

local news

Airport panel gets \$654,000 to pay Mainline

Subcontractors say they are unpaid or underpaid for work at Smith Reynolds Airport

By Wesley Young
JOURNAL REPORTER

State officials have released \$654,000 to the Airport Commission of Forsyth County for payment to Mainline Contracting Inc., although some subcontractors are still saying that they have been unpaid or underpaid for work they did at Smith Reynolds Airport for Mainline on a project to improve safety.

Meanwhile, federal investigators say that the airport commission hasn't provided federal civil-rights investigators the documentation needed to investigate the claims of the subcontracting companies, many of which are owned by minorities or women.

The state authorized three payments last week to the airport from a federal grant that

the state is administering. The payments are part of a \$5.8 million project nearing completion that involves extending the safety runoff area on the south end of Runway 15/33 at the airport, which the airport commission runs.

Airport officials say that the state payment was in turn passed on to Mainline and subcontractors authorized to get payment.

Richard Walls, the director of aviation for the N.C. Department of Transportation, said that though the payments don't resolve the pay issues between Mainline and some subcontractors, the state does not have the authority to withhold payments as long as there is proper documentation that the work was done as expected.

RAL Grading and Demolition of Raleigh, a subcontractor that started work last October, has claimed that Mainline owes it \$500,000 for work it performed, and that it owes subcontractors about \$270,000. Hauling companies that worked under RAL and a second subcontractor, Stewart Hauling and Backhoe, said they didn't get properly paid either.

Mainline, based in Durham, has denied the subcontractor claims and maintains that it overpaid RAL. The subcontractor claims have led to separate investigations by the Federal Aviation Administration, the state DOT and the local airport commission.

The FAA, in a letter to Walls, said last

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week that though the airport has "acted in good faith" to help subcontractors get paid, it would soon receive a "strongly worded letter" over not providing the FAA civil-rights office with documentation for its investigation.

Tom McKim, the chairman of the airport commission, said that airport officials have invited

the FAA to look freely through its files. McKim said that the airport is concerned, however, about the burden and expense of providing the FAA with the "ton of stuff" that providing documentation would involve.

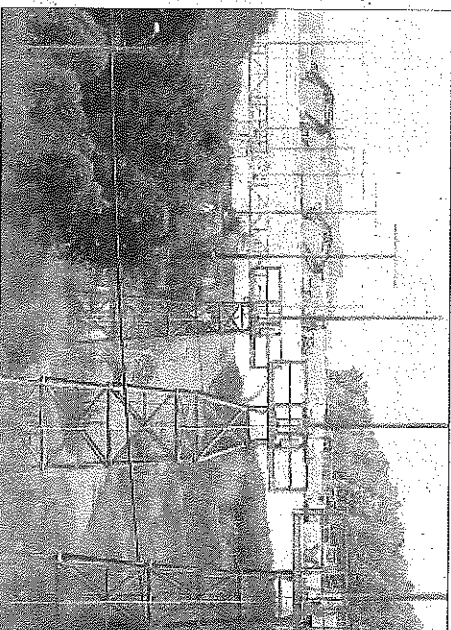
Meanwhile, the third in a series of haulers subcontracting under Mainline, Cat-A-Hula Haulers LLC, has not been at work on the airport site since

Aug. 27. McKim said that it was his understanding that Cat-A-Hula was paid for work per-

formed, but that the company had decided not to return to work today because of a disagreement over dirt measurements between Mainline and Avcon.

John Sharpe, Cat-A-Hula's director of operations, confirmed that his company has not worked recently, but he called McKim's other comments "his personal opinion."

Wesley Young can be reached at 727-7369 or at wyoung@wsjournal.com.



Construction to improve safety is under way at Smith Reynolds Airport seen from New Walkertown Road. A runway runoff is being extended.