



Cal Trans bridge work to take four years

Construction on the U.S. 101 Eel River Bridge Seismic Retrofit Project in Rio Dell is underway and is expected to continue through the end of 2030. That's the word from Myles Cochrane, Cal Trans public information officer.

"During construction, traffic impacts are expected to be relatively minimal," he said.

Northbound traffic is being shifted onto the southbound bridge while work takes place on the northbound structure, a traffic configuration expected to remain for an extended period during the project, Cochrane notes, adding "drivers will see lane shifts, reduced speeds to 55 mph, and very minimal, if any, disruption to traffic."

As noted here last fall, the project will address seismic vulnerabilities on the northbound bridge, built in 1941 and repaired in 1965 and 1989. Work includes partially replacing and seismically retrofitting portions of the bridge, including a partial retrofit of the north frame, full replacement of the south frames and improvements to the bridge approach. The construction cost remains approximately \$69.8 million, including more than \$61.8 million in federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding and \$8 million in SB 1 funding.

"The main thing I'd add," Cochrane says, "is that this is a long-term safety and resiliency project. The goal is to strengthen this important U.S. 101 crossing so it can better withstand a major seismic event while keeping traffic moving as much as possible during construction."

NEW TAXI SERVICE OPERATING IN SCOTIA

Bee There on Time Transportation is a new service based in Scotia. Owner Michael Whitney has worked for years as a non-medical transportation driver for other firms, a job designation meaning he is qualified to drive those who may be elderly or disabled and therefore require mobility assistance such as getting in and out of the vehicle.

Whitney has lived in central and southern Humboldt for many years, including Fortuna and Rio Dell. "I've probably driven 100,000 miles per year," he says, and is offering to drive others in his own business, wherever and whenever they need to go.

Examples he gives of transportation needs others might have include middle-of-the-night departures to get to San Francisco for a morning medical appointment, picking up or dropping someone off at the airport in McKinleyville, or a shopping trip to Eureka. "I drove one woman to Sacramento" to get a vehicle that was being towed, he said, and another to Arizona.

For short hops of less than 10 miles, Whitney charges a flat \$20 per trip, and for longer ones, \$2.50 per mile. His Prius can take up to three passengers. While he doesn't have an online presence, he can be reached at 707.223.0532 and of course appreciates as much lead time as possible to schedule a trip.



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Deadline for September newsletter is August 8th.
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Elizabeth Warren wears a couple different hats at the Rio Dell Community Resource Center, where she teaches free art classes to the public and is active in the operation of the community garden.

She launched a new class last month, using recycled items to produce a robot-like figure, which she found to be a favorite of the children she taught at Toddy Thomas School in Fortuna back in the day. "SCRAP Humboldt would come into my class about once a year and show how to make things" from repurposed materials, she said, referring to an Arcata-based non-profit that closed during the pandemic. She plans a driftwood and seashell project for August. "My goal is to teach one class a month," she says, noting that a wide range of people may show up on any night and provides a nice mix of interactions. Warren supplies all the materials needed.

Warren's stained-glass art has been featured here before and examples of her craft projects are on her YouTube channel ZabE Rocks! which has nearly 450 subscribers. But another passion is for the community garden managed by the Resource Center. She is part of a team that has overseen the redesign of the property which is currently growing a variety of vegetables including broccoli, celery, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and tomatillos as well as flowers and a dozen fruit trees.

"We always need volunteers," she indicates a poster with a QR code people can scan to learn more, which can be seen around town, as well as a Facebook page. Rio Dell school children come during the school year as part of the After School program, and members of the California Conservation Corp have been volunteering as well. "It's a daily need," she says of the work involved, which includes hand watering from a hose as there is no irrigation system.

"We are trying to raise enough food so we will have a table of produce at the commodities distribution," Warren said, and to perhaps have sweet potatoes as part of the community's Thanksgiving dinner. She noted the two nearby churches, Liberty Tabernacle and the host organization, Rio Dell Baptist, are such good neighbors, allowing volunteers the use of resources such as tools and bathroom access.

But needs remain, and she ticks off the list of things she'd like to see the garden able to receive. First up is soil, a lot of it. Others include an irrigation system; a gazebo in which classes and demonstrations can be offered; and a screen material for the fence as way to break the wind that sweeps so strongly across the garden, affecting the plants, and might help to keep cats out. A goal she has for the garden is to be a source of information and inspiration for other community resource centers in the region and beyond.



Fire runs for June 2026:

Medical aid – 44
Billable – false alarm
commercial – 6
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Meet the new assistant fire chief

Nate McKnight became assistant fire chief in the reorganization that accompanied the June retirement of former chief Shane Wilson. McKnight lives in Rio Dell and has just completed 22 years with the department, having held the positions of first assistant chief, second assistant chief and battalion chief. Before the merger of the districts, he was assistant chief in the Scotia department.

McKnight notes he is a second-generation volunteer fire fighter. His dad was with the Scotia department for 25 years, serving as assistant chief, and is currently a member of the Rio Dell Fire Protection District board. Nate McKnight and the new chief, Ryan Heussler, go way back. "Ryan and I have been friends since high school," McKnight says. "Our mothers worked together at CC Market. Ryan and I balance each other out, along with holding each other accountable to the tasks we assign ourselves."

As work is being redistributed, he notes, "I have been tasked with the budgeting of the district, workman's comp, and assisting with overseeing daily operations. As a group we have developed a great officer team. Ryan, I, and second assistant chief Mike Jensen oversee them as they continue taking on the tasks we have shared down to them. We are working on utilizing our recently appointed district secretary, Cindy Giancomini, more and more."

McKnight is paramedic lead for City Ambulance, where he has worked for 17 years. With "my beautiful fiancé" Jennifer Hudson, he has two dogs, Cooper and Sugar, and a cattle operation for which he recently formed a new company. "So, my days off are spent between the fire department and the cattle," he says.



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Kiwanis to show free movie in park

A free family movie will be shown at the Fireman's Park in Rio Dell on Sat., Aug. 22. The presentation will start at dusk, and those attending are asked to bring blankets or chairs to enjoy the show. The concession stand will be open selling hot dogs, nachos and beverages including root beer floats. The event is sponsored by the Rio Dell-Scotia Kiwanis Club.

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