

New bike bridge derails midway

By KEN HASWELL
Of the Emerald

Why is the Willie Knickerbocker Bike Bridge standing almost completed across the Willamette River at Judkins Point, but still closed to both bicycle and pedestrian traffic?

Because it is a case of building a bridge before having a reason to cross a river.

Now that the bridge is completed, Lane County and City of Eugene engineers must come up with bike path designs that will connect the bridge to the existing bike path system on the north side of the river. They must also plan a new bike path, which will run from the south side of the bridge to Franklin Boulevard near the Black Angus restaurant.

The idea for a bike bridge at Judkins Point emerged about a year ago when the Eugene Bicycle Committee was approached by the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). The board intended to place a 42-inch water main either across the Willamette or underneath it.

EWEB's engineers told the bicycle committee that the difference between putting the pipeline over the river or underneath it amounted to nearly \$100,000. They then asked the committee if it was interested in having another bicycle bridge crossing the river.

"It looked like too good an opportunity to miss," said Eugene Traffic Engineer Jim Hanks. "So, we said 'yes, we'd support it' and we then amended our bicycle master plan to include a bridge crossing (at Judkins Point) because there wasn't one at the time and we felt like it was a worthwhile purpose."

Hanks added that the committee told EWEB they didn't want to do any-

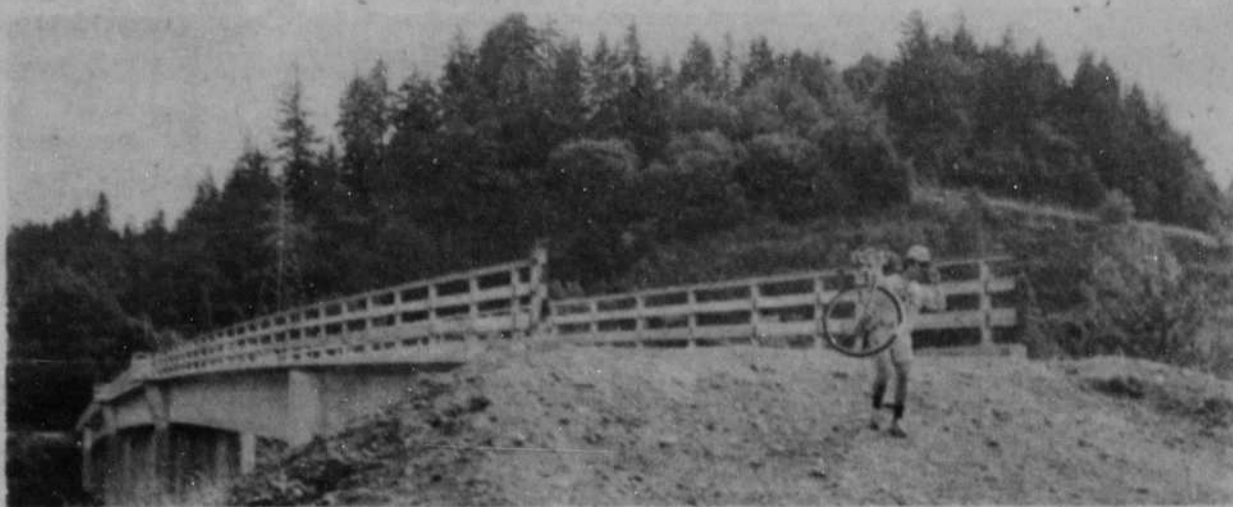


Photo by Jimmi Harris

The new Willie Knickerbocker Bike Bridge is not quite finished, but many area residents are discovering its advantages — even if it means carrying their bikes.

thing until they were sure of the total cost of the project and the availability of funding.

EWEB then agreed to accept bids for construction of the pipeline in three different ways: as a pipeline under the riverbed, as a pipeline bridge across the river and as a combination pipeline and bicycle/pedestrian bridge. The latter was the most expensive; it cost about \$72,000 more than the other two options.

The bicycle committee then contacted Lane County, Eugene and State of Oregon traffic officials, who all agreed it would be a worthwhile project to build another bicycle bridge. The County Commissioners authorized \$50,000, the city authorized \$12,000 and the state authorized \$10,000 toward the project.

