Bridge until more extensive public input can be collected. Reasons are as follows:

- the time window for public participation and *voting was limited to 17 days*, and many residents were unaware of the opportunity to weigh in on bridge design.
- the survey allowed *votes from anyone, anywhere*, whether they lived in Aptos, the county, or even outside the county. Bridge design should be determined by Aptos residents: one that aligns with the aesthetic quality and character of the community. Among Aptos respondents, the difference was only 68 votes: these results may not be indicative of overall public sentiment.
- the survey *did not limit the number votes* by individuals. Those with multiple devices could submit more than one vote.
- graphic perspectives of the bridges were inconsistent and may have affected voters' preferences. See example below.

This bridge would be a significant architectural feature in the Aptos community. Instead of leaving bridge design choice to a "Project Development Team," please allow Aptos residents more time to participate in choosing a bridge design that best aligns with the community character and aesthetic.

Thank you for your consideration.

Johanna Lighthill  
Aptos resident

Two Aptos Creek Bridge proposals described to be same width.







**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Sarah Christensen](#)  
**Cc:** [thekristenbrown@gmail.com](#); [rpquinn@pacbell.net](#); [Mitch Weiss](#); [Regional Transportation Commission](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on Agenda Item 29: Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge Over Aptos Creek and Soquel Drive  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 5, 2024 7:20:55 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

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Dear Sarah and SCCRTC Staff,

Please consider the following questions and notes before selecting the new trail bridge design over Aptos Creek.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Downing  
Aptos

**Will Aptos Village Park visitors see the arch above the trees? Is this desirable?**  
**Was County Parks consulted about designs?**

Although the bridge will be located on RTC property, the bridge area is included in the Aptos Village Plan. Relevant excerpts from the Aptos Village Plan Section on IMAGE & CHARACTER:  
Charette participants strongly favored that the overall image for the area should complement the existing village character. The architectural character of the various buildings should be no more than two to three stories. Historic buildings will be preserved and/or relocated such that they provide the setting for new buildings and related infrastructure. The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, Aptos Village County Park, and Aptos and Valencia Creeks will continue to provide a natural boundary around the Village. New buildings and streets will reflect the small town ambiance of the historic Village.

**Was this plan reviewed and included in the decision?**  
**Was there consideration of the juxtaposition of the new profiles of the design options with the historic 1929 road bridge?**  
**Which bridge design more closely matches the village plan?**

The new bridge design is part of the MBSST.

Relevant excerpts from the MBSST:  
STANDARD NO. 1 PROTECT THE PUBLIC AND COASTAL RESOURCES  
Coastal access facilities should be located where they safely accommodate public use. Their distribution should prevent crowding, parking congestion, and misuse of coastal resources. To fulfill this goal, accessway design and location should: a) minimize alteration of natural landforms and be subordinate to the setting's character; b) prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety; c) ensure the privacy of adjoining residences; and d) protect environmentally sensitive habitats and agricultural areas.

**Which bridge design best aligns with the above standards and recommendations?**

The PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT section of the MBSST includes 28 documents with references to preserving natural resources and promoting the enjoyment of scenic vistas and natural habitats including the:  
ARANA GULCH MASTER PLAN  
The City of Santa Cruz acquired Arana Gulch in 1994 as one of the greenbelt lands and, shortly thereafter, opened the property to the public. While popular with hikers strolling along the meadow, bicyclists riding to the Upper Harbor, and visitors of all ages enjoying the scenery and wildlife, recreational use on the property is limited to earthen trails—most of which existed prior to the City's ownership. Only two visitor entrances currently exist and there are no visitor facilities, except trails and associated signage. The intent of the Arana Gulch Master Plan is to establish a vision and goals that will shape the future of Arana Gulch as a unique open space within the city of Santa Cruz that includes amenities such as a bicycle and pedestrian path. In addition, the Master Plan identifies recreational uses and resource management guidelines to direct future management and enhancement of this natural area.

**The stress ribbon bridge design more closely matches the Arana Gulch Bridge and the original bridge design than the**

**Tied Arch design. Has this been considered in the decision?**

From the MBSST MAINTENANCE COSTS ESTIMATES section:

Implementing agencies will be responsible for any structure, culvert, or natural condition within its easement, regardless of whether it is a pre-existing condition or not. Existing bridge structures along the trail shall be modified to provide safe access for trail users, yet care should be taken to minimize impacts to the historic integrity of the bridges as defined.

**Will the Tied Arch bridge attract climbers and encourage people to hang things from the arch?**

**Will the Tied Arch bridge attract birds and their droppings?**

**Will mitigation be required that might be unattractive to the public?**

**Will this make the Tied Arch design more expensive to maintain?**

The MBSST plan includes Moving Forward Monterey Bay from AMBAG that directs projects to:

Avoid, minimize, or mitigate the environmental impacts caused by operation or improvement of the transportation system.

Strive to limit plans and programs to those transportation facilities and services which avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to prime agricultural land, natural wetlands and riparian corridors, coastal dunes, significant scenic corridors, significant natural habitat areas, and/or cultural and historical sites.

**Which bridge design best aligns with AMBAG recommendations?**

The MBSST includes the State Park General Plan for The Forest of Nisene Marks with pertinent goals that:

- Concentrate visitor use, recreation opportunities, facilities, and administrative activities in appropriate locations that will accommodate heavier use, while minimizing impacts to natural, cultural, and scenic resources.
- Locate facilities away from any sensitive natural or cultural areas, including streams and historic and archeological sites, to minimize impacts to these resources.
- Use signs, fencing, walls, stairs, and other features to direct visitors away from sensitive biological and cultural resources, as necessary, and to protect sensitive areas.
- Design facilities to blend aesthetically with scenic, natural, and cultural features.
- Utilize sustainable design and materials in the development of new facilities.
- Preserve the historic integrity of sites and railroad grades that are determined significant to the history of The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

**Which bridge design more closely aligns with the State Parks goals for nearby Nisene Marks?**

The MBSST also includes the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan of June 2010 that seeks to:

1. Preserve and maintain the existing transportation system, emphasizing safety, security and efficiency.
2. Increase mobility by providing an improved and integrated multi-modal transportation system.
3. Coordinate land use and transportation decisions to ensure that the region's social, cultural, and economic vitality is sustained for current and future generations.
4. Ensure that the transportation system complements and enhances the natural environment of the Monterey Bay region and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
5. Make the most efficient use of limited transportation financial resources.
6. Solicit broad public input on all aspects of regional and local transportation plans, projects, and funding.

**Which bridge design matches the natural environment of the Monterey Bay?**

**Was there sufficient local outreach for this large and lasting infrastructural feature?**

**Below is the view of the rail bridge from the historic road bridge over Aptos Creek.**

**Was this visual impact of the new design profiles considered? Is it important that the new bridge match the original bridge design?**

*Aptos Creek Bridge Design Options*



*Current view from the bridge*



*Stress ribbon view from the bridge*



*Tied arch view from the bridge*