

Chapter 1 Purpose and Need

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Tower Bridge (State Route 275) connects West Capitol Avenue, located in the City of West Sacramento, to Capitol Mall, located in the City of Sacramento (Maps 1 and 2; all maps and photographs are located at the end of this chapter). The bridge spans the Sacramento River northeast of Raley Field and southwest of historic Old Sacramento. Tower Bridge is owned, operated, and maintained by California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Tower Bridge (Bridge No. 22-0021) is a Streamlined Moderne-style lift bridge that consists of a steel-through truss with a vertical lift span, and steel plate girder approach spans. The bridge has a concrete deck and is supported on reinforced concrete piers and abutments (Photographs 1 and 2). The bridge's eight spans total 224.8 meters (m) (738 feet [ft]) in length, 15.8 m (52 ft) in roadway width, and 21.0 m (69 ft) in overall width; and carry four traffic lanes between steel channel railings and two 1.2 m (4-foot [ft]) sidewalks cantilevered outside the trusses. The bridge provides vehicular bicycle and pedestrian access between the cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento. The bridge crosses the Sacramento River with no skew. Tower Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on June 24, 1982.

The Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento (Cities) propose to construct pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Tower Bridge on Capitol Mall and West Capitol Avenue. Tower Bridge, which is owned and operated by Caltrans, provides vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access between the two cities. The Cities have received state and Federal funding for the project. As owner-operator of the bridge, Caltrans is the state lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Because the project is receiving Federal funding, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the Federal lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Caltrans is working with the Cities, FHWA, and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) in the design and environmental review of the project.

1.2 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed project will make changes to the bridge to increase pedestrian and bicycle capacity and connectivity between the Sacramento and West Sacramento riverfronts and the activities occurring in both locations.

Tower Bridge is the primary pedestrian/bicycle connection across the Sacramento River between the cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento. It is a vital link from Capitol Mall, Old Sacramento, and the Riverfront Promenade on the Sacramento side of the river to Raley Field, office developments, and the River Walk on the West Sacramento side of the river. Tower Bridge is also the primary Sacramento River crossing route for recreational and commuter bicyclists. The existing sidewalks on Tower Bridge are 0.9 to 1.2 m (3 to 4 ft) wide. While this

meets Caltrans design standards for pedestrian use and meets minimum Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recommends minimum 3-m- (10-ft-) wide sidewalks for a mixed-use facility (pedestrians and bicyclists), such as that planned by the proposed project.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Tower Bridge Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvements Project (project) is to improve pedestrian and bicycle access across the Sacramento River along the Capitol Mall corridor for everyday and special event activities, while minimizing impacts to the historic structure.

The Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan (approved in concept by both City Councils in July 2003) proposes new pedestrian bridges at R Street, Richards Boulevard, and Broadway, and improved non-vehicular facilities on Tower Bridge and I Street Bridge. The Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan's highest priority for implementation is the central loop, which includes widening Tower Bridge sidewalks to improve connectivity along the Capitol Mall corridor. The urgency of the central loop is dictated by its proximity to downtown employment and residential areas, and recent investments and plans in this zone. The purpose of the project is to address the central loop by finding a solution to improve everyday and special-event pedestrian and bicyclist mobility. A safe and feasible crossing for both pedestrians and bicyclists is a key component of the long-term success of the riverfront. The project also seeks to maintain the historic integrity of the Tower Bridge structure by achieving consistency with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Standards).

The need for this project is summarized in these pedestrian and bicycle issues: access, capacity, and system linkage.

1.3.1 Access and Capacity – Pedestrian/Bicycle

The existing sidewalks were not designed for mixed pedestrian and bicycle use. As currently configured, the sidewalks and their railings meet Caltrans design standards for pedestrian use only, and bicyclists use the roadway deck. Bicyclists who choose to use the sidewalks must dismount and walk when they encounter a pedestrian. Both Cities envision the riverfront area accommodating a variety of daily uses and special events as part of developing a vibrant, active recreational resource for the public that will also support economic development in the area. It is anticipated that these activities will place additional bicycle and pedestrian demand on Tower Bridge.

The Raley Field project demonstrates the demand that special events create. The analysis details the anticipated pedestrian volumes for events at the stadium. The Traffic and Parking Analysis for Raley Field (December 1998) states that, with the proposed [now existing] stadium, "Pedestrian safety may be an issue on and near Tower Bridge, [as] pedestrian capacity will be exceeded on Tower Bridge, both before and after a sold-out event."

