

Published: October 26, 2009 07:51 am
The Daily Star

Pony Farm Bridge delay frustrating

We were disappointed to hear of yet another hindrance on the Pony Farm Bridge repair project.

Hopes were raised in August when state Sen. James Seward, R-Milford, announced in a media release that funding was in place and work would begin shortly. However, Oneonta Town Supervisor Robert Wood recently announced that higher-than-expected bids have stalled repairs on the structure, which was closed by the state in January 2008.

The amount that the town had on hand for the work was \$570,000 and the lowest bid was \$919,000, a pretty staggering discrepancy. We're puzzled as to why estimates for the costs of materials were based on information from three years ago, when the project was originally planned. It seems as though the numbers should have been revisited to address the effects of inflation and an increase in steel and concrete costs.

Now the town can't or won't pay the difference, and Canadian Pacific is not willing to give more funds. In tough economic times, trying to scrape together the money to solve this problem will likely prove difficult, and we hope that the state grant for the bridge doesn't expire while the town searches for a solution.

We're frustrated by continuing promises of progress that never eventuate, and can only imagine the disgust of business owners and residents who have been forced to use alternate routes for such a lengthy period of time. Business owners are suffering a loss of traffic and convenience for their customers, and they can surely use all the help they can get right now.

Wood has indicated that seeking a congressional earmark, using state funding to shore up Pony Farm Road and an at-grade crossing over the tracks to the west of the bridge are all being considered. Perhaps with more research, additional state funding or some sort of bond could be secured. The town will obviously need to approach the pool of bidders with a new proposal and secure a low cost of labor, and we hope that it will work with a stronger sense of urgency to reach a swift solution to this mess.