

MITIGATIVE RECORDATION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCE
LACMTA BRIDGE OVER COLORADO BOULEVARD

**CHRIS Site No. 19-187944; Caltrans Bridge No. 53C0596
City of Arcadia, Los Angeles County, California**

Prepared for:

Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority
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August 2, 2010
CRM TECH Contract No. 2465

Name: LACMTA Bridge over Colorado Boulevard
CHRIS Site No. 19-187944; Caltrans Bridge No. 53C0596

Property Type: Railroad bridge

Construction Date: 1933

Location: On the LACMTA (formerly ATSF) mainline
At the intersection with Colorado Boulevard
Approximately 400 feet west of Santa Anita Avenue
City of Arcadia, Los Angeles County, California
Within the Rancho Santa Anita land grant
T1N R11W, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian

Owned and Operated by: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation
Authority (LACMTA)
320 S. Santa Fe Avenue,
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Introduction:

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (LACMTA) railroad bridge over Colorado Boulevard (Fig. 1), listed as No. 53C0596 in the California Department of Transportation's historic bridge inventory, was identified during a cultural resources survey conducted in 2004-2005 as a property that appears to be eligible for local designation as a historic site (Myra L. Frank/Jones & Stokes and Applied Earthworks 2005:8; MGLFECA 2007:3-5-30). Therefore, it is considered to meet the statutory definition of a "historical resource," as provided by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; see PRC §5020.1(j) and Title 14 CCR §15064.5(a)(1)-(3)). In 2006, the bridge was included in the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS), and designated Site No. 19-187944 (Tang 2006). This report presents the results of a comprehensive documentation program completed in July 2010, which is intended as part of the mitigation measures necessitated by the possible demolition of the bridge during the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension project.

Description:

The LACMTA bridge over Colorado Boulevard, formerly a part of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (ATSF), is a single-span steel plate girder bridge of the half-through type, constructed of two riveted I-beams supported on each end by a concrete abutment (Figs. 2, 3). It measures approximate 140' in total length and 20' in width. The two massive I-beams serving as the main girders each measure 8'4" tall and are topped with 1'8"-wide flange plates, while the floor beams measure approximately 1' wide. The main girders are reinforced on the interior by triangular stiffener plates at the interval of 3'6" or 7' (Fig. 4). The bottom of the span has a clearance of 14'8" feet over the street below.

The bridge carries one set of railroad tracks resting on wooden ties and a ballast of crushed rock, flanked by the top portion of the main girders that serve as sidewalls (Fig. 4). Portions of the railroad bed are covered with vegetation, as the bridge has evidently been out of service for some time. The abutments sport a smooth surface and are topped with thick concrete sidewalls with Art Deco-style motifs. Among these ornamental features are slender, stepped towers with multi-gable caps at the edges of the abutments and three-part rectangular relieves along the top border, which has a slight overhang (Fig. 5).

