

## Officials: Rail moving on closed bridge

*CP Rail is 'working on a solution'*

**By Jake Palmateer**  
Staff Writer

ONEONTA — A fix may be on the horizon for a town of Oneonta bridge owned by Canadian Pacific Railway that was closed by the state because of its poor condition.

The late January closure of the bridge linking state Route 7 with Pony Farm Road is causing lost business and creating a potential safety hazard, several people said at a town board meeting Wednesday or in letters to the railroad.

The state deemed the bridge unsafe in January.

Duncan Davie, an aide to state Sen. James Seward, R-Milford, said state funding is available to assist Canadian Pacific in either repairing or replacing the bridge. And a town official indicated Thursday that the company is making progress.

"CP Rail has advised us that 95 percent of the preliminary engineering on that bridge is done," Davie said Thursday. "They are looking at a couple of options."

Between \$450,000 and \$500,000 in transportation funding set aside in the 2007-08 state budget is available for use on a bridge repair or replacement project, Davie said.

The bridge on Thursday showed obvious signs of stress, including rebar poking through crumbling concrete abutments. Barriers are in place at each end.

Wilber Bank President and Chief Executive Officer Doug Gulotty and Rob Robinson, president and CEO of the Otsego County Chamber, are among those lobbying the railroad to do something about the bridge.

The bridge provides access to the western end of the Pony Farm Industrial Park, a 70-acre light industrial park, and to several homes and a farm. The only other access to the area sandwiched between the railroad tracks and Interstate 88 is Corporate Drive to the east.

"If anything happens at the entrance up there, we're stuck," said Brian Konze of Comm Innovations.

Konze said business has dropped 20 to 25 percent since

the closure.

The town board agreed to send a letter to Canadian Pacific asking them to move promptly on a fix.

"We are aware of the issue with the closure of Pony Farm bridge," said Mike LoVecchio, Canadian Pacific's senior manager of media relations, in an e-mail to The Daily Star. "We are working on a solution."

He declined further comment Thursday.

But Oneonta Town Supervisor Robert Wood said his conversations Thursday with Canadian Pacific indicated the railroad is moving ahead.

The railroad has finished one proposal and is expecting a second to be completed in two weeks, Wood said.

His understanding is that one proposal would be for replacement and another would be for repair, he said.

"Timeline is another story," Wood said, noting that he has not heard when work could actually begin.

Wood said he will be e-mailing to Canadian Pacific a list of town and county government



Star photo by Julie Lewis

The bridge over CP Rail tracks is seen from Pony Farm Road looking toward state Route 7 on Wednesday.

officials whom he would like to see updated on the Pony Farm bridge.

In East Worcester, residents are still waiting to hear about the Brooker Hollow Road bridge, which is in a similar situation to the Pony Farm bridge, said Otsego County Rep. Donald Lindberg, R-Worcester.

A temporary fix has allowed vehicle traffic to use the bridge since January 2006 after the bridge was deemed unsafe by the DOT in 2005.

Canadian Pacific has agreed to fix that bridge, but Lindberg said the wait has been frustrating.

"The railroad has got to be pushed," he said.