

WASHINGTON METRORAIL SAFETY COMMISSION

Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Location: This meeting was conducted as a publicly streamed video conference. The video recording of the meeting is available at [WMSC Public Meeting of the Commissioners March 4, 2025](#). Commissioner questions and comments are captured in the video recording.

MINUTES

Order of Events	Items
Attendance	Commissioners present: Chair Christopher Hart, Vice Chair Robert Lauby, Secretary-Treasurer Debra Farrar-Dyke, and Commissioners Rouse, Conklin, Robinson, and Higgins. Commissioner Higgins was a voting member for the review and adoption of the Safety Event Investigations.
1.	Call to Order. Hart. Hart called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. WMSC General Counsel Silbaugh called the roll, and a quorum was achieved throughout the meeting.
2.	Safety Message. Darrell Braxton, Program Specialist, Operations. Braxton defined that a near miss is transit means an event that is not an incident or accident. It does not have to result in property damage or an injury. However, it is a learning opportunity so record the details of the event, report any hazards that are identified, and consider those hazards and determine if mitigations are needed.
3.	Approval of the minutes of the January 28, 2025 Public Meeting. Hart. Farrar-Dyke sought comments on the proposed minutes. Hearing none, she moved for approval of the minutes of the January 28, 2025 Public Meeting. The minutes of the January 28, 2025 Public Meeting were approved unanimously.
4.	Public Comments. Hart. Hart invited comments from members of the public who joined the webinar audience and who identified themselves as speakers. No members of the public offered comments. Chair Hart also reminded viewers that comments may be provided to the WMSC website, through social media, or by email.

<p>5.</p>	<p>Chair’s Remarks. Hart.</p> <p>Hart began his comments with a report on several meetings Commissioner Conklin and he participated in with WMATA Board Chair Santos and Director Drummer. He looks forward to the continued opportunity to get to know the WMATA Board Members. Secretary-Treasurer Farrar-Dyke will be joining him for the April meeting. Hart also forecast updates on the WMSC’s ongoing safety oversight activities and the actions that are taken to ensure that Metrorail upholds its safety commitments and strives to continuously improve the safety of its system.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>CEO’s Remarks. David Mayer, Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Mayer previewed the staff reports on corrective action plan implementation, the ongoing safety audits into rail operations and the control center, and elevators and escalators, as well as the WMSC’s continued vigilance following our concurrence to start Automatic Train Operations at design speeds on the Red Line. Further, the investigation team will seek the adoption of investigations into four evacuations for life safety events and the derailment of a rail maintenance machine. Next, Mayer focused on the WMSC’s special study of the Metrorail Radio Infrastructure replacement and modernization project. Metrorail has been working on launching an entirely new radio system -- a project that it initiated in 2017. The project is intended to increase the reliability and performance of the radio system, and to improve the quality of radio communications throughout the Metrorail system. The WMSC’s Audit report of Emergency Management and Life Safety that we issued in January 2025 noted that the current radio communication system at Metrorail is unreliable for operations or emergencies. The inability for personnel in the field to communicate with personnel in the control center and for first responders to communicate with one another during emergencies poses a safety risk to the safety of all who interact with the Metrorail system.</p> <p>The WMSC’s special study of the Project will assess the overall status of the project and when and if the anticipated safety benefits of the project will be realized. The study will culminate in a report, which will be shared with Metrorail and the Commissioners before it is released.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Audits. John O’Donnell, Program Specialist, Audits and Corrective Action Plans.</p> <p>O’Donnell, as during prior meetings, reported that the deadline for the production of documents has passed but the WMSC has not received the majority of the documents needed to begin the Fitness for Duty and Occupational Health Programs Audit. Thus, the WMSC is not able to begin its targeted assessment of compliance with worker safety standards. Next, O’Donnell reviewed the audit report for the Emergency Management and Fire Life Safety Program, which was issued on January 29, 2025. The audit found that Metrorail has made systematic improvements since the prior 2022 WMSC audit in this area. The WMSC also identified 5 findings, including areas where Metrorail does not follow its procedures and requirements, does not address equipment issues, and is not properly identifying and inspecting life safety equipment. For the Control Center and Rail Operations audit, the team is reviewing additional information received after the January 14th exit conference while continuing to prepare the draft report for this audit. As a result of information received from Metrorail, the WMSC will be conducting additional interviews. Next, for</p>