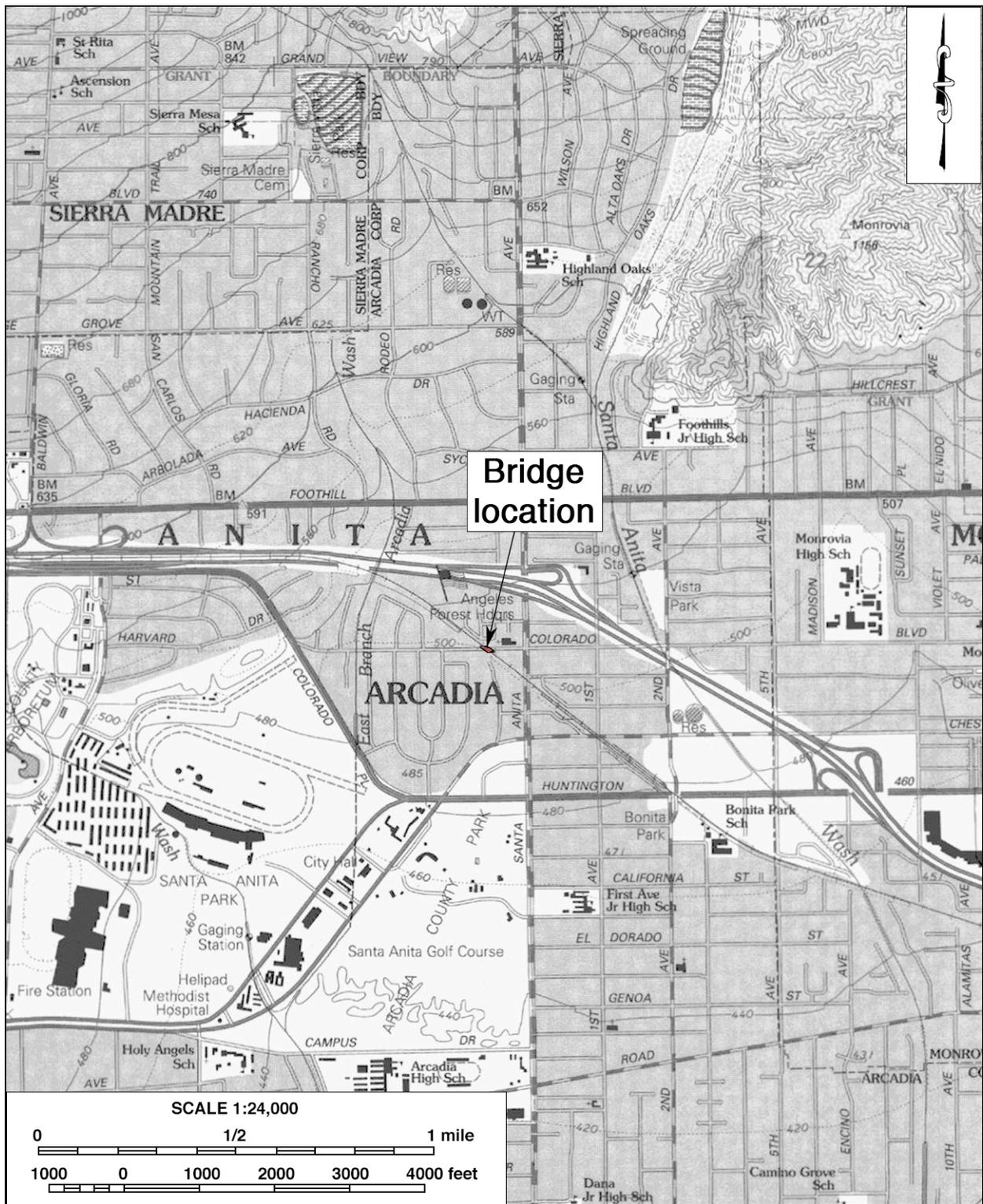


Figure 1. Location of the bridge. (Based on the USGS Mt. Wilson, Calif., 1:24,000 quadrangle)

