

Soto Street Bridge over Mission Road and Huntington Drive South

Historic Property Survey Report Historic Architecture Survey Report

Prepared for:

**Bridge Improvement Program
Bureau of Engineering
City of Los Angeles**

By

**Portia Lee, Ph.D.
California Archives**

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HISTORIC PROPERTY SURVEY REPORT

I. Description - Location

Bridge Number: Soto Street Bridge over Mission Road and Huntington Drive South
CalTrans District: 7
County: Los Angeles
Location: Between Valley Boulevard and Turquoise Street
1.7 miles north of I 10
Year Built: 1936

A. Project Need

As part of the development of the Highway Bridges Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (HBRR), the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering evaluated the condition of the Soto Street Bridge over Mission Road and Huntington Drive South, CalTrans Bridge Number 53C-0013. Representatives from the City of Los Angeles and CalTrans performed a field review to assess the physical condition of the bridge site. The following observations were reported:

- Inadequate curb-to-curb width
- Cracks in the concrete railing and sidewalk
- Cracks in the asphalt and concrete
- No sidewalk
- Non-standard barrier and railing
- Narrow bents presenting traffic barriers
- Insufficient overhead clearance

Bridge Inspection Reports have determined that the bridge has a Sufficiency Rating of 63.6 and is structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The bridge was evaluated in 1986 and placed on the CalTrans list of local historic bridges with a Category Rating of 6: Not Eligible for the National Register. At that time the bridge was 50 years old. This report is an updated evaluation of historic significance in the context of a proposed project to widen the bridge.

B. Scope of Project

The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering proposes to improve the serviceability and functional obsolescence rating of the Soto Street Bridge by repairing and widening the bridge deck by 6.1 meters (20 feet). New substructures will be constructed to meet the increased loading demand of the wider superstructure. Also proposed are improvements to the bridge railings, approach guardrails and transition guardrails. The project is 0.27 kilometers in length.

New right of way acquisitions are also proposed. Street traffic modifications are also proposed for the north and south approaches, the geometrics of the at-grade intersections modified to accommodate new bents, and underclearance improved at Mission Boulevard.

C. Area of Potential Effects

The Area of Potential Effects (APE) was established in consultation with the Bureau of Engineering, City of Los Angeles. The APE is essentially the area occupied by the bridge and streets crossing under it within a 100-foot radius. Soto Street Bridge over Mission Road and Huntington Drive South, Bridge No. 53C-0013, is located at the apex of a triangular area formed by Soto Street and Mission Road as they travel northward to intersect. Their junction is the dead-end of both streets. After the intersection, the streets continue northward with new names: Mission Road continues as Huntington Drive South; Soto Street continues as Huntington Drive North.

Outside the APE, topography is moderately sloping terrain with somewhat steep hills to the east.

D. Public Participation

Comment will be solicited from the 14th District Council Office, the Hillside Village Homeowners Association and other interested groups and persons in the El Sereno and Lincoln Heights area.

E. Properties Identified

No properties have been found in the APE that have been previously listed or determined eligible. The north boundary of Lincoln Park is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the south at Mission Road and Selig Place,

Zoning is largely C-2 along the Mission Road frontage south of the bridge and C2 after the junction along Huntington Drive South. Residential zones along the streets that intersect the bridge such as Moonstone, Canto, Tourmaline and Turquoise Street are

variously designated as R1, R2 and R4. None of these properties were evaluated for this report.

F. List of Attached Documents

1935 Bridge Plans
 CalTrans Bridge Condition Reports
 Current photographs
 Historic Photograph
 Correspondence

G. Summary of Findings

No eligible properties have been identified within the APE of the proposed undertaking.

Bridge 53C-0013, has been identified within the APE of the proposed project. It has been re-assigned a Category Rating 6 on the CalTrans Historic Bridge List: Not Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

II. HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE SURVEY REPORT

A. Description

The original Bridge Inspection Report in the files of the California Department of Transportation, dated May 29, 1939, describes the bridge as:

Steel through (3) plate girder spans on reinforced concrete piers on Raymond concrete piles; reinforced concrete (8) girder spans on reinforced concrete (4) column bents on Raymond concrete piles

Spans were:

1 @7.5 cantilever, 3@ 32.5', (2 @ 29.8', 1 @ 26.8', 1 @29.7' not full width of the bridge); 2 @ 84.8', (1 @29.7', 1 @26.8', 3 @ 32.5' c/c N.

