

St. Augustine Record

Bridge problems fewer, but no fix yet

Source could be power voltage problems, says engineer

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By [TRACEY McMANUS](#)

Engineers working on the Bridge of Lions told city officials Thursday they are working to eliminate the malfunctions but are still unsure what is causing them or when they may end.

"Obviously there's a great concern when there's malfunctions, especially ones that affect vehicular traffic," said project public information officer Laurie Sanderson. "At this point we're still discussing and adjusting the parameters."

Sanderson joined project engineers Jose Polo and Jeffrey Williams along with City Manager John Regan and Public Works Director Martha Graham to discuss the bridge's issues. Since bridge tenders began logging problems March 25, the bridge has malfunctioned at least 78 times.

Polo, an engineer with URS Construction Services, said he suspects the drawbridge jamming, traffic gate issues and navigation light outages have to do with power voltage problems or electrical currents needing adjustments.

"It's a complex project," he said. "It has electrical, mechanical, structural parts.

"It's a rehabilitated bridge, and like anything else they have glitches, and we're working on the debugging."

Contractors and engineers have tried to solve the overall problem by fixing each malfunction as it comes, Sanderson said.

The bridge log shows malfunctions have decreased and are fewer in between.

As of Thursday there have been five malfunctions in the first 17 days of June, while there were 27 problems in the first 17 days of May.

The engineers, though, could not explain which improvements have helped the problems to decrease.

Not all the malfunctions have affected vehicular traffic, Sanderson noted, and many are internal problems.

Regan also asked the engineers to address the gap between the shoulder of the bridge and the drawbridge line, which has created a danger for bicyclists getting their wheels caught in the gap.

While contractors have placed reflectors along the shoulder to avoid accidents, there may have to be adjustments to the platform itself.

"Sometimes there have been over-the-handlebars accidents," Regan said.

Although he was not given an answer for when the bridge will be malfunction-free, Regan said he is satisfied engineers are addressing the issues and working to solve the problems.

"They have their plan, they're working it, and it's proving to be successful," he said. "We'll continue to monitor and inspect, but (Florida Department of Transportation) appears to be putting significant effort into it."