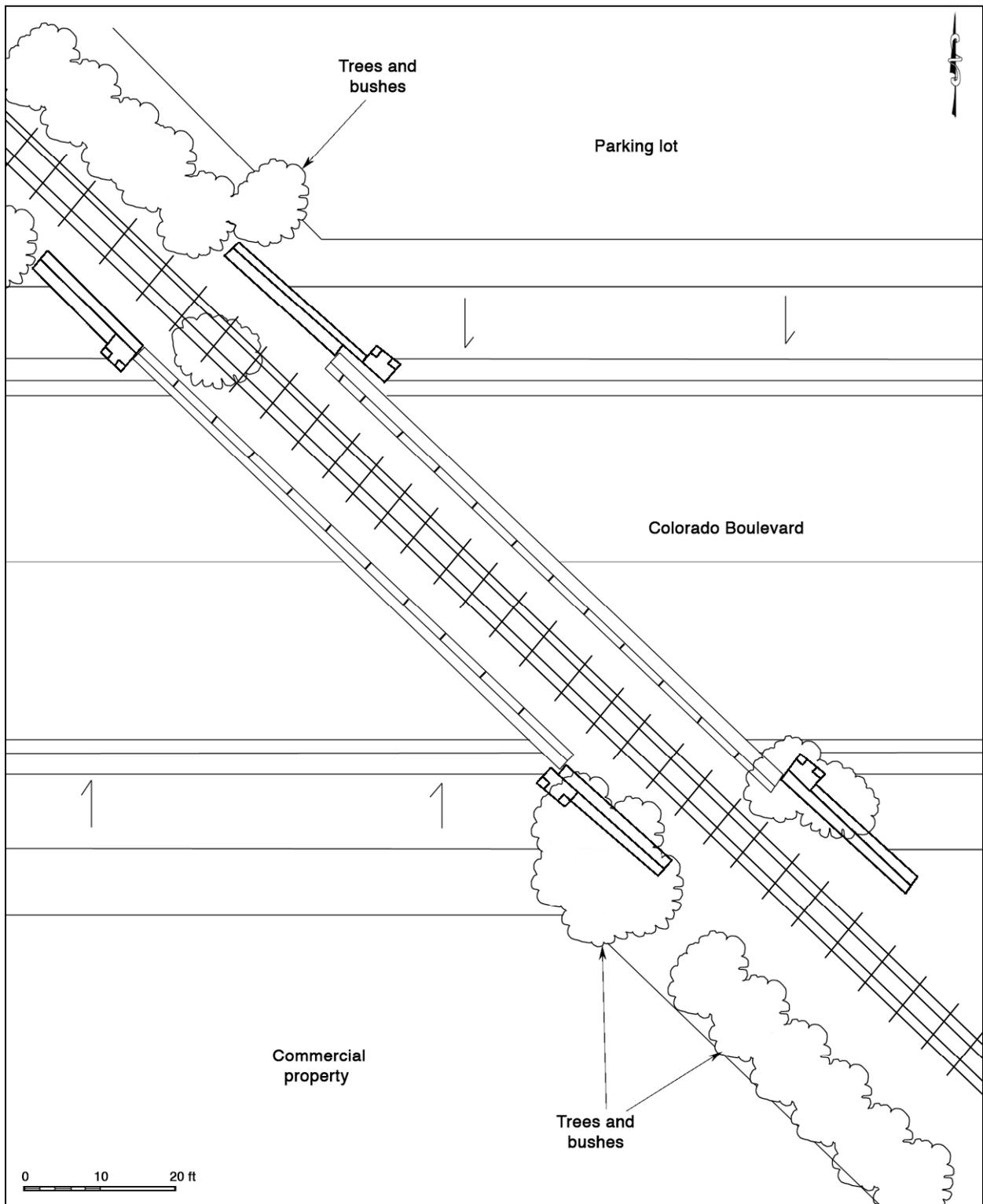


Figure 2. Sketch map of the bridge.



Figure 3. Overview of the bridge. (View to the west; photo taken on July 27, 2010)



Figure 4. Deck of the bridge. (View to the southeast; photo taken on July 10, 2006)



Figure 5. Art Deco-style ornamentation on the concrete sidewalk. (View to the northwest; photo taken on July 10, 2006)

History:

This bridge was constructed over Colorado Boulevard (formerly Orange Avenue) in 1933 through a contract between the ATSF, the County of Los Angeles, and the City of Arcadia (Lozano 2006). Under the contract, the ATSF designed the steel bridge span, the county designed the concrete abutments, and the city apparently provided the right-of-way (*ibid.*). Maintenance records indicate that the bridge was built using design template identified as "E65," but no further information was available on the template (Feldman 2005:1-2). The bridge apparently replaced a previous overpass, which was present at the same site at least by 1923 (City of Arcadia 1923).

