

## WASHINGTON METRORAIL SAFETY COMMISSION

**Date:** Tuesday, April 8, 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 April 8, 2025](#). Commissioner questions and comments are captured in the video recording.

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### MINUTES

Order of Events	Items
Attendance	Commissioners present: Chair Christopher Hart, Vice Chair Robert Lauby, Secretary-Treasurer Debra Farrar-Dyke, and Commissioners Bobb, Rouse, Conklin, Robinson, and Higgins. Commissioner Higgins and Robinson were non-voting members for this meeting.
1.	<b>Call to Order.</b> 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.	<b>Safety Message.</b> Darrell Braxton, Program Specialist, Operations.  Braxton shared that April is the National Safety Council's Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Distracted driving is a leading cause of crashes on the road, but many of these tragedies are preventable. He highlighted a few mitigations to ensure safe vehicle operations without distraction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't drive while drowsy</li><li>• Do not use your phone while driving; find a location to pull over and stop to take a call</li><li>• Avoid loud conversations and music</li><li>• Plan your route ahead of time</li><li>• Keep your attention on the road and your hands on the steering wheel</li></ul>
3.	<b>Approval of the minutes of the March 4, 2025 Public Meeting.</b> Hart.  Farrar-Dyke sought comments on the proposed minutes. Hearing none, she moved for approval of the minutes of the March 4, 2025 Public Meeting. The minutes of the March 4, 2025 Public Meeting were approved unanimously.
4.	<b>Public Comments.</b> 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.
5.	<p><b>Chair’s Remarks.</b> Hart.</p> <p>Hart began his comments by acknowledging the regular dialogue between the WMSC and Metrorail concerning its safety certification, audits, and corrective action plans. He 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>
6.	<p><b>CEO’s Remarks.</b> David Mayer, Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Mayer started with a brief overview of the status of the WMSC’s safety certification oversight for Metrorail’s current use of automatic train operations on the Red Line, and its plan to expand use of ATO to other lines. He focused on the continual collaboration between the WMSC and Metrorail on this project. He also highlighted one safety hazard that has increased during ATO operations on the Red Line: station overruns. Since the December 15, 2024 start of the use of ATO on the Red Line, there have been 217 station overruns in ATO versus 21 overruns in manual mode. This increase means that the use of ATO is driving the risk associated with station overruns in the wrong direction. WMSC staff informed Metrorail that we cannot concur that Metrorail’s safety certification process adequately identified and mitigated the overrun hazards, and until it does, ATO should not be used in revenue service on any other rail line. Next, last week, the WMSC sent a Notice of Non-compliance to Metrorail. This Notice addresses Metrorail’s failure to respond to two action item deliverables stemming from an agreed-to CAP following the 2023 WMSC Audit of Roadway Maintenance Machines. The Audit Finding concerns the use of adequate fall protection when working on or around Roadway Maintenance Machines. Our Notice seeks compliance with the CAP so the fall hazard protections are implemented. Moving to the WMSC’s Program Standard, by regulation, the Program Standard document must explain the WMSC’s oversight authority, policies, reporting requirements, and methods for interacting with Metrorail. It is reviewed every year for needed changes or updates, which may stem from regulatory changes or lessons learned. The WMSC will send the latest draft of the Program Standard to Metrorail for its review and comment. The WMSC considers every relevant comment that Metrorail submits before presenting the document to the Commissioners for approval. Mayer also extended his thanks to Metrorail, the Federal Transit Administration, and some of our colleague members of the Transit Safety Oversight Association (TSOA) who participated in interviews in support of the WMSC’s drafting of our first strategic plan. The WMSC is beginning to formulate the plan now and will be working with the Commissioners on its scope and content. Finally, the WMSC is drafting our annual report on WMSC operations and the safety of the Metrorail system. We will present this combined report for the Commissioners’ consideration during an upcoming public meeting.</p>
7.	<p><b>Audits.</b> John O’Donnell, Program Specialist, Audits and Corrective Action Plans.</p>

	<p>O'Donnell, as during prior meetings, reported that a year has passed since the deadline to produce 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 reported for the Control Center and Rail Operations audit that the team is reviewing additional information received after the January 14, 2025 exit conference. Next, an exit conference was held on March 28, 2025 for the Elevators and Escalators audit. Metrorail provided additional information to review for this audit on April 4, 2025. The team is reviewing this information along with drafting the report. Last, the WMSC sent an audit notification and initial request for documents for the audit of Metrorail's Communication Systems. Documents were received on March 24, 2025, and interviews and on-site observations will continue into May. 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.</p>
8.	<p><b>Corrective Action Plans (CAPs).</b> Ashley Rhodes, Program Manager for Corrective Action Plans.</p> <p>Rhodes reported that eight CAPs have been closed since the March 4, 2025 public meeting. There are 84 open CAPs, and 5 CAPs under development stemming from the Emergency Management and Life Safety Audit. Metrorail has submitted 29 new deliverables for the open CAPs since the March meeting. Before discussing the closed CAPs, Rhodes focused on a Notice of Non-Compliance sent to Metrorail because of its failure to provide the agreed-to actionable items for Corrective Action Plan C-0240. Metrorail developed this CAP in response to findings in the 2023 WMSC Audit of Roadway Maintenance Machines, in which the WMSC found that Metrorail is putting personnel at risk by not ensuring the use of fall protection when working on or around Roadway Maintenance Machines. Metrorail provided Actionable Item 1 under the CAP but has refused to provide the next two Actionable Items. Metrorail can return to compliance by providing these two items. Turning to the eight closed CAPs: C-0136 required Metrorail to address the Audit finding that 6000 series cars were being put into service without SAFE approval. To address this finding, 6K railcars were defaulted to out of service until completing the required Service Maintenance Program. To ensure these requirements were met, a Certificate of Compliance with appropriate approvals was submitted for all 182 6000 series railcars. CAP C-0137 addressed another Revenue Vehicle Finding regarding the 6000 series Service Maintenance Program. Metrorail removed the coupler overhaul from the 6000 series SMP process without documenting that change or completing a review of that change by the Safety Certification Review Committee as required. To address this, Metrorail Updated its Certifiable Elements and Items List development policy which now includes requirements for WMATA's Safety Certification Review Committee to review and approve all Certified Items List changes. CAP C-0155 was created as a result of the WMSC's Cycle 1 Audit of High Voltage and Traction Power Programs and was later modified because of the later Cycle 2 Power Audit to address Metrorail's lack of effectively identifying, tracking and mitigating hazards related to high voltage and traction power. Metrorail Developed a new Safety Risk Management SOP which included the newly created Safety Risk Coordinator role as well as creating Metrorail's internal system for tracking hazards and risks along with the organizing of safety committees at various levels of the organization. All applicable personnel were then trained in this new system. CAP C-0156 is another Power Audit CAP from our first triennial cycle which addressed Metrorail being behind schedule on its floating slab testing to monitor for deterioration due to stray current. Metrorail completed floating slab testing at all 85 total locations, work that included repairing 96 broken bond cables, and retesting all locations to</p>

