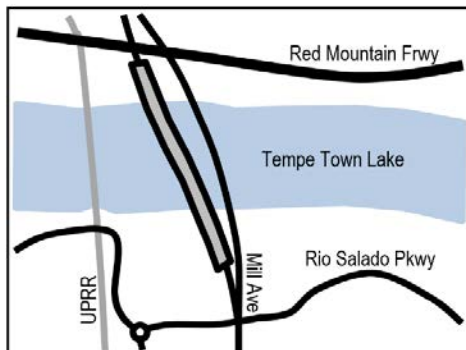

CITY OF TEMPE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Date: 07/13/2023
Agenda Item: 5

ACTION: Request for Certificate of Appropriateness to install arm rests in the OLD MILL AVENUE BRIDGE alcoves. The applicant is the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force. The presenter is Paul Bentley, City of Tempe Deputy Human Services Director. (PL230190/HPO230003).

RECOMMENDATION: Approve



Property Owner:

City of Tempe

Applicant:

Tempe Homeless Solutions
Task Force

Tempe Hist. Prop. Reg. Status:

Designated

National Register Status:

Listed

ATTACHMENTS:

- Memo from Dr. Paul Bentley, Deputy Human Services Director
- Drawing of proposed arm rest design

STAFF CONTACT(S): Zachary J. Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer, 480-350-8870

Department Director: Jeff Tamulevich, Community Development Director

Legal review by: N/A

Prepared by: Zachary J. Lechner, Historic Preservation Officer

COMMENTS:

The Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge is located at 1 South Mill Avenue. The bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1981 and designated as "Historic" by its inclusion in the Tempe Historic Property Register in 1999.

Staff evaluation of the Certificate of Appropriateness request utilized information on the Tempe Directory of Historic Buildings [website](#), the National Register of Historic Places [nomination](#), and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as guidance when analyzing the submittal.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:

From the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge [listing](#) on the *Tempe Directory of Historic Buildings*:

THEME / CONTEXT

The Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge is associated with the context of Community Planning and Development. It falls under the theme of transportation - bridge. . . .

SUMMARY

The Mill Avenue Bridge is the second oldest automobile crossing on the Salt River in the Phoenix metropolitan area, and has been in continuous use since its completion in 1931. It was the major transportation link in three transcontinental highways (U.S. Routes 60, 70, and 80) and Arizona's only north-south route, U.S. Route 89, until the freeway system was begun in the 1950s. The bridge was built to replace an earlier highway bridge built twenty years earlier at Ash Avenue . . . [that] had become increasingly congested and was no longer able to adequately support wider and heavier vehicles. In 1928, a group of Tempe businessmen submitted a request to the Arizona Highway Commission that a new bridge be planned. The bridge was designed by the Arizona Highway Department in 1929. Ralph Hoffman, the bridge engineer for the State of Arizona, signed the contract with Lynch-Cannon Construction Company of Los Angeles, implementing Federal Project 2-B. The bridge was opened to traffic in August of 1931, but was not officially dedicated until 1933. Presiding at the ceremony was Arizona Governor B. B. Moeur, a Tempe physician.

The Mill Avenue Bridge is a ten-span poured concrete, open spandrel structure. The spans are multiple ribbed with open spandrels, each 140 ft. long, supporting a concrete roadway on beamed and webbed columns above the ribs. The ribs are designed as hingeless arches fixed at the piers. Two types of piers are used in the design and the spans are divided into groups of three, four, and three, separated by abutment piers. Abutment piers are of a typical column construction. Abutment piers are extended and carried above the roadway level in four hexagonal towers forming pedestrian rest bays with canopies. This effect is maintained with hexagonal pylons terminating the railings at each end of the bridge.

(HPO note: The alcoves that the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force is requesting to alter with the installation of arm rests, via a Certificate of Appropriateness, are the "hexagonal towers" and "rest bays" referenced above. Like the rest of the bridge itself, the eight alcoves (four on each side) are made of poured concrete. Their intended use was to provide pedestrians traversing the bridge with a

shaded sitting area.)

