



NEWS

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TUNNEL INSPECTION REPORTS INDICATE THAT 5,000 TO 7,000 FEET OF INITIAL LINER UNDER CONSTRUCTION DO NOT MEET SPECIFICATIONS

The MTA turned over to its outside consulting firm, Monday, a group of inspection reports which strongly indicate that significant stretches of the Metro Red Line initial tunnel liner -- perhaps 5,000 to 7,000 linear feet under construction beneath Vermont Avenue and Hollywood Boulevard -- do not meet contract specifications.

The "non-compliance reports" given to Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates of Chicago were presented to the MTA, Sept. 30, by Parsons-Dillingham, the MTA's construction management firm. The reports show that as far back as September, 1993, Shea-Kiewit-Kenny construction workers were failing to properly fill expansion gaps in the initial tunnel liner with drypack concrete, as required by contract. Instead, some gaps were covered with plywood and then plastered over.

It appears that "little attention was given to this problem by inspectors of Parsons-Dillingham," said Franklin E. White, MTA chief executive officer. A total of 56,000 feet of tunnels lined in 4 foot segments had been excavated when work was halted Aug. 18 due to settlement along Hollywood Boulevard.

Except for a second similar non-compliance report filed in March, 1994, Parsons-Dillingham inspectors filed no further reports about the problem until Sept. 20, 1994, when a physical inspection, supervised by an MTA engineer, was conducted in the northside Hollywood tunnel.

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That inspection, which included drilling into the expansion gap, covered about 200 feet in various locations of the tunnel. The report showed that in five percent of the inspected gaps, the work was performed correctly with the full eight inches of concrete. In 60 percent of the gaps, however, less than one inch of drypack concrete was used. In 16 percent of the inspected gaps, wood was placed in the gaps and plastered over. Another 15 percent of the gaps had one to four inches of concrete, with the remaining 4 percent having six and one half to seven inches of concrete.

Two subsequent visual inspection reports by Parsons-Dillingham, dated Sept. 27 and 29, 1994, listed some 1,700 segments of the initial liner of the Vermont tunnels -- totalling some 5,000 to 7,000 linear feet -- in which some expansion gaps apparently had been filled with wood, covered with plywood and plastered over.

"It is deeply shocking to discover that the tunnel contractor apparently disregarded an important safety feature of the contract, even after they were warned about non-compliance" said Supervisor Ed Edelman, MTA Board chairman. "It is even more dismaying to learn that the construction management firm has neglected to properly inspect this portion of the work for an entire year. It is a miracle that no one was injured as a result of this non-conforming work."

"The Wiss, Janney report will help ascertain whether the structural integrity of the initial tunnel liner has been compromised and whether remedial measures can be or should be taken," said White. "We must get to the bottom of this problem, and fix it, in order to restore public confidence in our subway construction project."

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MTA Officials noted that the Vermont Tunnels were constructed in the Puente formation, an area of very stable ground. In fact, 78% of those tunnels had been constructed prior to the January 17 earthquake and endured that temblor with no adverse affects.

"We do not anticipate further subsidence of any significance along Vermont Avenue," said Edward McSpedon, MTA executive officer, construction. "We are reviewing the Hollywood Tunnels, which are constructed in the New Alluvium formation, to determine whether additional temporary supports are required."

MTA officials noted that the initial liner -- a four-segment ring of precast concrete -- is only a temporary structure to support the surrounding earth. The initial liner is lined with a high-density polyurethane liner. A final reinforced concrete liner is built within this structure and is designed to withstand ground forces. The final liner does not depend on the initial liner for support strength.

"Once completed, this total structure will provide Red Line patrons with a safe environment in which to travel," said McSpedon.

Wiss, Janny will also work with MTA staff and consultants to develop and strategy to safely resume construction along Hollywood Blvd.

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