	<p>the Elevators and Escalators audit, interviews and observations are complete and the data is under review. An exit conference likely will be held at the end of March. Last, the WMSC is about to begin its audit of Metrorail’s Communication Systems. The audit’s scope focuses on Metrorail’s voice and data transmission systems that are presently in use or available for use, such as radio and public address systems. The audit will focus on present inspection, maintenance, engineering, and other practices for those systems. Initial documents are expected from Metrorail in March.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Corrective Action Plans (CAPs). Ashley Rhodes, Program Manager for Corrective Action Plans.</p> <p>Rhodes reported that one CAP has been closed since the January 28, 2025 public meeting. There are 91 open CAPs, which include one remaining CAP stemming from the Roadway Worker Protection Audit and 5 CAPs stemming from the Emergency Management and Life Safety Audit. Metrorail has submitted 49 new deliverables for the open CAPs since the January meeting. Before discussing the closed CAP, Rhodes provided a status on two of the WMSC’s notices of non-compliance. These notices were necessary because Metrorail refused to follow the requirements of the WMSC Compact and the WMSC Program Standard in preparing acceptable CAPs to correct hazards contained in recent WMSC audit findings. Metrorail has not responded to the Notices for C-0255 or C-0272. Turning to the one closed CAP: CAP C-0162 represents systematic safety improvements developed from the 2022 Emergency Management and Life Safety Audit. C-0162 resulted in Metrorail developing an entirely new set of procedures collectively referred to as the Incident Management Framework, which included the first Metrorail-wide emergency response training. The Framework outlines the incident command structure and incorporates both jurisdictional emergency responders as well as Metrorail personnel and is scalable to various types of safety events. The new framework incorporates new terminology to match with the National Incident Management System terminology that jurisdictional emergency responders are familiar with. The new framework also defines duties and provides playbooks for key personnel who respond to incidents. Metrorail trained 3,892 personnel through four different training levels, with a subset of personnel receiving classroom training over the course of several days.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Safety Certification Status Report. Paul Smith, Director, System Engineering.</p> <p>Smith focused on the in-depth review of Metrorail’s use of automatic train operations and the change to the maximum allowable speed following the WMSC’s concurrence for their use on the Red Line on December 9, 2024. As of March 4th, there have been 190 station overruns on the Red Line involving trains operating in ATO. Of these, approximately 100 station overruns have resulted in trains passing the 8-car marker stopping point by one or more train cars. A station overrun occurs when a passenger train making a scheduled station stop, fails to stop within the station platform limits, at the eight-car marker, and is unable to service the platform. The safety consequences of station overruns include roadway workers being struck by the train, passengers being unable to disembark or board the train using all available doors on the train, which can lead to injuries or the inability to safely evacuate the train to the platform during an emergency. Smith spoke about trends in the overrun data. On January 15th and 16th, following heavy snowfall and icy track conditions, station overruns increased. This finding is what led Metrorail to recognize the need to refine its severe weather procedure. There are days when automatic train operations were suspended due to such weather conditions which then saw a rapid decline in station overruns. As mentioned during our last meeting, it was determined some train operators were</p>

	<p>incorrectly pressing the “Station Stop Cancel” button, fearing that the train would not make the correct station stop in ATO. However, that button actually prevents that train from stopping, canceling the Station Stopping Profile. Metrorail issued a directive to address the issue of the “Station Stop Cancel” button being used incorrectly. The WMSC followed up to ensure that WMATA incorporated this element into training for train operators. Additionally, there have been stations that have experienced more station overruns than others. As part of its effort to prevent station overruns in ATO, Metrorail started evaluating each of these red line stations for location specific train control adjustments, and in some locations, such as Rockville Station, instituted temporary mitigations that show results of declining station overruns.</p> <p>Metrorail has been investigating station overruns at Judiciary Square Station where trains are experiencing a higher number of overruns than at any other station on the Red line. Metrorail has explained that trains arriving at this station are experiencing an Electromagnetic Interference that has contributed to the overall number of Station Overruns across the Red line. Smith reported that the WMSC told Metrorail that for the remainder of the Metrorail system to be assessed for ATO concurrence by the WMSC, the WMSC requires evidence of comprehensive Red Line ATO station overrun data gathering, and a disciplined analysis of that data using the safety management system approach. Metrorail must design, test and implement mitigations using systems engineering, leading to mitigations to prevent station overruns in ATO on the Red Line.</p> <p>Turning to the safety certification of the 8000-series railcars, oversight of Metrorail’s safety certification process requires an independent assessment of the safety certification and project documents and records for these railcars. The WMSC requested access to the railcar planning documents, acknowledging that some may be in draft form, so that the WMSC may provide safety input at the earliest points possible, when it is easiest and least costly for Metrorail to change the design. Metrorail has not provided these materials and stated that it does not intend to provide draft documents or planning documents. Metrorail will provide the preliminary design document once it is complete. The WMSC will respond to the preliminary design document with its assessment of whether the necessary safety considerations have been incorporated, and trusts that if there are outstanding safety considerations, Metrorail will not assert that the time has passed for changes to be made to the design.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Safety Event Investigations. Adam Quigley, Manager, Safety Investigations and Natalie Quiroz, Investigations Analyst.</p> <p>The WMSC investigations team has been investigating several incidents, including a collision that occurred on January 25, 2025, between North Bethesda and Grosvenor rail stations, resulting in a fatality. The WMSC is examining all aspects of this event, including adherence to standard operating procedures when individuals are reported on the roadway, automatic train operations rules and procedures, and emergency response protocols. A final report will be presented at a later date. Additionally, the WMSC is investigating two red signal overrun events that have occurred in February and March. These incidents are being thoroughly reviewed, and we continue to interview operators involved in red signal overruns to determine contributing factors.</p> <p>The reports referenced below may be found at the following link: https://wmsc.gov/oversight/reports/.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. W-0360 Derailment near Naylor Road Station – May 17, 2024 2. W-0361 Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at L’Enfant Plaza Station – April 17, 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3. W-0362 Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Foggy Bottom Station – May 18, 20244. W-0363 Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Eisenhower Avenue Headquarters – July 2, 20245. W-0364 Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Benning Road Station – July 22, 2024 <p>Commissioners moved to adopt the five reports. The motion passed unanimously.</p>
11.	Adjournment. Hart adjourned the meeting at 2:26 p.m.