1.3.2 System Linkage

A goal of the West Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan (November 1994) is to “[p]rovide pedestrian and bicycle linkages...between the riverfront area and adjacent areas, including West Sacramento and downtown Sacramento,” adding that “the presence of pedestrians is essential to animating the riverfront area; their needs should be given extremely high priority.” A goal of the Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan (July 2003) is to “[p]rovide for a balance of alternative modes of circulation to and within the riverfront, including West Sacramento and downtown Sacramento, emphasizing non-automobile circulation.”

To accomplish these goals, the Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan proposes a River Loop to connect the riverfronts for pedestrian and bicycle travel. This plan proposes a widening of Tower Bridge to accommodate sidewalks of appropriate widths.

In addition, the Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan proposes a few new river crossings, as mentioned earlier, as well as improved non-vehicular facilities on Tower Bridge and I Street Bridge. The Central Loop, of which Tower Bridge is a major link, has been given the highest priority for implementation due to its role in linking the existing activities and developments along the Capitol Mall corridor.

Bicycle commuters also use Tower Bridge to cross the Sacramento River into downtown Sacramento. The Caltrans Findings Report for their 2001 Bike to Work Day found that bicyclists frequently expressed concerns about the speed of traffic and the need for better bicycling facilities that separate bicycle and vehicular traffic.

1.4 RELATED PROJECTS

Caltrans and the Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento have identified the following projects in the project area that are related to the proposed project. The first project listed, City of West Sacramento Pedestrian Connection Project, has independent utility from the proposed project and can be implemented without the proposed project. However, the project must be implemented prior to completion of the Tower Bridge project, therefore these two projects are interdependent.

The remaining projects have independent utility from the proposed project and can be implemented without the proposed pedestrian/bicycle improvements project. Similarly, the proposed project can be implemented with or without the projects discussed below.

1.4.1 City of West Sacramento Pedestrian Connection Project

The City of West Sacramento intends to construct a paved pedestrian connection from the end of the existing walkway on the southwest corner of the Tower Bridge to the paved area west of the bridge on South River Road. The purpose of the project is to provide a continuous pedestrian path from the Tower Bridge to the southeast entrance of Raley Field. The project will be funded by City of West Sacramento Redevelopment funds. Engineering is anticipated to begin Summer

2004 and the project is expected to be open for use prior to the start of the 2005 baseball season. (Toppenberg pers. comm.)

1.4.2 Tower Bridge Painting Project

Caltrans recently painted Tower Bridge as an on-going maintenance activity to protect the bridge. The project involved limited paint removal and repainting of the entire bridge. Caltrans coordinated selection of the paint color with the Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento. A public outreach program to select the paint color was conducted. Caltrans prepared the environmental documentation for the project. The painting project began in January 2002 and was completed in 2003. The lift deck on the bridge was elevated for approximately two months during this project.

1.4.3 Tower Bridge Pavement Rehabilitation Project

The Tower Bridge pavement rehabilitation project includes deck rehabilitation consisting of grinding and overlaying the existing roadway deck surface, increasing the gap in the lift span joints to eliminate binding, rebalancing the lift span, and restoring joint movement in piers 2, 3, 4 and 5. The project also includes restriping the vehicular travel lanes to 3.3 m (11 feet) to provide 1.2-meter (4-foot) multi-purpose shoulders. The proposed work will be conducted from the roadway. It may be necessary, however, to perform some activities from under the western end of the bridge using scaffolding and/or a barge. The project will be constructed with both federal and state funds.

Caltrans is preparing the environmental documentation for the project. The total project cost is approximately \$2 million. The project is scheduled for construction in Spring 2005.

1.4.4 State Route 275 Modification Project in the City of West Sacramento

In 2000, Caltrans relinquished State Route 275 from the Jefferson Boulevard overcrossing to, but not including, Tower Bridge to the City of West Sacramento. The City of West Sacramento will be converting approximately 3,100 feet of the former State Route 275 (to be renamed Tower Bridge Gateway) from a freeway to a city street. The project will remove the Riske Lane overcrossing and Third Street underpass and would provide new, at-grade, signalized intersections at Fifth Street, Third Street and Riske Lane (future Garden Street). The environmental documentation on the modification project was prepared by the City of West Sacramento and copies of the documentation can be reviewed at the City of West Sacramento offices. The design has been completed; however, construction cannot proceed until adequate funding is identified.

