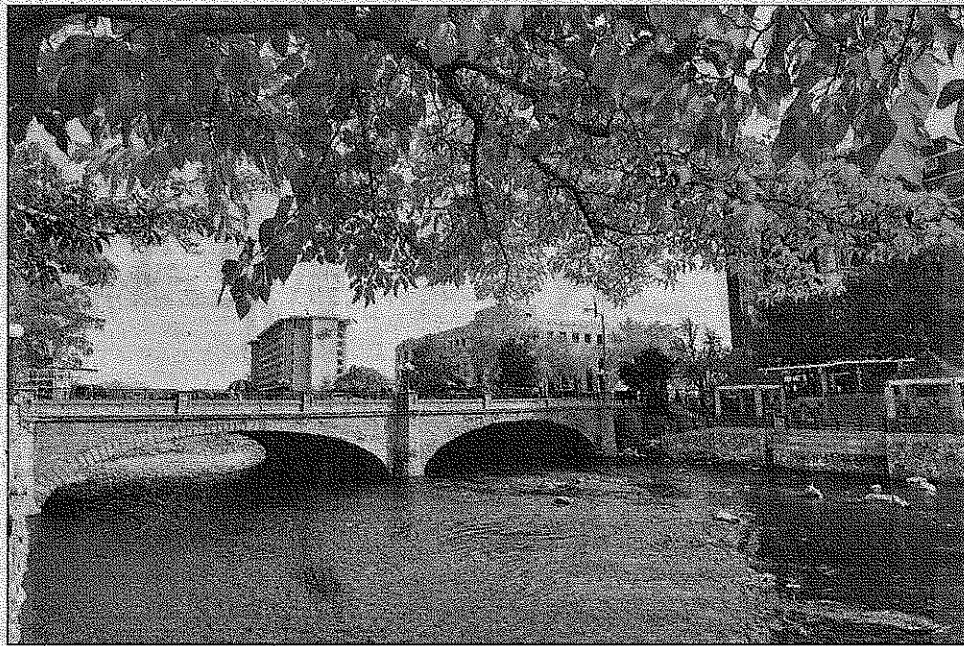


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DOWNTOWN RENO

Bridge's long story coming to an end



TIM DUNN/REG

City officials plan to replace the 105-year-old Virginia Street Bridge, which is a flood hazard.

105-year-old span should be replaced soon, officials say

By Jeff DeLong

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Plans to tear down and replace Reno's historic but problematic Virginia Street Bridge will proceed following action Friday by a coalition of local officials.

The Flood Project Coordinating Committee agreed up to \$1.8 million should be spent to continue planning and begin design of a new bridge. Construction of the \$20 million project could commence in 2013 if funding is secured.

The 105-year-old bridge, made famous in stories of people tossing wedding rings into the Truckee River after divorces, causes major problems during floods.

A bottleneck, the double-arch concrete span captures logs and other flood debris, causing water to back up into the streets of downtown Reno. It was a major source of city flooding during the Truckee River's last major flood in January 1997.

A smaller flood in 2005 damaged the structure, further dem-

onstrating the need for its replacement, officials said.

"It won't stand much longer," Reno Mayor Bob Cashell said Friday.

The \$1.8 million will fund public outreach efforts to determine the exact nature of the open-span structure that will replace the old bridge, begin design and obtain needed permits.

The project, officials said Friday, should also serve as a design template for projects to replace other downtown bridges that contribute to Truckee River flooding. Bridges spanning the river at Sierra, Lake, Center, Booth Street and Arlington Avenue also need replacement.

"This bridge will kind of set the scene for those other bridges," said Kerri Lanza, an engineer with Reno public works.

Officials stressed the need to proceed with the Virginia Street Bridge project as soon as possible, with surveying activity needing to occur while the Truckee River is low.

SEE BRIDGE, 4A »

VIRGINIA STREET BRIDGE

» Concrete, double-arch bridge was built in 1905.

» Dubbed the "bridge of sighs" because of stories of divorcees tossing wedding rings from the bridge into the Truckee River.

» Bridge was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

» Bridge was listed as one of Nevada's most endangered historic places in 2002 and 2006.

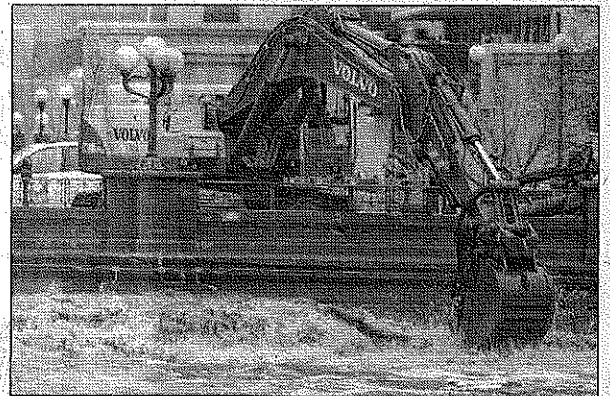
» During floods, the bridge acts as a bottleneck for logs and other debris, substantially contributing to flooding of downtown Reno.

» In 2007, the Reno City Council and Flood Project Coordinating Committee voted to tear down and replace the bridge with a less flood-prone structure.

» \$20 million project could proceed in 2013 if needed funding is secured.

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RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL/RGJ.COM



LIZ MARGERUM/RGJ FILE

A backhoe operator piles debris onto the Virginia Street Bridge during a flood in January 2005. The bridge has been a bottleneck during flooding.

Bridge/Council member laments loss of historic site

From 1A

"It's important to get the surveying done," said Naomi Duerr, director of the Truckee River flood project. "The river is going to start rising. The rains are coming, and the snow is coming."

Reno Councilman Dan Gustin described the bridge

replacement as the "linchpin" for downtown Reno's portion of the broader \$1.6 billion flood project.

He also described the need to remove such a historic structure as unfortunate.

"That's always been the gag in my throat, as you know," Gustin said.