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**LEFT:** “There’s a gap you can see in this picture where the arch meets the girder,” Hardy said. “There’s a gap there, and then the bottom of the arch and the bottom of the Keystone (block) don’t line up. This is partly due to the arch being too long. In order to correct that, the arch would have to be shortened a few inches.” **ON RIGHT:** “A view towards the center of the bridge, where we have just the girder going across the top,” Hardy said. “Then you can see the arch coming in on the bottom end. The two red lines are the location of where the connecting rod should be going through the girder, and then where an anchor point is in the arch. Those are off by anywhere from two inches to four inches. Of the 16 anchor rods that we have, about two-thirds of them don’t line up the way they should.”

# ‘SLOW EDUCATION’

## DOT explains another 4-5 week bridge delay

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**W**ATERTOWN — “Please don’t take this the wrong way, but our businesses on Main Street are paying for your education,” District 3 Alderperson Steve Board addressed two Wisconsin Department of Transportation members. “So thank you very much. You’re already six months late. So your education has

been extremely costly to the businesses that exist in Watertown.”

For over an hour Tuesday night, WisDOT members presented a Main Street Bridge update including new construction issues with the arch and span-drels, and misaligned connection rods and arch lengths.

The end was the same: Yet another bridge delay, this time four to five weeks.

During that time, DOT

and contractor ZTI will need to determine what changes will need to be made to the faulty components and fabricate replacements.

With another new estimate — likely mid-April opening for traffic — DOT project manager Craig Hardy indicated the complexity of the bridge itself played a role in its latest delay.

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## Bridge/ from A1

“This is a very unique and complex bridge,” said Department of Transportation project manager Craig Hardy.

“The bridge design tries to mimic the old bridge that was taken out. It’s an arch bridge. We don’t build a lot of those, they’re not very common. But to go along with the aesthetics of the downtown, an arch bridge is going back in there. One of the issues that we’re running into since the time that the girders were delivered a little over a week ago, is the assembly and the fit of the arches that go underneath the bridge.”

The arches were delivered too long, resulting in a gap between it and the girder.

The slots for the connecting rods through the girder and arch are also misaligned. Those anchor points are off from anywhere from two to four inches, depending on location. Of the 16, about two-thirds are misaligned.

Some of the 16 total spandrels were also discovered to be too short or too long, and wouldn’t fit in the space between the arch and the girder.

“That’s the way they were delivered to the site,” Hardy said. “These are built off-site in a factory and then they’re delivered to the project. As the contractor assembled them, that’s what was discovered

for this issue.”

As work has progressed this winter, the retaining walls and bridge abutments have been completed. Sections of the sidewalk have been removed and the bridge girders have been delivered and installed.

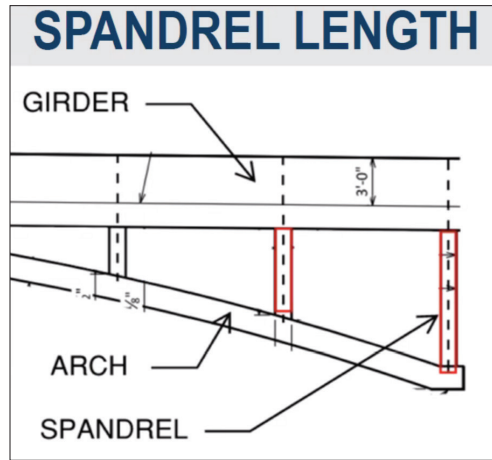
DOT said it and ZTI discussed ways to keep construction going despite these issues, but too many modifications would be required to the project, decreasing the bridge’s quality.

“Our bridges are designed to last 75 years or more, so we need to take not just the short term, but the long term into account,” Hardy explained.

“We felt it was in our best interest to instead of making modifications, to make new components that fit the spec requirements of the project. Once we found this out, we met with the city, the mayor, the public works director, to talk about what we discovered...In the end, we want to deliver a quality product to the city. It’s going to be a long-term investment in that we want to do it right the first time.”

After hearing about yet another mistake with the construction of the bridge, the City of Watertown Common Council wanted to understand whether this was a manufacturing or specifications error?

“That’s what we’re trying to figure out right now with the 3D scan that the contractor is taking,”



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“There’s 16 total spandrels, four in each quadrant,” Hardy said. “As they were delivered to the project, it was discovered that somewhere were too short and there would be a gap in between the arch, the girder and the spandrel. Other spandrels were fabricated too long, and so they won’t fit in the space between the arch and the girder.”

Hardy said. “Once we know those measurements, we can compare that to the specs and we can know exactly if they fabricated it to specs or not.

“We believe this is a manufacturing issue,” he later said. “Until we have the data, we’re anticipating that’s what that is at this point.”

Mayor Emily McFarland said the 3D scans occurred Thursday, and the city and DOT are waiting to hear from ZTI on those results. The parties were scheduled to meet Wednesday to discuss.

“Every day this stays stagnant is another day our business, community, residents and visitors are impacted,” McFarland said. “If you guys don’t

have a contractual way to do so, I sure don’t either, but I do have a voice. And I can be quite persistent.”

Alderson Board also inquired about the dry-fit/testing process with the manufacturer and ZTI.

“As far as it should have been dry-fit, I leave that up to the contractor,” Hardy said. “That’s their means and methods. We leave a lot of that control up to the contractor to determine when they want to dry-fit it. So if their manufacturer wants to dry-fit it at their site, that is their complete prerogative.”

What’s not their prerogative is the liquidated damages associated with this project. When negotiating for uninterrupted winter work with the contractor, WisDOT

increased the damages from \$2,500 a day to \$5,000, after March 1.

Where is that sum of potentially over \$220,000 to be allocated at the end of the day?

“As far as the liquidated damages goes, those are to cover the costs associated with the additional traffic-control that the state has to pay for, the additional inspection time and added costs. It’s an administrative assessment to help recover the costs that the department is spending to handle those delays.”

As he did during an October Common Council meeting, District 6 Alderson Fred Smith investigated the possibility of diverting some of those funds to those who are afflicted the most.

“From my perspective, the real losers on this delay are the citizens of Watertown and the businesses that are in proximity to the bridge that remains closed,” Smith said. “Do you think that there is any fairness in assigning some percentage of these liquidated damages to those who are truly suffering on an ongoing basis?”

“The whole point of all these extraordinary efforts to overcome the earlier delays and to keep the construction project going through the winter months was to alleviate the very harm that is being extended by an additional five or six weeks. Whether it’s doubled-liquidated damages or the original

amount, the point is, the real harm is accruing to these businesses. Some of which are just barely hanging on. And this additional delay is going to be a dreadful consequence.”

Another WisDOT project manager at the meeting, Jim Oettinger, said that was in no way a hope.

“The DOT does not have a mechanism to do what you’re saying here,” Oettinger said. “This is one project. The team is implementing the DOT policy and procedure the way it is. And that’s about all I can tell you about that. This is what the policy is. There is no mechanism to take a portion, all, or any of it to the businesses. So that’s all I can really tell you on that.”

As the city and citizens wait and demand for more answers about another delay, there’s certainly much more discourse to come.

“I think that’s a very sad state of affairs that we’re relying on the notion that there is no mechanism in place,” Smith responded.

“I think justice suggests that we find a mechanism and that we further justice to the fullest extent of making those who have suffered this dreadful wrong as whole as possible.”

*This story will be updated as more information is provided. Mayor Emily McFarland confirmed that the DOT has gotten the scan results from ZTI and are reviewing them today during a meeting scheduled for 2p.m.*