

Bridge Water Street bridge repairs delayed

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SANTA CRUZ — The \$5 million rehabilitation of the Water Street bridge has been put off for a year, the result of new studies that found an increased potential for ground “liquefaction” during an earthquake.

Work that was scheduled to begin this month, instead will begin next spring, according to Larry Erwin, director of the Santa Cruz Public Works Department.

The Water Street bridge rehabilitation involves removing and replacing the northern portion of the bridge and seismic retrofit work on the southern portion.

Erwin said the bridge had to be

redesigned in light of geotechnical studies on the effects of liquefaction, a phenomenon that occurs when loose dirt becomes liquid during ground motion.

Bridge abutments have been changed on either end so the bridge won't collapse even if liquefaction occurs, he said. “The design should accommodate it and not fail. But to accomplish it we had to beef up the abutments,” said Erwin.

Construction could have started this July, rather than April. But that would leave a shorter span time span to complete work in the river channel, which must occur between April 15 and Oct. 15, said Erwin.

Accelerating the schedule for a shorter time span would have required contractors to work longer days, double shifts and weekends, said Erwin. That would add about \$2 million to the repair costs.

Instead Erwin said the city should put off work for a year, with completion in October 1996.

The delay will have a ripple affect on the Soquel Avenue bridge, scheduled for work after the Water Street bridge. Now work on that bridge will be pushed to 1997. After the bridge work is complete, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is scheduled to work on the San Lorenzo River levee. Erwin said that project won't be delayed since it is scheduled to begin in 1998 and is not funded.