1.4.5 Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan

In 1994, the Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento adopted their own individual Riverfront Master Plans. Approximately 10 years after adopting individual plans, the Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento decided to create one master plan document that treats both sides of the Sacramento River comprehensively. The study plan, which was approved in concept by both cities in 2004, proposes improved pedestrian facilities on both the Tower Bridge and the I Street

Bridge plus two new pedestrian bridges: one connecting R Street in Sacramento and Garden Street in West Sacramento, and the other connecting Richards Boulevard to the West Sacramento side of the river. The plan proposes a central loop zone between the I Street bridge, Tower bridge, and the proposed new R Street to Garden Street bridge to extend the existing promenades to form a complete central loop. The Riverfront Master Plan Update will help both cities move forward towards reaching the goals for the riverfront. The current vision for the riverfront is to encourage pedestrian activity with high quality landscaping and design and to include a wide mix of contemporary uses such as open space, public gathering sites, housing and commercial activity. Both cities want to provide a high-quality experience for both visitors and residents.

The goals of the 2004 Sacramento Riverfront Master Plan are to:

- create riverfront neighborhoods and districts
- establish a web of connectivity
- strengthen the green backbone of the community
- make places for celebration.

1.4.6 West Sacramento's River Walk Park

West Sacramento's River Walk Park is a partially completed 3.5-mile linear park located along the bank of the Sacramento River directly opposite downtown Sacramento and the State Capitol. Phase 1 of the River Walk Park, including a meandering brick promenade, grand stairway, active and passive recreation areas and related trails, landscaping and lighting, stretches 1,800 feet north of the Tower Bridge. Phase 1 was completed in 1998 at a total cost of \$3.6 million. The City of West Sacramento intends to extend subsequent phases of the River Walk Park through the Triangle Specific Plan Area, located southwest of the Tower Bridge. The extension of the River Walk Park is an integral component of the City's plan to make the Triangle Specific Plan Area an extension of the urban fabric of downtown Sacramento and create jobs for its residents. The River Walk Park will provide benefits to all 500,000 residents living within 15 miles of the park. Key benefits of this project include: development of a regional recreational amenity, indirect job creation by accelerating the development of office and residential uses in the Triangle Specific Plan Area, and improved access to the Sacramento River for city residents and visitors. The City will be starting the development of the design of the remainder of River Walk this summer.

1.4.7 Riverfront Rail Spur Relocation Project

This project involves all of the activities related to the removal of approximately 13,000 lineal feet of rail track that runs north-south across the eastern edge of the Triangle Specific Plan Area adjacent to the Sacramento River in the City of West Sacramento, along with the demolition of the existing RMC Pacific Materials Cement terminal that is presently served by that rail line. The first phase of the project, which is already underway, is for the City/Redevelopment Agency to negotiate a business deal with RMC Pacific Materials to facilitate the relocation of the cement terminal. The relocation agreement will be considered a project for CEQA purposes, and an EIR will be prepared to analyze the potential for environmental impacts at the proposed alternative site located at 1890 Parkway Boulevard in West Sacramento. When the business deal and environmental review are complete, the City/Redevelopment Agency and RMC Pacific Materials

will execute the relocation agreement, which will allow for RMC's continued use of the terminal while its alternative location is under construction. When RMC has completed its move, the rail spur will be removed in sections to facilitate development projects that it presently obstructs.

1.5 LEAD, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES AND COOPERATING AGENCIES

Lead, responsible, and trustee agencies as defined by CEQA, and cooperating agencies as defined by NEPA are identified below.

Lead agencies (responsible for preparing environmental document) are:

- California Department of Transportation – state lead agency
- Federal Highway Administration – Federal lead agency

Responsible agencies (public agencies other than the lead agency with responsibility for carrying out or approving a project and complying with CEQA) include:

- City of Sacramento
- City of West Sacramento
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Public Utilities Commission
- Reclamation Board

Trustee agencies (State agencies with jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project) include:

- California Department of Fish and Game

A cooperating agency may be any federal agency other than the Federal lead agency that has discretionary authority over the proposed action, jurisdiction by law, or special expertise with respect to the environmental impacts expected to result from an action. The following agencies have been identified as cooperating agencies:

- Corps
- U.S. Coast Guard