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Wednesday, March 28, 2012

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# Contractor claims Silver Spring Transit Center meets concrete specifications

*Foulger-Pratt will meet with county to review data in early April*

By Aaron Kraut, Staff Writer

Despite county claims of structural inconsistencies in the Silver Spring Transit Center, the building is structurally sound and meets design specifications, said principal Bryant Foulger of contractor Foulger-Pratt.

A county-commissioned report found significant portions of the concrete poured on the middle and upper floors of the transit center by Foulger-Pratt and subcontractor Facchina Construction Co. either are too thin or too thick. County council President Roger Berliner (D-Dist. 1) of Potomac said last month the county could consider legal action against the firm.

"The frame itself is structurally sound," Foulger said. "The question is does it satisfy what the county thought they were buying. Our contention right now is yes."

On March 15, Foulger-Pratt provided the Department of General Services with an analysis by engineering firm Simpson Gumpertz & Heger that concluded the strength of concrete slabs in the Transit Center satisfied the requirements of the American Concrete Institute.

Department of General Services Director David Dise said the analysis did not prove the structure met what was agreed to in the drawings and specifications. Foulger said the firm is in the process of providing data to the county to back that assertion.

Foulger-Pratt will meet with the county in early April to review the data, Dise said.

"We certainly hope it doesn't come to [legal action]. Our intention is to sit down and work collaboratively with the county, like we have been working with them," Foulger said. "We're interested in getting this building finished."

The \$101 million, three-tiered transit hub on the corner of Wayne Avenue and Colesville Road will connect Metrorail, busses and the MARC train. Construction began in 2008 and was slated to open in June 2011, but was delayed when utility lines

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had to be rerouted, Dise said last month. The center was rescheduled to open in January 2012

until inspectors discovered the concrete problem.

A county-commissioned evaluation by project architect Parsons Brinckerhoff found in some areas, concrete poured over horizontal reinforcement bars were 8 inches or 11 inches thick. The concrete poured over those bars should be 10 inches thick so the reinforcement bars can support the weight, Dise said.

Foulger said there is no new estimate on when the center will be finished, but Foulger-Pratt is proceeding with all other aspects of construction.

"We are working toward a date," Foulger said. "If there had to be some significant changes made to the structure, then it would affect it."

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