

FIGG Bridge Engineers statement regarding the NTSB board meeting of October 22, 2019

At the NTSB meeting today, it was evident that the investigation into the FIU pedestrian bridge construction accident presented challenges for the agency to accurately understand all of the technical and factual components. The accident was the result of a complex series of events and failings by parties at multiple stages of the project.

An analysis conducted by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE), the country's preeminent forensic structural engineering firm, proved that if the construction joint at member 11 had been built as required by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Standard Construction Specifications, the construction accident would not have occurred.

WJE has worked with the government on numerous forensic investigations in its 60-year history such as the 2007 collapse of the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge in Minneapolis. In its review of the FIU pedestrian bridge accident, WJE conducted detailed research, in-depth analysis, and physical testing. When the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center issued its October 19, 2018 analysis concluding that the concrete cold joints were not intentionally roughened, WJE went a step beyond analysis and performed testing of full-scale replicas of the critical connection with both roughened and un-roughened surfaces. WJE's tests revealed, contrary to the findings of the NTSB, that the failure to roughen the concrete beneath bridge member 11 was the fundamental cause of the collapse.

FIGG Bridge Engineers, Inc. looks forward to an opportunity to discuss WJE's findings with FHWA.