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The repair and remediation of in-service pipelines is a safety critical process that must be closely controlled, but which must nevertheless be performed using cost-effective techniques. For large diameter pipelines, the use of manual welding is time-consuming and there is a greater risk of operator error due to the long welding times. Similarly, higher strength pipelines require precise weld bead placement to ensure correct tempering of previous weld layers and the electrodes conventionally used will not provide adequate weld metal properties on pipe grades above X80. There is, therefore, a need to develop advanced welding repair and remediation methods for in-service pipelines.

Working in collaboration with TransCanada Pipeline (TCPL), Pipeline Research Council International (PRCI), and the Welding Engineering Research Centre of Cranfield University, and SABREweld Ltd., Edison Welding Institute (EWI) is working a project funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Special Programs Administration to extend the current capabilities of in-service welding by developing an automated welding system for use on in-service pipelines.

The project is comprised of the following tasks:

1. Review of Industry Needs, Requirements, and Current Practices - in process
2. Technical Specifications for Automated In-Service Welding System - in process
3. Design and Build of Automated In-Service Welding System - in process
4. Laboratory Development and Evaluation
5. Weld Procedure Qualification
6. Field Testing and Validation
7. Final Report

The preliminary design of the mechanized, multi-axis welding carriage with adaptive control/tracking for low hydrogen gas metal arc welding (GMAW) and flux-cored arc welding (FCAW) processes is complete. During this quarter, the project team will begin building the system. The team will continue to explore functionality options for the optimum system performance and to develop software solutions to implement these innovations.

The major objectives of this program are to:

- Develop an automated welding system for use on in-service pipelines
- Implement a real-time adaptive control system to ensure reliable welding conditions
- Evaluate system performance through laboratory trials
- Validate the system and gain regulatory approval by qualification of procedures complying with recognized industry standards and perform field trials

For the coordination, preparation and distribution of press releases, please contact Lisa McClintock, EWI Marketing and Communications, at phone number 614-688-5130 or via Email at lisa_mcclintock@ewi.org.