The roadway width was 2 @ 32.0' between concrete curbs; sidewalks were 1 @ 5' and 2 @6.5' with 4 connecting roads: 4 @ 25.5 between concrete curbs. The final alignment reflected the intersection of three major roads.

The bridge was designed by the Pacific Electric Railway Company according to Area 1935 specifications and built by the State of California Division of Highways as a Federal Aid Project, No. WPGM-313 in 1936.

B. Bridge History

Roadway and Railway Context

Henry Huntington built the Pasadena Short Line in 1902. The main passenger and freight line to Pasadena, streetcars and trains ran along its lines until Huntington's successor company, the Pacific Electric Railway, converted its passenger services from rail to bus in 1951. The four-track Soto Street railroad bridge over Mission Road and Huntington Drive carried all the Pasadena bound lines from 1936, the year it was built, until service was abandoned in 1951.

A 1949 Zoning Map of the area indicates that the important street in the area was Huntington Drive South; Huntington Drive North was a narrow side street. After 1951, Huntington Drive was widened, so that the southbound Huntington Drive became Soto Street for travel over the bridge, or to turn off it to reach westbound Mission Road. Huntington Drive South, over which the bridge now runs, is essentially a local access road. A stamping in the sidewalk below the bridge reads, "Los Angeles Paving Co., 1936."

Grade Separation

As early as 1909, the at-grade Mission Road crossing proved hazardous to motorists and riders preparing to board the trains of the Pasadena Short Line. On Thanksgiving evening in 1909 five members of the Jacobs family were killed at the intersection, then known as the Rose Hill crossing. "[Street] cars run at high speed through the cut," the *Los Angeles Times* reported on November 28, 1909, "and automobiles approach at a rapid rate." The location was strategic since all of the Pasadena Lines came through the crossing and Mission Road had become the main highway for travel to Pasadena and northeast communities after the paving of Downey Avenue. In addition the Pacific Electric ran freight trains on the tracks, which frequently caused traffic bottlenecks.

Congressman Dromgold of the First Ward, who had carried through successfully the installation of the Buena Vista (North Broadway) bridge, was quoted as saying "public safety requires an immediate arrangement for complete separation of traction and other travel. According to the article, the City Engineer was making a preliminary estimate for the City Council of costs for that portion of the project that affected the underneath roadway. Councilman Dromgold stated that he believed the Pacific Electric would meet the city on equitable terms. Despite the press and community attention given to the tragedy at the Rose Hill crossing, including a reading to the City Council quoting the words of the funeral sermon preached over the bodies of the Jacobs'

victims, the crossing remained at-grade for 27 years. On September 12, 1911 the *Los Angeles Express* reported that the Pacific Electric would install danger signals along the Pasadena Short Line, "immediately... probably with wig-way lights and bells, like those it had been experimenting with at Mission Road."

Apparently the construction of the grade separation after such a long delay in 1936 reflected Depression era economics. The Pacific Electric contributed by drawing the plans, which were approved and built by the State Highway Division, using local labor paid with a portion of the Southern California allotment of Federal relief funds.

The 1935-1936 Annual Report of the Bureau of Engineering reported the Mission Drive-Huntington Road grade separation under construction at a cost of \$275,000. The Annual Report for 1936-1937 reported the structure completed and accepted during the fiscal year, reporting that "final figures are not available from State Highway Department." Correspondence in the CalTrans Bridge Report file, dated March 29, 1939, reports additional costs of 81,605.56, participating costs paid by the Bureau of Public Roads. The entire facing page of Chapter IX of the Report of the Bridge and Structural Design Division was taken up with "before and after" views of the intersection. (See Attachments, Historic Photograph.)