The rail line at this location was originally built in 1885-1887 as part of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad, which was acquired by the ATSF in 1887 and became a part of the ATSF's first line to reach the port of Los Angeles (Bryant 1974:102-103; Serpico 1988:23). During the heyday of the steel rails, it was a part of the ATSF's famed Kite-Shaped Track, a popular late 19th and early 20th century railroad excursion route. So named because of its resemblance to a racetrack with only one turn and its stretches converging to a point (ATSF n.d.; Moore 1973a; Fig. 6), the Kite-Shaped Track played an important role not only in the economic development but also in the social and cultural life of southern California. The entire route, as designated by the ATSF, extended a total of 166 miles from Los Angeles in the west and Mentone in the east, with the ATSF hub of San Bernardino at the nexus.

The Kite-Shaped Track was born of ATSF's aggressive expansion into California in the 1880s. After the construction of its first subsidiary in California in 1885 successfully broke the Southern Pacific Railway's transportation monopoly in the state, the ATSF completed

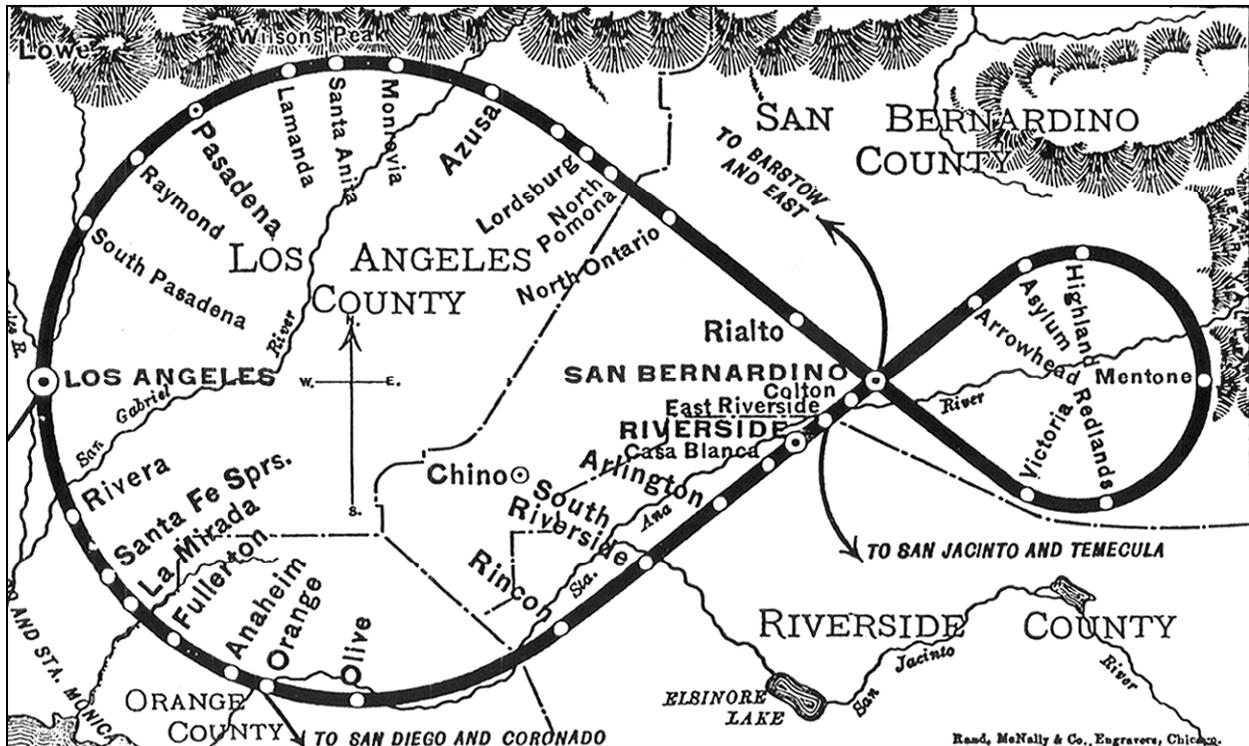


Figure 6. Schematic map of the Kite-Shaped Track. (Source: *The Citrograph* [Redlands], March 26, 1892)