PROJECT ANALYSIS:

The applicant seeks to install arm rests on the benches in each of the eight alcoves (“pedestrian rest bays”) on the iconic Old Mill Avenue Bridge. These arm rests are designed to prevent the local unhoused population from establishing encampments in the alcoves, vandalizing them, and otherwise using them improperly. To address these ongoing problems, City staff have been removing debris and various belongings from the alcoves and power washing the structures on a regular basis. The applicant is seeking a permanent solution to unauthorized use of the alcoves, one that will allow City staff to reduce its time-consuming and costly clean-up efforts, which, in the case of power washing, may have a long-term detrimental impact on the historical integrity of each alcove’s concrete structure.

In July 2022, the Homeless Solutions Task Force requested a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission to install metal gates across each alcove. Feedback from the Commission was largely negative. The Commission did not authorize the Certificate of Appropriateness and urged the Homeless Solutions Task Force to devise a less invasive solution.

The applicant’s current (arm rest) proposal will alter the appearance of the alcoves only slightly, neither unduly distracting from the alcoves’ aesthetics or preventing their historic use as rest and shade areas for pedestrians. The applicant has assured the Historic Preservation Office that installation of the arm rests will not require drilling into the concrete of each structure, and each set of arm rests will be removable. The white paint color used for each arm rest will allow it to blend in with the alcove, further reducing its visual impact. Overall, the arm rest proposal is a reasonable solution to a persistent problem that will have an insignificant impact on the alcoves’ and the bridge’s historical integrity.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties include four distinct standards: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. The Standards for Preservation (detailed below) are most applicable to the applicant’s proposal. The most relevant Standards for Preservation in this case are as follows:

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.

4. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
5. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based upon the information provided and the above analysis, should the Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the applicant's proposed plan for installing arm rests in the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge alcoves (PL230190/HPO230003), HPO recommends approval be subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. Installed arm rests shall be removable and cause no structural damage to any portion of the bridge alcoves.
2. The paint color for the arm rests shall match the City-approved paint color for the Old Mill Avenue Bridge.
3. The Certificate of Appropriateness shall only be valid after the applicant obtains any and all other necessary entitlements from the Planning Division.
4. Any changes to the arm rest design plan as submitted shall be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Officer for compliance with the Certificate of Appropriateness and issuance of a Certificate of No Effect.

SAMPLE MOTION:

"I move to approve the applicant's request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of arm rests in each of the alcoves on the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge, located at 1 South Mill Avenue, contingent on adherence to the conditions of approval contained in the staff report.

(Commissioners may also amend the conditions of approval when making a motion.)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Zach Lechner, Historic Preservation Commission Staff Liaison
THROUGH: Tim Burch, Community Health and Human Services Director
FROM: Paul Bentley, Dep. Community Health and Human Services Dir.
DATE: July 3, 2023
SUBJECT: Proposed arm rests for “pedestrian rest bays” on Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge



Purpose:

On July 13, 2022, representatives of the City of Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force presented a proposal to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with the intent of addressing health and safety concerns specific to pedestrian rest bays on Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge (see the attached memorandum). At the completion of the presentation, the HPC directed staff to identify alternative solutions that will not impact the structural integrity of the bays, while promoting the health and safety of the community.

The City of Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force has identified an alternative solution to ensuring the pedestrian rest bays on Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge are used for their original intent while promoting the overall health and safety of the community. This solution is to integrate arm rests into the bench seating. The task force is seeking the Historic Preservation Commission’s concurrence to move forward with this alternative solution.

Background:

Completed in 1931, the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge is an iconic landmark in Tempe and a historic gateway to our city, providing an automobile and pedestrian crossing of Tempe Town Lake and the Salt River. The bridge has been listed on the Tempe Historic Property Register since 1999 and has withstood many floods and strong monsoon storms due to its sturdy construction. Included in the construction of this historic bridge are four hexagonal towers on each side of the bridge which form a total of 8 canopied, “pedestrian rest bays” (also referred to as “alcoves” in this memo) along the southbound side of the bridge.

