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City Expands Historic Bridge to Accommodate Future Eastside Trains

- 1st Street Viaduct will once again carry mass transit

By NED RACINE

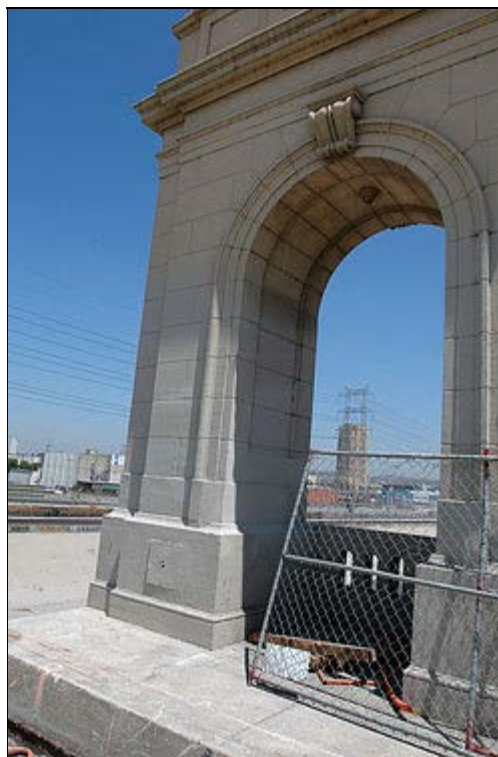
(July 3, 2007) The 1st Street Viaduct, which has carried Angelinos across the Los Angeles River since 1929, is being widened to carry Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension railcars.

The expansion of the 71-foot-wide viaduct—a bridge composed of several short spans—began in March. Scott McConnell, Metro's construction manager for the city's widening project, said the project is scheduled to be complete in October 2007.

The viaduct's north side will be widened 26 feet to accommodate tracks down its center, while still providing two traffic lanes on each side. The six-foot-wide sidewalks on each side of the viaduct will remain.

In addition to widening the roadway, the viaduct's support structure is being bolstered to hold the weight of the Gold Line rail cars. To do this, beams are being added to existing girders just below the roadway.

Photos by Ned Racine



One of the viaduct's pylons frames the Union Station Gateway Center.



Workers reinforce the girders supporting the 1st Street Viaduct.

One of 12 historic bridges that cross the once fickle Los Angeles River, the viaduct opened for traffic on January 1, 1929. No stranger to transit, the viaduct carried the Pacific Electric Railway's Red Cars until 1961, when the tracks were paved over.



To prepare for arrival of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, the 1st Street Viaduct across the Los Angeles River is being widened and reinforced. One of the viaduct's historical light standards lies on the sidewalk.

Today, the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works estimates the viaduct carries 21,500 vehicular trips daily.

Efforts are underway to preserve the distinctive masonry light standards and 10 pylons along the quarter-mile span. An oil pipeline and water line have already been removed from the viaduct.

The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, which will feature eight stations (two underground), will span six miles from Union Station in downtown Los Angeles via the Arts District/Little Tokyo and Boyle Heights to Atlantic/Pomona Boulevards in East Los Angeles. It is scheduled to open in 2009.