

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

1. Do the Madrone and Nokomis Avenue bridges really need to be replaced? What if we don't touch them?

Both bridges were constructed in 1930, and have performed well over that time, but due to several deficiencies, they now qualify for federal funding to replace them. Nokomis Bridge has scour issues that is undermining the central support, which could lead to damage in the future. Both bridges were not constructed to current seismic standards, and could be damaged in a large earthquake. The bridges also do not pass the flows expected in a 100-year flooding event. The bridges qualify for funding now, and if we decide to leave the bridges until they are damaged, there may not be funding available at that time, and local funds would need to be used. The estimated project cost of several million dollars per bridge is a significant amount of funding to find in the future. If the bridges were to fail in the future, the same process as we are going through now would be undertaken to replace the bridges.

2. Can the bridges be removed and replaced with pedestrian-only bridges? How about bridges that only allow emergency vehicles (police/fire/ambulance)?

The federal funding is only available to replace the bridges with vehicular bridges. Pedestrian or emergency-only bridges would need to be funded by the Town. In addition, the Ross Valley Fire Department code has certain requirements for access to allow them to protect residents and structures. If the bridges were to be removed, a suitable turn-around area would be required, which would not fit within the current public right-of-way.

3. What will the new bridges look like? Can we keep the same aesthetic?

There are several bridge design alternatives, however, the visible side walls of the bridge need to be designed to withstand vehicle impacts. The 'Texas Rail' style looks most similar to the existing railings. We received valuable public input at the May, 2017 neighborhood meeting, and we encourage you to let us know your thoughts on the bridge aesthetic.

4. How wide will the new bridges be? Can they be narrower?

Caltrans classifies Madrone Avenue as a Major Collector, and thus, the bridge deck needs to be wider than Nokomis Avenue, a local road. The Town is considering filing a 'design exception' to construct the bridges narrower than typically required by Caltrans – 22 feet for Nokomis, and 24 feet for Madrone. The proposed width of Madrone Avenue bridge would match the width at other locations along the roadway.

5. What traffic calming measures can the bridge projects include?

Traffic calming measures can be included in the project. The Town has a Traffic Calming Guidebook available on our website, which will direct the process for traffic calming. Some measures may be covered by the project funding, while other measures may qualify for other funding sources.

6. Will Low Impact Development (LID) (raingardens) be included in the bridge projects?

The Town typically includes LID measures in projects when feasible, and the bridge replacement projects are no exception. Rain gardens in bulb-outs, for example, could be included, and would also have a traffic calming effect by narrowing the roadway.

7. Will raising the bridges reduce flooding in the Ross Valley? Will replacing the bridges increase flooding to the street and neighboring homes?

Caltrans requires that the bridges be installed at an elevation such that they do not block the flow in the creek. The Town is working with the County Flood Control Division to establish the controlling flow level/water surface elevation. Raising the bridges to allow more flow under them will reduce the water surface elevation immediately upstream from the bridge. Raising the bridges will not, in and of themselves, raise or lower the 100-year flood elevation in the neighborhood.

8. What impact will raising the bridges have on the neighboring driveways?

Raising the deck of the bridges any amount will have an impact on nearby driveways. The Town is working with County Flood Control to determine the required increase, and the impacts to homes and driveways is an important part of the discussion. The project team will work to minimize the impact as much as possible, and will be working with each homeowner on the specifics.

9. How long will construction take? Will different bridge designs have different construction durations?

Until a final bridge design is approved, it is difficult to determine the construction duration. The duration of construction will be taken into account in choosing the bridge design, and minimized as much as possible. With that said, elements of the construction within the creek will likely have seasonal work limits, typically June through October, while other elements of work can occur year-round. Consideration will be made to minimize construction time and disruption to the neighborhood.

10. Will retaining walls be included in the bridge projects?

Retaining walls will be included if they are required based on the bridge design and the upstream and downstream conditions of the creek.

11. Do all the trees need to be removed?

Trees are an important part of San Anselmo's character, and the project team will carefully consider each tree, and preserve them as much as possible. All of the trees in the project area will be inspected by a certified arborist to determine their health. Based on the required work area to construct the bridges, some trees may need to be removed, and replacement trees will be included in the project.

12. Why can't the creek be dredged like it was in the past?

The regulatory agencies that oversee creeks typically do not allow dredging of creeks. The Ross Valley Flood Risk Reduction Program seeks to minimize flooding while balancing the health of the creek ecosystem.