The total EWEB pipeline project cost \$1.25 million. That amount includes a 45-inch diameter pipe on the north side of the river and a pipe that splits in two: A 24-inch diameter pipeline heading toward Glenwood and a 42-inch diameter pipeline heading toward Eugene on the south side of the river. The contact for the project was given to Wildish Construction Co. of Eugene.

Hanks says one of the problems with the new bicycle bridge is, "It doesn't connect on both sides right now."

"We felt that the opportunity for a bridge at that location would never be there again, so we decided to build the bridge and to worry about the approaches later," he added.

Since the bridge is a joint venture between the county, the city and the state, responsibility for the approaches to it are divided. The county is responsible for the north side of the river and the city is responsible for the south side approach.

Keith Ellington of the County Transportation Department says the county will start work on the north side approach next week. He says that it intends to move the current bike path far enough away from the bridge abutment as to allow for a gradual sloping of the bridge connector.

George Price, director of Lane County Public Works Department, estimates that the construction of the north side connector will take about six weeks.

Diane Bishop of the Eugene Traffic Engineers Office says the bridge was

"kind of an unscheduled event, so we didn't have any of the designs for any of the work to be done on the south side. We were kind of caught off-guard."

She says the county decided not to do a lot of work on the north side until the city has a path on the south side. But Price disagrees with her, saying the county has had other projects of more importance to contend with.

Dave Reinhard, supervisor of Eugene's engineering division, says they haven't any designs for the south side connector and bike path yet, "but we are hoping to get something underway by the end of summer and constructed by this fall."

He says his department tentatively intends to build a pathway from the south side of the bridge. It will head south until it reaches the old concrete intake of the Millrace, which goes under the railroad tracks. He says there are four culverts that were built there in the early 1940s and have since been covered over with concrete. The engineers intend to convert these culverts into a bicycle underpass to save the cost of building an overpass.

In order to reach the culverts, the city must construct a small footbridge of approximately 40 feet to cross over to the south side of the Millrace intake.

Once under the railroad tracks, the bike path will run along the Millrace to Franklin Boulevard.

Future plans include a bike path heading north to Springfield from the Knickerbocker bridge.

The Willie Knickerbocker Bike Bridge is named after a Eugene citizen who was known throughout the state for his bicycle antics. He lived just outside of Eugene on a 160-acre homestead and died in a Eugene convalescent home in 1960 at the age of 92.

Whitebird offers holistic and legal aid

By STEWART WRIGHT
Of the Emerald

The Whitebird Sociomedical Aid Station is many things — a crisis relief center, a heroin detoxification center, a low cost

medical outpatient clinic, a legal referral service and a counseling center.

Sandy Alperin, the volunteer coordinator of the center, says that although the center receives city and county reve-

nue-sharing funds, private contributions and fees, it is usually running at a loss. There is a paid staff of 20, including counselors, a physician and a naturopathic doctor.

The medical clinic charges on a sliding scale according to income, as does the counseling service.

The naturopathic doctor provides an alternative to conventional medical care. He is licensed by a college of natur-

opathy and uses natural substances, dietary and environmental methods to provide a holistic approach to health. The clinic also has many alternative practitioners coming and going. These include a chiropractor, a licensed massage therapist and a licensed massage acupuncture therapist.

The center also has a legal referral service which refers clients to a board of lawyers

who charge on a sliding scale. Once a week a lawyer is present at the center to give legal advice.

The clients' advocacy council is involved in many projects, including setting up a legal co-op and providing an arena where past and present clients can air their views, Alperin said.

The center holds counseling sessions weekly. This is usually done at a prearranged time and the charge can run up to \$15 per session. There is also a 24-hour crisis intervention service, which deals with everything from drug overdoses to emotional problems.

In addition to the paid staff there is a volunteer staff of about 50. All volunteers go through an eight-week orientation session in which they learn basic communication skills and are introduced to the functions of the center. After the orientation, the volunteers may work in any section of the center they wish. Alperin says that volunteer work at the station is good training for medical professions, paralegal work and counseling.

All decision-making at the center is collective, incorporating views of staff members, volunteers and clients alike. The center is located at 341 E. 12th St., 342-8255.

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