

Sway Bar Bushing Replacement

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In the quest for improved steering response from my 1986 Grand Wagoneer, I decided to replace the bushings for the sway bar and the end links in the front end. I could see that the end link bushings were particularly bad and I could easily peel away parts of the tired rubber sway bar bushings. I decided to go with polyurethane instead of rubber and I went with grease able sway bar bushings to try to keep the reported squeaking in check.

I bought the bushings from www.jegs.com and here are the part numbers that I used:

End Link Bushings: Item# = 355-9-8107R, Description = SHOCK EYE 5/8 HOURGLASS, Qty/Price = 2 at \$3.69 = \$7.38 Sway Bar Bushings: Item# = 355-9-5160G, Description = Energy Suspension Sway Bar Bushing 15/16", Qty/Price = 1 at \$14.99 = \$14.99

I also bought a can of Marine anti-corrosive wheel bearing grease. I used this grease for the inner diameter of the bushings for easy installation and also to prevent squeaking. The marine grease won't be washed away by water as easily as normal wheel bearing grease and the whole can was only \$3.

You might want to spray penetrating lubricant on the bolts & nuts in advance of doing this job. I had a morning/evening spraying ritual that I did for 3 days prior to attempting this job and it must have helped because everything came off.

Here's how to replace the bushings:

1. Raise the vehicle with a proper floor jack and support the frame rails with proper jack stands. I used the floor jack to support the front axle even though I had the vehicle supported on the jack stands.
2. Remove both front wheels so you can easily see the end link and sway bar assembly.
3. Using a 3/4" socket, remove the two nuts for the end link. The top of the link attaches itself to the sway bar and the bottom attaches itself to the steering knuckle. Remove the nuts from both sides of the vehicle. Separate the bottom of the end link from the steering knuckle using a brass hammer and tap the end link away from the bolt that's part of the knuckle.

4. Using a 5/8" socket, remove the bolts that attach the sway bar bushing bracket to the frame rails. These bolts are probably completely rusted in (as were mine). Even though I sprayed them with liquid wrench, I still had to heat up the retaining nuts with a torch. It's almost like Jeep expected this as there are notches in the frame rail that allow you to see the retaining nuts and you can heat them up easily. Get the nuts good and hot before attempting to remove the bolts.

5. Now that the sway bar is free from the frame, pull it through from a side of the vehicle. Separate the end links from the sway bar (I used a brass hammer and tapped the bolts that attach the link to the sway bar). Remove the tired old sway bar bushings by sliding them off the bar (the factory bushings don't have a slot in them to separate them from the bar). With everything separated, clean up the bar and links with degreaser (it's probably dirty from leaking oil and power steering fluid). Remove the old end link bushings with a pair of pliers. I used needle nose pliers and literally tore the old end link bushings right out of the links.

6. Install the new end link bushings into the end links. If you have access to a vise, this is a piece of cake.

7. Clean up the bolt that attaches the end link to the sway bar with sand paper or steel wool to remove any rust spots and grease it liberally with wheel bearing grease. Insert the bolt into the end link but don't attach it to the sway bar just yet (do it on the vehicle).

8. Clean up the area of the sway bar where the bushing seats in the same manner as you did with the end link bolts. Grease up the ID of the sway bar bushing and install it in the general area where it should belong.

9. Get back under the jeep and put the bar up where it should be. Adjust one side of the bushing location to align it with the frame channel and install the sway bar bushing bracket. I had problems using the short bolts that came out of the bracket since the new bushings were so stiff and wouldn't compress enough for me to get the short bolts into the retaining nuts. I took out a pair of calipers and bought 4 new bolts from the hardware store: (4) 7/16 X 14 hardened hex head bolts with washers cost me \$2 and made the install a piece of cake. Adjust the other side of the bushing and install that bracket to complete the installation of the sway bar.

10. Attach the top ends of the end links to the sway bar using the nicely greased bolt that you cleaned up in step 7.

11. Grease up the bolt that's part of the steering knuckle and install the lower end of the end link.

12. Put the wheels back on, lower the vehicle, and you're done!

11. Attach