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New Fort Hamer Bridge reaches milestone

Bridge to connect Parrish and Lakewood Ranch about one-third completed

About 800 feet of bridge now completed, starting from north bank of the river

Completion of \$32.69 million project expected by summer 2017

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PARRISH

Construction workers for the [Fort Hamer Bridge](#) are back on land again for the first time since 2015, when they sank the first piers for the span that will connect Parrish and Lakewood Ranch.

Workers were on an island midstream of the Manatee River this week to the east of Waterlefe Golf and Country Club.

Even though the island, covered in cabbage palms and lush vegetation, appears solid, appearances can be deceiving.

“It’s tidal, so the water goes up and down,” senior bridge inspector Ken Wright said of the island. “It gets pretty wet.”

The island marks the spot where the Fort Hamer Bridge will begin to curve to the west, and where there will be an outlook for pedestrians and cyclists, as the bridge approaches the south bank of the Manatee River.

Unlike earlier phases of bridge construction, which started in March 2015, and were hampered by heavy rains, conditions in June were near ideal, engineer Justin Hogan said Thursday.

In June, workers added another 268 feet of bridge, bringing the total to 804 linear feet, Hogan said.

Thursday, crews were pouring concrete for a diaphragm, which supports loads on the bridge, and moving trestles to accommodate a temporary parallel bridge from which cranes work.

“You can see where the trestles are starting to accommodate the curve in the bridge and where the lookout will be,” Hogan said.

The latest estimate for completion of the bridge is June 2017, he said.

“We are not having to shut down, and we can keep production going,” Hogan said of the weather, which although hot, has had less rain than previously.

The final pier is expected to be installed by early 2017. The bridge is now about one-third complete, he said.

“After almost 16 months of construction, we are approximately 400 feet out from the shore,” project spokeswoman Trudy Gerena said. “This month has really been a productive one with the last rain event being Tropical Storm Colin. We have really gone a whole month without a rain event. So Johnson Brothers is making great progress.”

Cost of the two-lane Fort Hamer Bridge project is \$23,95,567. In addition, \$6,490,000 of roads improvements are being made to Fort Hamer Road, and \$2.7 million of improvements are being made to Upper Manatee River Road.

The bridge will have a sidewalk on the east side, paved bike lanes and roadway lighting.

A new traffic signal will be added on the south side of the bridge at its intersection with Upper Manatee River Road. A detour is planned for August-September while crews construct a new traffic pattern from Upper Manatee River Road to the south approach of the bridge.

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