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Backwards or frontwards, moving bridge's girder is a job of large proportions.

Broken bridge tests one's calm

By JOAN RAYMOND
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SANTA CRUZ — The Soquel Avenue Bridge this month celebrates its fourth anniversary of being broken.

City, state and federal officials have been working to fix the bridge ever since a logjam popped two of its

four lanes during flood storms of January 1982.

Public Works Director Larry Erwin said today it should be about three months more before the repair work is completed.

Delay has been the watchword for the \$600,000 repair job, and today was no different.

This was the long-awaited day that

crews began the job of setting giant girders across the break now that the new foundation in the San Lorenzo River has been completed.

Orange signs were posted telling the public the bridge would be closed today and Friday.

This wasn't the first time the public had been notified about closing the bridge.

Three weeks ago, the Public Works Department ran a newspaper advertisement saying the bridge would be closed to erect the girders, but the work didn't take place.

Erwin said the San Jose hauling contractor could not do the work at that time because he had failed to

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Broken bridge

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obtain a permit from the state Department of Transportation.

But all was ready today for early-morning work, or so it was thought.

Crews were on the bridge waiting for the delivery of the girders when it was discovered the first long, reinforced-concrete girder was coming in backwards.

It was impossible to make a turn-around on the bridge. The truck measured 141-feet with the girder on it.

So, while construction workers waited, the truckdriver — with police escort — had to circle back, across the Water Street bridge and through downtown, rather than a direct approach from Ocean Street.

Meanwhile, there was some more bad news. A second girder was also arriving backwards.

Despite the delays, Erwin believes the girder work should be just a two-day job.

There should be no more bridge closures after this week, he said.

State Fish and Game Department regulations have caused other delays. Crews have been prevented

from working in the river from October through May because of state fish-protection laws.

Ever since the bridge was broken, city officials have been moving up the estimated completion date.

Considering past experience with delays on this job and the Municipal Wharf remodeling, city officials have learned to be cautious in announcing completion dates.

In October, City Manager Richard Wilson announced the bridge project had been again set back, because it was discovered new concrete footings had to be poured. At that time, Wilson reported the bridge would probably be fixed by this summer.

In February 1982, Erwin estimated the bridge would be fixed by the spring of 1983.

When 1983 passed, city officials said it would be repaired in 1984.

In 1984, the date was moved up to 1985, and so on.

Last summer, work was delayed when generator caught fire, sent a black cloud of smoke up the San Lorenzo River and caused an estimated \$35,000 in damage.

The contractor is Dan Caputo of San Jose.