Architecture

On October 23, 1935 Charles West Jones wrote to Mr. Panhorst on Bridge Department internal stationery a complete description of the proposal for the Mission Road Grade Separation. A three party agreement to build the bridge would be entered into between the State, Pacific Electric Railway and City of Los Angeles. The railway company prepared the contract plans, dated November 1935, and submitted them to the city's Art Commission, which approved them.

The steel plate railroad bridge occupied the center section of the structure. Concrete approaches on either end rose to the double-tracked, elevated deck of the railway, allowing the Pasadena Short Line cars to cross the multiple intersection above grade. Passenger access to the streetcars was afforded through two stairways from the street. Only a limited waiting area was available for streetcar passengers, since the design provided neither handrails nor sidewalks elsewhere on the street railway deck. At the present time, modern barrier rails have been constructed along the margin of the pavement.

Decorative details on the concrete portions of the bridge were carefully wrought, reflecting the Art Deco aesthetic of the era. Trolley poles and trolley pole supports were a very important aspect of the design. Poles were pocketed at the ends of the shallow bent arches. Each pole was inserted into an elaborated corbel fastened to a decorative plate. The plate was elaborated downward into a curved bracket attached to the bent column. The most prominent decorative elements were the curved, semi-

circular piers marking the transition from the concrete portions of the bridge to the steel center section. These columns, extending the height of the bridge, were deeply scored. Access stairways were concrete. Piers below the steel section are also ornamented in the Art Deco Style. Bents at the abutment are characterized by closed, shallow divided arches; these function as a retaining wall.

C. Significance

Three distinct requirements have been established for properties to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

- Properties must possess significance
- The significance must satisfy at least one of the four National Register criteria
- Significance must be derived from an understanding of historic context.

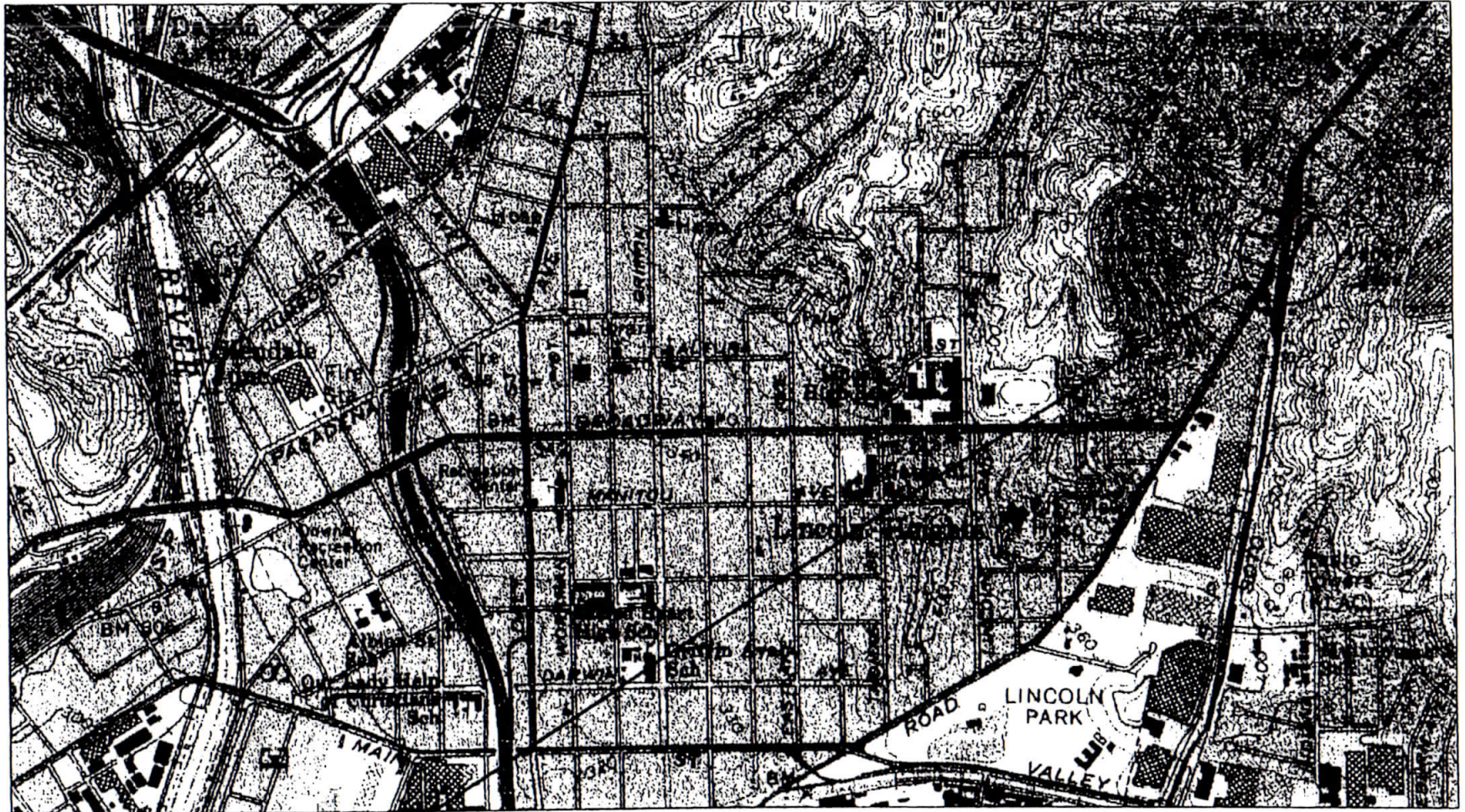
Historic context, the theme, place and time within which a property develops its significance, describes the important aspects of the historic development of an area. Context reveals the quality of significance that is present in sites, building, structures or objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. To be eligible for the National Register, sites, buildings, structures and objects must also be:

