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Wednesday, August 06, 2014

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Silver Spring Transit Center remediation started this week

Unofficial posters placed on fence around center taken down

By Kevin James Shay Staff Writer

This story was updated at 3:15 p.m. on Aug. 7, 2014.

"Foulger-Pratt" and "Pedestrians Ahead" signs remain on the fence surrounding the area where the main remediation work on defects with beams and girders at the Silver Spring Transit Center started this week.

David Dise, the director of Montgomery County's Department of General Services, said the work began Thursday at 7 a.m.

Unauthorized protest signs reading "Move the fence? Let's use this space" that appeared on the fence recently have been taken down. Workers have been doing preparatory work for remediation fixes the past few months.

The posters, about 3 feet high by 6 feet long, were placed along the fence that surrounds the transit center near Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue. Dan Reed, an urban planner and designer who lives near downtown Silver Spring, said he spoke with the unofficial poster hangers for his blog, "[Just Up the Pike](#)," posting photos of the signs on the fence.

Reed said two Silver Spring residents put up the signs to lobby for some of the fenced-in grassy space being used for festivals or other events.

Reed declined to identify the sign hangers. "The individuals who hung the signs don't really want to be identified, partially for privacy reasons, but also to focus the conversation on the message, not the messenger," Reed said.

The fence helps protect people from a construction site and moving it would have to be approved by the



Photo by Kevin Shay

"Foulger-Pratt" and "Pedestrians Ahead" signs remain on the fence surrounding the under-construction Silver Spring Transit Center. Some protest signs reading "Move the fence? Let's use this space" that appeared on the fence recently have been taken down.

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Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, which owns the land, said Esther Bowring, a Montgomery County spokeswoman. "They would be liable then for whatever happened on the property, just as they will be after completion," she said.

The signs highlight an undercurrent of frustration with the delays associated with the project. During his campaign, former County Executive Doug

Duncan called the fence and uncompleted transit center an "eyesore" and made it a major campaign issue.

The county broke ground on the transit center in 2008, but work stopped in 2011 after structural defects within the \$119 million project were found. The county and contractor Foulger-Pratt agreed on a remedy plan earlier this year.

Work of various type has been going on all year, Bowring said. In the spring and early summer, the contractor demolished some ramps and removed drains and expansion joints in preparation for the overlay work. Leak detection surveys and lidar scans of beams were conducted to determine the best placement for the strut beams that will be installed this fall.

The contractor conducted other tests to prepare for the remediation work and all permits have been received for that work, Bowring said. Coordination and safety meetings happened Monday and Tuesday, she said.

"We will be updating the council on remediation progress in September," Bowring said.

When open, the center will be a three-level transit hub connecting Metro rail lines, MARC commuter trains, taxis and Ride On and intercity buses.

The opening of the center could be delayed into 2015, especially with Metro having a couple of months to inspect the center and prepare it for operations once Foulger-Pratt completes the remediation fixes. A more specific updated completion schedule was not available on Tuesday.

A report by an advisory panel headed by former Lockheed Martin CEO Norm Augustine concluded that the remediation work on beams and girders to correct the design deficiencies could add \$7 million to the center's cost and might delay the opening into 2015. The panel, which included three construction and engineering experts, cited possible safety concerns as well as maintenance issues.

The panel did not see any evidence of a major structural failure, even with the facility in its present form. But it said it was "particularly important that remediations ... be implemented promptly in order to avoid lesser safety hazards." Those hazards include concrete chunks falling on people in the center, the panel said.

"The likelihood of sudden failure which could impact safety to large numbers of persons is considered to be low provided proper long-term maintenance and regular biannual inspections are performed," the report said.

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Staff Writer Andrew Schotz contributed to this story

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