There has been an ongoing challenge with persons utilizing the alcove spaces on the bridge as temporary shelter or even more permanent encampment locations. The alcoves are directly adjacent to northbound and southbound vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic on the bridge. This is an unsafe and unhealthy place to utilize as shelter. Further, current usage has resulted in an accumulation of trash in the alcove areas.

This continued activity prevents these spaces from being used for their intended purpose: to provide those crossing the bridge on foot to temporarily use the alcove benches as a pedestrian rest bay area, ideal for a break or to take in the scenery of the surrounding area.

Members of the Tempe City Council and the City Manager expressed concern about the issue of the unauthorized use of the alcove spaces on the bridge to the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force, a cross-department group of City staff working to implement strategies to reduce the number of unhoused individuals in Tempe through positive shelter and housing solutions, and to address the various human service, public safety, and sanitary issues that homeless encampments present.

To address the bridge alcove issue, the City of Tempe Engineering and Transportation and Community Health and Human Services Department staff members conduct daily visits to the bridge to remove trash and encourage those living unhoused in the bridge alcoves to engage with the Community Health and Human Services - HOPE Team toward services, resources, shelter, and housing solutions. Engineering and Transportation Department staff also power-wash the pedestrian rest bay areas weekly and the Community Development Department works to remove any graffiti as quickly as possible. Maintenance of these alcove areas is very staff intensive and there is concern that continued power-washing of the alcove walls could begin to deteriorate the bridge's construction materials. These efforts have reduced the frequency of unhoused individuals sheltering in the alcoves but have not eliminated this activity.

Recommendation:

As an update to the July 3, 2022 HPC meeting, staff, working as part of the Tempe Homeless Solutions Task Force, request that the Historic Preservation Commission grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of visually appealing arm rests at each of the 8 alcoves or pedestrian rest bays on the Tempe (Old Mill Avenue) Bridge.

The arm rests are intended to prevent anyone from using the existing seating benches as a place to sleep or lay down (see prototype images below). This environmental design solution promotes the intended use of the alcoves, as well as the health and safety of the community by reducing traffic concerns and the accumulation of trash and debris.



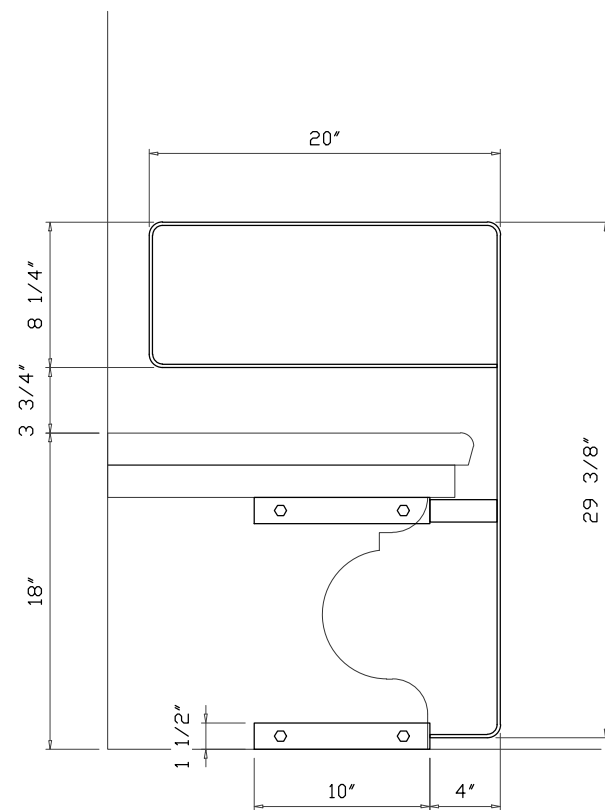
Other permanent and temporary barriers have been considered. Permanent barriers have been discarded due to their potential negative impact on the structure of the alcoves and their degradation. There is also concern that a temporary barrier, such as a construction/traffic barricades, metal fencing barricade or wood covering would be unsightly, drawing attention away from the beauty of the historic bridge's construction. Additionally, a nonpermanent barrier such as a barricade or a large planter likely would not keep individuals out of the alcove areas. These barriers could also become an item that can be made in to a "shade structure" by individuals wanting to utilize the space for unauthorized purposes. Temporary barriers may also obscure law enforcement officers' view of individuals utilizing the area behind the barrier for unauthorized purposes.