the Kite-Shaped Track by 1892 to provide its own connection to the population and freight centers in the Los Angeles Basin and the Inland Empire. While its initial focus was on agricultural freight, the ATSF quickly realized the value of the Kite-Shaped Track as a tourist vehicle to promote its passenger services and the sale of its land holdings (Moore 1973b).

From 1892 to the mid-1910s, the ATSF's Kite-Shaped Track excursion—or "kite-lining" for short—ranked among the leading tourist attractions in southern California, for local residents as well as travelers from the eastern United States (Moore 1973b; Garret 1996:107). With the catchy slogan "No Scene Twice Seen" (Gustafson and Serpico 1992:65), the excursion gained nationwide fame and propped such cities along the route as Pasadena, Redlands, and Riverside into favored winter resorts for the rich and famous. With the dawn of the automobile age, however, the popularity of the Kite-Shaped Track began to dwindle, and the excursion was no longer offered after World War I (Moore 1973b; Duke 1991:12). Regular passenger service and freight traffic also declined steadily after the 1920s, until in 1956 the ATSF finally abandoned a portion of the Kite-Shaped Track to make way for a highway project (*Sun* 1956).

Significance:

According to CEQA provisions, "'historical resource' includes, but is not limited to, any object, building, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which is historically or archaeologically significant, or is significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California" (PRC §5020.1(j)). More specifically, CEQA guidelines state that the term

"historical resources" applies to any such resources listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, included in a local register of historical resources, or determined to be historically significant by the Lead Agency (Title 14 CCR §15064.5(a)(1)-(3)).

Regarding the proper criteria of historical significance, CEQA guidelines mandate that "a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be 'historically significant' if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources" (Title 14 CCR §15064.5(a)(3)). A resource may be listed in the California Register if it meets any of the following criteria:

- (1) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.
- (2) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.
- (3) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.
- (4) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (PRC §5024.1(c))

In light of the information presented above, it could be argued that the LACMTA bridge over Colorado Boulevard is associated with the history of the Kite-Shaped Track, which itself may be considered an important event in the social, economic, and cultural annals of southern California in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, as discussed above, the heyday of "kite-lining" lasted from the 1890s to the mid-1910s, after which the Kite-Shaped Track, like the railroad industry at large, entered a period of gradual but steady decline in the face of the momentous challenge from proliferating automobiles and fast improving highways. Constructed in 1933, the bridge over Colorado Boulevard postdates the most significant period in the history of the Kite-Shaped Track by nearly two decades, and thus does not demonstrate a particularly close association with this historic event.

Repeated studies have uncovered no evidence the bridge is closely associated with any other events or persons of recognized historic significance in national, state, or regional history. Neither is there any evidence that it represents the work of a prominent architect, designer, or builder. The bridge exhibits the basic characteristics of the then-popular Art Deco style, but it is essentially a product of standard design and construction, and does not qualify as an important example of its style, type, period, region, or method of construction except in a local context. According to Feldman (2005:2):

Common bridges seen along most rail corridors are the timber pile bridges with wood decks and railings and the riveted plate girder, or thru girder. The thru girder bridge has been used for railroad bridges since the mid-19th century and is one of the most common designs still in use throughout the rail system in the United States. The railroad bridge over Colorado Boulevard in the City of Arcadia is an example of a thru girder bridge. Generally, this style of bridge is unadorned and utilitarian; however, the Colorado Boulevard bridge has smooth concrete abutments with Art Deco styling along the upper portion... No other examples of a thru girder railroad bridge with decorative abutments similar to the Colorado Boulevard bridge were observed along the existing rail corridor.