

Sunset Bridge, the early years

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Sunset Bridge in 1957, over what is now the 405 Freeway

Caltrans photo

Say goodbye to the Sunset Bridge over the 405. The overcrossing—a symbol of California’s freeway-building love affair that profoundly affected the evolution of Los Angeles—was completed in 1956.

On Friday, after 54 years of loyal service, the bridge will start coming down, to be rebuilt as part of another ambitious transportation initiative—the \$1.034 billion project to construct a [10-mile northbound carpool lane](#) on the 405 Freeway, along with a wide range of other improvements.

The bridge cost \$722,657 to build over what was then called the Sepulveda Freeway. California Governor Goodwin J. Knight was on hand to address the “groups of civic leaders, businessmen and residents of nearby communities” who turned out for the 1954 groundbreaking. “Highways are no longer a luxury, but a necessity to move goods and people, the Governor told them,” according to a report at the time in a publication called California Highways and Public Works.

The publication also noted: “Early development of the Sepulveda Freeway is of importance to the west and south coastal sections of the Los Angeles metropolitan area as well as to afford traffic relief on existing highways and streets through the San Fernando Valley leading into and through central Los Angeles, the Governor stated.”

On the question of traffic relief, at least, some things never change. But Los Angeles itself has—dramatically—as these historic Caltrans photos of the Sunset Bridge show.

Now, more than a half-century later, six nights of [demolition work](#) on the south side of the bridge are expected to start after midnight Friday. The tool of choice to bring down the bridge piece-by-piece is the [hoe ram](#)—basically a

crane with a huge jackhammer attached. There will be three of them working Friday night in a work area that will be swaddled in 6,000 square feet of sound blankets that contractors hope will help muffle the noise. Anyone with questions or concerns is encouraged to call the project hotline, (213) 922-3665.



The view from above in January, 1955.

Caltrans photo



Another view of the bridge in April, 1957

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