Next Steps:

The Engineering and Transportation Department would be responsible for installing the arm rests and their staff would work collaboratively with the Tempe Historic Preservation Office to ensure as minimal impact or alteration to the bridge as possible. The Engineering and Transportation Department staff would be responsible for maintenance of the arm rests.

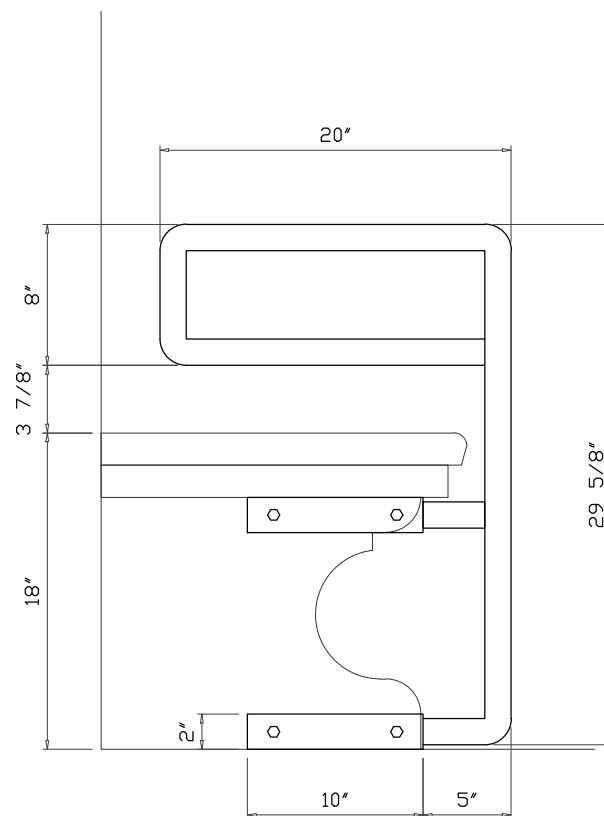
The cost to purchase and affix the arm rests to the bridge alcoves is approximately \$80,000 (i.e., \$5,000 per arm rest X 16 arm rests). Funding has been identified to cover this cost. Should HPC grant the certificate of appropriateness, it is anticipated that the arm rests could be manufactured and installed by the end of this calendar year.

