Airport Work Is Probed

A number of subcontractors say they have not been paid; EAA, DOT begin investigations over contracts

By Wes Young
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Federal and state officials are investigating claims that subcontractors — many of them small or owned by minorities — were not fully paid for work on a $8 million expansion project at Smith Reynolds Airport.

Richard Walls, the aviation director for the N.C. Department of Transportation, said that his department's investigators began their work in May after subcontractors began complaining.

The general contractor for the project is Mainline Contracting Inc. of Durham. The work involves creating a 400-foot safety area at the south end of runway 18/36.

The money for the project is coming from a Federal Aviation Administration grant to the state DOT.

"We are working very diligently with the airport authority... and assisting them to make sure all the subcontractors and vendors are paid," Walls said.

Local airport officials said they're working to investigate the claims as well. But Tom McKlin, the chairman of the Airport Commission of Forsyth County, said that the airport has a "limited ability to affect events between Mainline and its subs."

News of the investigations comes days after the departure of Larry Scatliff as airport director. Scatliff left Aug. 30 in what airport officials called a mutually agreed arrangement.

A spokeswoman for the FAA said that the FAA is investigating a claim of nonpayment filed by SHR Construction and Demolition, a minority-owned subcontractor. Under federal law, a percentage of the money spent under federal transportation grants must go to "disadvantaged business enterprises" including those owned by minorities and women.

Mainline subcontracted hauling work to a succession of businesses owned by minorities and women, some of whom in turn subcontracted work to others.

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