



NEWS

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MTA ANNOUNCES INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE IF WOOD WEDGES USED TO BRACE SEGMENTS OF THE TUNNEL LINER BENEATH HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD WERE OF PROPER STRENGTH AND PROPERLY INSTALLED

MTA officials will hire an outside construction specialist to investigate the use of wooden wedges placed between segments of the tunnel liner built beneath Hollywood Boulevard to make sure they were as strong as they were required to be and that they were properly installed.

Last Friday, RCC engineers indicated that failure of the wedges, which were crushed along 200 feet of tunnel beneath Hollywood Boulevard near the intersection of Hollywood and Hudson Avenue, may have contributed to the settlement at street level.

A total of nine inches of subsidence was recorded in the intersection August 20 when MTA authorities requested the boulevard be closed. Some portion of settlement is now believed to be attributable to the failure of the wooden wedges to properly maintain the expansion gap between segments of the underground tunnel liner.

Hollywood Boulevard has since been reopened to traffic.

Preliminary test results on some sample wedges have indicated that the wood actually used failed to meet its specified strength and that accompanying concrete in the gap may not have been properly placed or met design specifications.

"I am very concerned about these latest reports," said Ed Edelman, MTA Chairman and a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. "We need to examine these matters very carefully with the best experts available."

MTA Chief Executive Officer Franklin White said he expected to name the firm to be hired by the end of the week and that the firm would report directly to him.

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"Tunneling beneath Hollywood Boulevard was put on hold August 18 when the subsidence of soils beneath the boulevard was noted," said Ed McSpedon, Executive Officer, Construction. "Since then, we have consulted with an outside panel of experts and cooperated with federal authorities who are conducting their own independent investigation."

"No tunneling will proceed until we are absolutely sure that procedures are in place to ensure a minimum risk of additional subsidence in the area," said McSpedon.

The MTA's original contract specifications called for the use of steel struts or their equivalent between the tunnel liner segments. Shea Kiewit Kenny, the firm building the tunnel segment beneath Hollywood Boulevard, asked for and was granted permission by the MTA's design firm to substitute wooden wedges in September, 1992.

"We are investigating whether we got the wood that was approved for use, and that it was as strong as it was supposed to be," added White. "We also will review the decision to substitute the wooden wedges and the supervision of the installation of them."

RCC engineers noted that there has been only minor additional subsidence in the area since August 22. RCC engineers also have supervised the insertion of grout from the street level to reinforce soil and prevent further subsidence.

"While these matters are of serious concern to us during the construction of the tunnels beneath Hollywood Boulevard, they will have no impact on safe subway operations," added McSpedon. "The tunnel liner which will be installed subsequently will provide our passengers a safe environment for their travel."