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# The World Weekend

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## Highway 38 tunnel closed all weekend

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ELKTON — Motorists traveling along state Highway 38 have seen a lot of bridge work over the past year around the Elk Creek Tunnel area.

One of those bridges, on the east side of the tunnel, likely has attracted some puzzled looks. The new span, constructed by Slayden Construction Group of Stayton, looked like it was a bridge going nowhere.

But it was all done on purpose.

The bridge was built alongside the old one and, over this weekend, the 78-year-old structure will be removed and the new bridge moved over to replace it. The process is what the Oregon Department of Transportation calls "rapid replacement."

While they do the switch-and-replace work, the roadway at the Elk Creek tunnel is closed (all lanes) until 6 a.m. Monday. When the highway re-opens, drivers will pass over the creek on the new bridge.

The state had a couple options in doing the work, but public sentiment prompted ODOT to choose the rapid replacement.

One option for the new structure was to close down the highway at the tunnel for more than six months to build the new bridge, something people in Elkton did not want to see happen.

Another was to build a temporary lane alongside for traffic, but that would have required a lot of space on either side of the bridge. But it is only about 30 feet from the entrance to the tunnel.

So the best and most cost effective way was to build the bridge alongside the old one and close the highway for one weekend to move it into place.

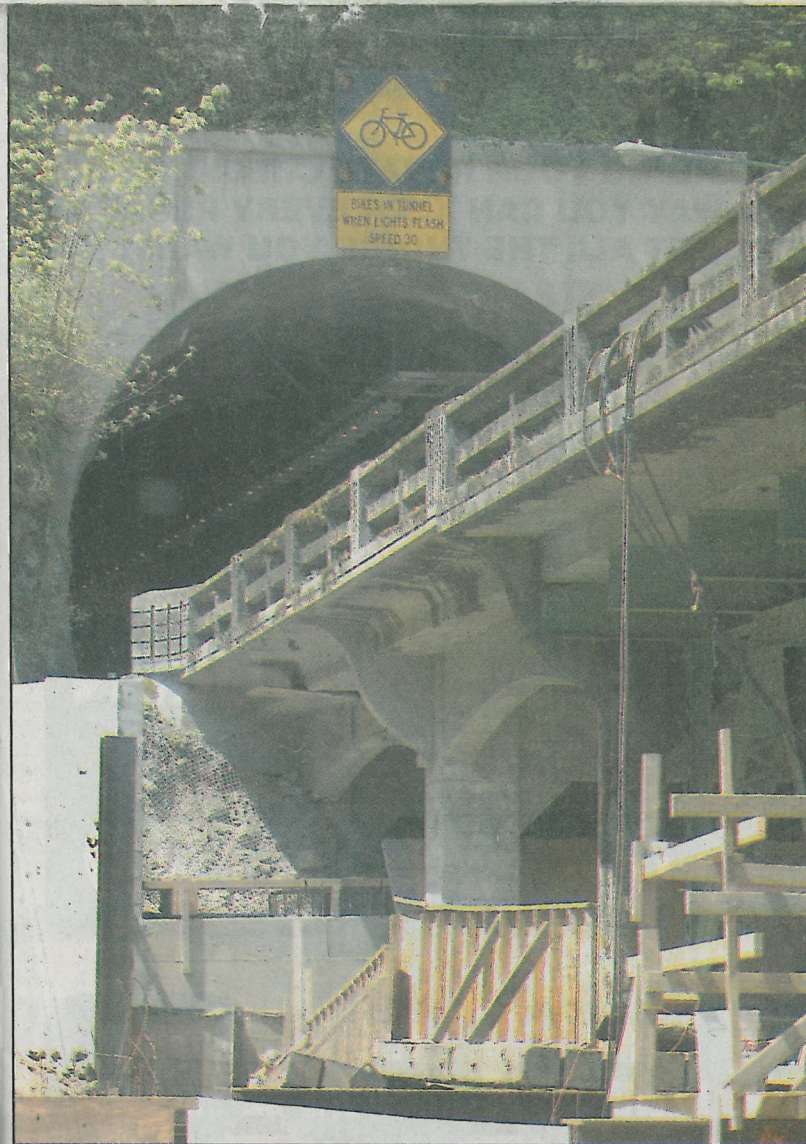
Once the new bridge is moved onto the supporting structure with the help of Mammoet Inc., gravel will be filled in to the approaches and pre-made concrete slabs will be welded to the ends of the bridge and paved.

This will not be the only rapid replacement bridge near the tunnel.

Crews are building a bridge on the west end and sometime in August, it should be ready to move into position of the existing bridge.

ODOT is replacing five bridges along state Highway 38 at an estimated cost of \$52 million. Work started in June 2007 and should be finished by December 2009.

For more information about the project, those interested can go to the Web site at [www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION3/ElkCreek.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION3/ElkCreek.shtml).



**RIGHT:** The new bridge at Elk Creek Tunnel has been raised on massive hydraulic jacks and will be put into place today.



**ABOVE:** The old bridge on the east side of the Elk Creek Tunnel was built in 1930 and took months to build at the time. The entire structure was chipped away and moved out of the way to make room for the new bridge.

World Photos by Lou Sennick

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