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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Metro Park Plans Lead To Protest

By The Moscow Times

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About 50 protesters rallied in southern Moscow on Sunday in the latest confrontation in a struggle that echoes the battle over the Khimki Forest road.

Local residents and environmental groups are challenging the construction of a new metro line beneath Bitsevsky Forest Park.

The new line would connect orange-line station Novoyasyenevskaya with Bulvar Dmitriya Donskogo, a stop on the gray line just south of the Moscow Ring Road.

The extension would entail building a new line running diagonally northwest to southeast through a section of Bitsevsky Park. It would also include a new connecting station and a completely new station, dubbed Lesoparkovaya, in the middle of the forest where it is bisected by the Moscow Ring Road.

Environmentalists and local residents are up in arms over the project, complaining that work started in October, but that the first "public consultation" — required under Russian law —

did not take place until January, when construction work was already in full swing.

A local initiative group, Residents of Yasnevo in Defense of Bitsevsky Forest, said last week that they received a letter from the Federal Inspection Service for Natural Resources Use confirming that an expert commission had found "discrepancies" between the project and environmental legislation.

At the end of January, Greenpeace Russia and the World Wildlife Fund wrote to prosecutors calling for an investigation because work was going ahead before completion of a state environmental review required by law for such projects.

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