Powder coating option available: Need to specify Color Choice



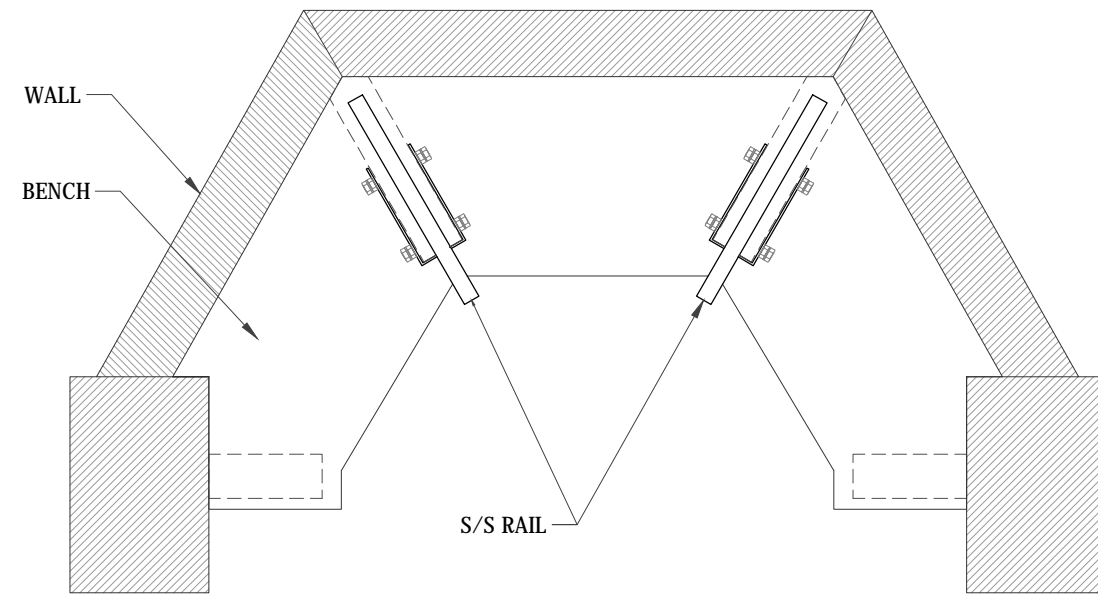
1 1/2" x 3/16" S/S FLAT BAR

FIG. A

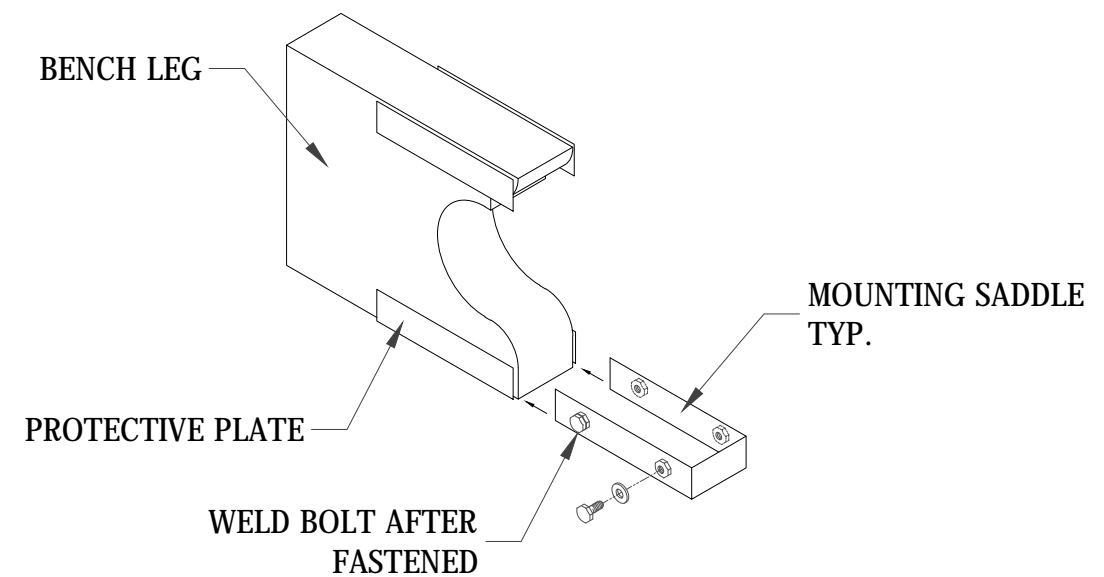


1 1/2" SQ. S/S TUBING

FIG. B



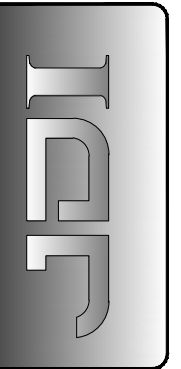
PLAN VIEW, TYP. (1) LOCATIONS



BENCH DIVIDER RAILS (QTY.2)

REVISIONS:

- 1
- 2
- 3



JAYCO DESIGN AND
INSTALLATIONS
2560 N33rd Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85009
jaycoinstallations.com

TEMPE LAKE BRIDGE
TEMPE, AZ

SHEET NAME:
CUSTOM
STAINLESS

DATE: 02-15-2023

SCALE: AS NOTED

DRAWN BY: JJM

PROJECT NO. 00-0000-0

SHEET NO.

SS1



GENERAL NOTE
PLANS ARE APPROVED AS DRAWN (WITH CORRECTIONS AS NOTED). ITEMS
WILL BE FABRICATED PER THESE PLANS. JAYCO ASSUMES NO
RESPONSIBILITY IF THE PLANS DO NOT FOLLOW SPECIFICATIONS.