- Criterion A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or
- Criterion B. Associated with the lives of person significant in the past; or
- Criterion C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, material, method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- Criterion D. Yield, or be likely to yield, information important in prehistory.

The relevant historic context to determine significance for the Soto Street Bridge over Mission Road and Huntington Drive appears to be Criterion C, Architecture: Art Deco Public Works Projects in Los Angeles in the 1930s. In addition to its significance through Art Deco ornamentation, it has some historic significance under Criterion A through its association with the Federal Aid Projects of the Depression era. In addition, the bridge conveys its significance as part of the historic Pasadena Short Line railroad. The bridge has retained substantial integrity with the exception of association lost when the bridge was taken out of rail service. It also appears that some decorative features may have been lost in seismic upgrade.

Summary of Findings

Originally built as a grade separation for rail transportation enhancement and safety, the bridge has lost its historic function. However, it still retains many of the Art Deco ornamental elements for qualification under Criterion C, Design and Construction. These elements are significant, although they do not appear to be strong enough to warrant an upgrading of the structure to Category 4, Eligible for the National Register.



BRIDGE
53C-0013

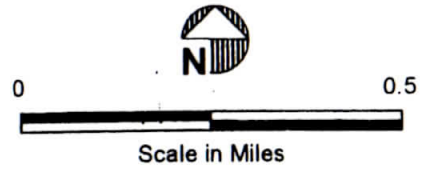
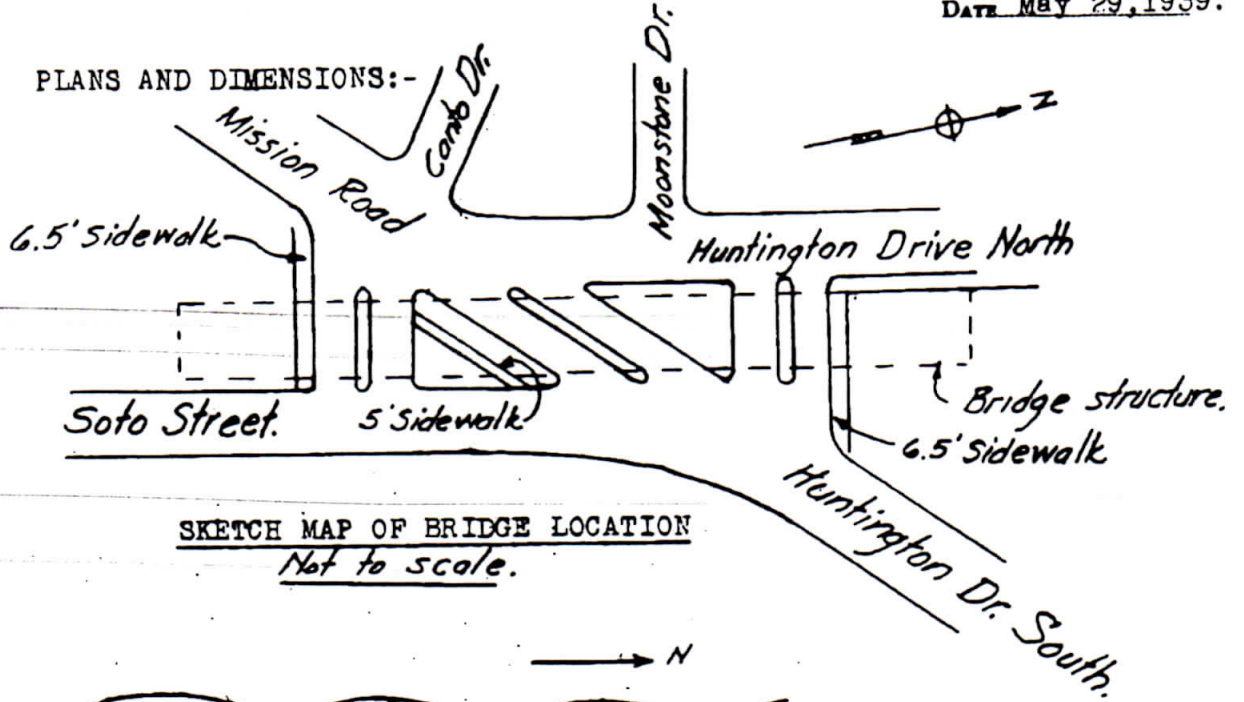


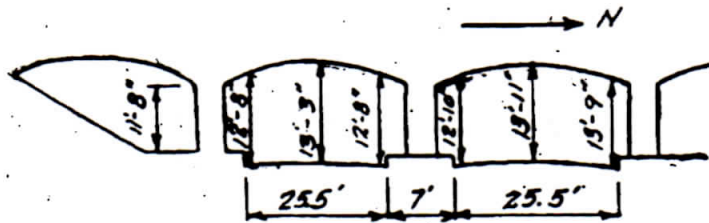
FIGURE 1: SITE
LOCATION MAP
SOTO STREET BRIDGE
OVER MISSION ROAD
(BRIDGE NO. 53C-0013)

Base Map: U.S. Geological Survey 7.5 Minute Topographic Map Series:
Los Angeles, California Quadrangle dated 1966; Photorevised 1981.

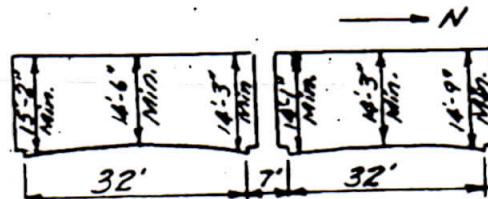
PLANS AND DIMENSIONS:-



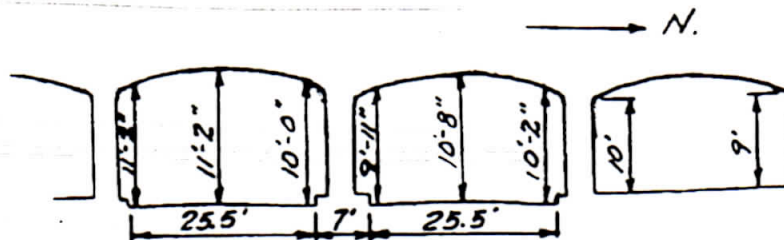
SKETCH MAP OF BRIDGE LOCATION
Not to scale.



CLEARANCE DIAGRAM OF CONNECTING
ROADS AT SOUTH END OF BRIDGE.



CLEARANCE DIAGRAM OF MAIN CROSSING



CLEARANCE DIAGRAM OF CONNECTING
ROADS AT NORTH END OF BRIDGE.

SEE SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF SEP 22 1939 FOLLOWING.