	<p>verify electrical continuity was restored. C-0168 developed from the Emergency Management and Fire and Life Safety Programs and addressed Metrorail not ensuring experts in fire and life safety were included in and had a documented role in Metrorail project development, planning, review and approvals, a lack which contributed to hazards being introduced into the Metrorail system or hazards being allowed to continue to exist without mitigation. Metrorail updated relevant policies like its Capital Construction Program Procedure and Safety and Security Certification Program Plan to document the requirement of participation of SAFE subject matter experts, including in Fire Life Safety and Emergency Management, in the development, approval and implementation process through Metrorail project completion. C-0224 addressed Metrorail's Communications group having job descriptions that had not been updated since the 1970s and 1980s and did not reflect current job responsibilities and necessary qualifications. Metrorail reviewed its existing 18 communications job descriptions, removed 2 which were no longer relevant, and revised the remaining 16. C-0225 addressed Metrorail's organizational structure, preventing it from effectively ensuring that its track is maintained in a state of good repair as specified by Metrorail policies, procedures and standards. Metrorail updated organizational charts and responsibilities listed for each group involved in Track Inspection to ensure that all responsibilities were defined and understood. Metrorail also updated its Ultrasonic Testing of Rail Field Welds Policy that specifies who is responsible for carrying out this task, the process for ensuring this testing occurs, and the documentation and tracking of this process. Last, C-0245 addressed Metrorail having the opportunity to more effectively collect and proactively utilize reliability data to ensure safe and effective operations regarding Roadway Maintenance Machines. Metrorail updated relevant roadway maintenance machine data gathering policies to include the tracking of vehicle engine hours to help calculate their mean time between failures. Supervisory checks are now being conducted to verify that work orders include engine hours and correct component codes for maintenance activities to be utilized for reliability data.</p>
9.	<p><b>Safety Certification Status Report.</b> 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 soon as ATO was activated on the Red Line, there were many station overruns. 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. There are safety consequences of station overruns. Most consequentially would be roadway workers being struck by the train, or equipment on the roadway being struck. But failing to service the platform also could result in passengers being unable to disembark 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, or law enforcement personnel being unable to board these trains to conduct security activities. Based on these continuing overruns, on the Red Line, Metrorail's automated train control system cannot be relied upon to make station stops at fixed locations, which is the purpose of ATO. Metrorail is projecting that, in ATO, there will be about 360 overruns/year. This is similar to the level of station overruns in 1996, which preceded the NTSB's recommendation and the Department of Transportation Volpe Center recommendation that a comprehensive systematic analysis be undertaken to understand the causes of these station overruns and to improve the train stopping accuracy of the ATO system. 360 station overruns in ATO is more than the manual mode overruns last year. Also, at Judiciary Square Station, overruns continue to happen without any certainty as to the source of the issue.</p>

	<p>Metrorail has attributed these occurrences to electromagnetic interference. The WMSC has explained that Metrorail and its original equipment manufacturer/supplier must conduct an assessment and write a report about Judiciary Square Station overruns. We await this additional information. Additionally, Metrorail explained that many of the train operator-caused overruns have been the result of the train operators engaging the station stop cancel button incorrectly. Metrorail has indicated it is disabling this feature on all trains. We have asked Metrorail to provide all engineering modification and other operational assessments pertaining to the disabling of this feature that currently allows train operators to cancel the station stop of their train. 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 documents but said it 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>
10.	<p><b>Safety Event Investigations.</b> Adam Quigley, Manager, Safety Investigations and Natalie Quiroz, Investigations Analyst.</p> <p>The reports referenced below may be found at the following link:  <a href="https://wmsc.gov/oversight/reports/">https://wmsc.gov/oversight/reports/</a>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. W-0365 Hazardous Waste Spill of Hydraulic Fluid between Rosslyn and Foggy Bottom-GWU Station – August 7, 2024</li> <li>2. W-0366 Improper Rail Vehicle Movement near Dupont Circle Station – July 21, 2024</li> <li>3. W-0367 Improper Rail Vehicle Movement at Pentagon Station – August 17, 2024</li> </ol> <p>Commissioners moved to adopt the three reports. The motion passed unanimously.</p>
11.	<p><b>Adjournment.</b> Hart adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.</p>