Gautho, Julia

From: Kevin Maguire <kmaguire831@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 9, 2026 10:40 AM
To: Margaux Morgan; Gerry Jensen; City Clerk; Clarke, Joe; Goldstein, Jamie; Melinda Orbach; Westman, Susan
Subject: Item 9B – Stockton Avenue Bridge: Determine Caltrans Funding Before Committing Local Funds

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Mayor Morgan and Councilmembers,

I appreciate the Council's unanimous August 27 direction to finally address the Stockton Avenue Bridge maintenance recommendations and to develop a genuine preservation and rehabilitation strategy.

However, the information in tonight's report changes the equation substantially.

Council's August 27 direction contemplated completing the Caltrans-recommended polyester concrete overlay for construction costs not exceeding $150,000 and, if possible, before winter. We now know the preliminary project cost is approximately $410,000 — $126,000 for engineering and approximately $284,000 for construction — before traffic control, approach-roadway work, inspection and materials testing are included.

Staff is therefore presenting methacrylate treatment as a lower-cost interim alternative at approximately $172,000, again before several additional costs are included. Staff itself describes methacrylate as an interim preservation measure rather than the treatment recommended by Caltrans.

I don't believe Council should allow the desire to complete something before winter to drive the engineering decision.

There is also a major funding question missing from tonight's report.

In April, the City's own structural consultant stated that, based on the 2022 Caltrans inspection report, the Stockton Avenue Bridge **is currently eligible for Bridge Preventive Maintenance Program funding to repair the bridge deck.** The consultant also indicated that the newer 2026 condition information could result in Caltrans reassessing the bridge for Highway Bridge Program funding for rehabilitation and potentially replacement.

Caltrans' Highway Bridge Program provides federal aid to local agencies for bridge rehabilitation and preventive maintenance. Federal preventive-maintenance eligibility has existed for local public bridges for many years.

So before Capitola commits $172,000, $410,000 or potentially considerably more of local money, I ask Council to direct staff to obtain answers to five questions:

1. Has the City ever applied for HBP or BPMP funding for Stockton Avenue Bridge, particularly for the Caltrans-recommended deck work?
2. What portion of the polyester overlay is currently eligible for federal reimbursement, and what local match would Capitola actually have to provide?
3. Has Caltrans reviewed the March 2026 condition findings, and could those findings make a more comprehensive rehabilitation project eligible for HBP funding?
4. Would proceeding now with locally funded methacrylate or polyester work affect future reimbursement or eligibility for a larger rehabilitation project?
5. What immediate work does the bridge engineer say is actually necessary before this winter for safety, as opposed to desirable preventive maintenance that could be properly designed and funded?
6. Was that April recommendation carried out?
7. Were the March 2026 inspection findings and photographs actually sent to Caltrans, when were they sent, and
8. what response has the City received regarding updated HBP eligibility?

The City's future RFP now calls for a consultant experienced in the Caltrans local-assistance process and in identifying state and federal funding. That's good. But that funding analysis should happen **before**, not after, Council commits hundreds of thousands of dollars from local reserves.

Council inherited a maintenance problem that appears to have accumulated for years. Please don't allow that past delay to create an artificial urgency that leads to another rushed decision.

Do the necessary safety work. Monitor the bridge through winter. But take the time to design the right preservation project, pursue every available Caltrans and federal dollar, and bring Council an apples-to-apples comparison of cost, lifespan and long-term rehabilitation compatibility before committing substantial local funds.

Finally, I ask Council to address the management failure that brought us here. It is unacceptable for inspection reports concerning a major piece of City infrastructure to be received for years while significant maintenance recommendations apparently never reach the City Manager or Council for a funding decision.

Please direct the City Manager to establish a formal infrastructure accountability process for all major City assets — bridges, roads, storm infrastructure, the Wharf and other critical facilities. Every inspection report should be logged, reviewed, assigned to a responsible department, its recommendations tracked to completion or formally deferred, available grant funding evaluated, and significant unfunded needs reported to Council, and published on the city web portal for public transparency.

That is the accountability piece still missing from this discussion.

If staff recommends deferring maintenance, that should be a documented management decision — not something Council discovers a decade later.

Stockton Bridge cannot simply become a lesson about what went wrong. Council should require the City Manager to show you what management controls are being put in place so this cannot happen again.

Kevin Maguire
Capitola