



Washington Metrorail Safety Commission

Fiscal Year 2026 Work Program

Introduction

The Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) is the designated State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail system. In 2017 the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the State of Maryland created the WMSC with the approval of Congress and the president through an interstate compact to act as the SSOA for the WMATA rail system under Title 49 U.S.C. § 5329.

Federal regulations, specifically Title 49 C.F.R. § 674.5(a), require that “... a State that has a rail fixed guideway public transportation system within the State has primary responsibility for overseeing the safety of that rail fixed guideway public transportation system. A State safety oversight agency must have sufficient authority, resources, and qualified personnel to oversee the number, size, and complexity of rail fixed guideway public transportation systems that operate within a State.”

This document provides details of the work activities related to the WMSC Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 draft budget, which was transmitted to the three jurisdictions on October 29, 2024, in keeping with the requirements of the *Master Agreement among Washington Metrorail Safety Commission, Commonwealth of Virginia, District of Columbia and the State of Maryland regarding member jurisdictions state safety oversight funding contributions*. The WMSC’s FY 2026 begins on July 1, 2025.

WMSC Organization and Structure

The WMSC was established by the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission Interstate Compact (P.L. 115-54) in August 2017 (the “WMSC Compact”). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) certified the WMSC’s safety oversight program in March 2019. This certification met a nationwide deadline for establishing and certifying SSOAs, and it triggered a transfer of direct safety oversight responsibility from the FTA to the WMSC. Having been previously operated under the financial auspices of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the WMSC began its first financially independent fiscal year on June 3, 2019.

The SSO program of the WMSC is overseen by Commissioners appointed by each of the three signatory jurisdictions to the WMSC Compact: The State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the District of Columbia (“the jurisdictions”). The WMSC’s work is carried out by a team of full-time staff led by the WMSC Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

A team of program staff consisting of the Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Director of Systems Engineering, subject matter experts (SMEs), program managers for investigations, safety certification, corrective action plans, risk-based inspections, and program specialists, carry out the day-to-day execution of the WMSC SSO Program Standard. This team is managed by the Deputy CEO/Chief Operating Officer.

WMSC staff are responsible for 24/7 safety oversight of the Metrorail system. These activities include:

- Oversight of Corrective Action Plans (CAP), safety certification, emergency management
- Initiating and concluding safety event investigations



- Conducting inspections of the Metrorail system
- Oversight of Metrorail's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP)
- Completing audits of various areas for compliance with Metrorail policies, procedures, and other requirements, and to identify safety deficiencies

The Deputy CEO/Chief Operating Officer, General Counsel, and Chief Financial Officer report directly to the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO's authority extends to executing the organization's Program Standard, organizational accountability, and overall mandate. Some SSO powers are reserved for the Commissioners, including but not limited to the adoption of safety investigation reports, and, if necessary, compelling Metrorail to restrict, suspend or prohibit rail service on all or part of the Metrorail system, direct WMATA to disqualify or suspend performing any safety sensitive duties any individual who has alleged or had violated safety rules, procedures, regulations policies or laws and restore such an individual's ability to perform safety sensitive duties.

In addition to its in-house program staff, the WMSC manages a technical services contract with a firm that specializes in safety oversight work. Through project-specific task orders, the WMSC uses this contract to augment its own staff capabilities, when needed, for safety audits, and other specific efforts arising out of our SSOA program work.

The WMSC is unique among the 30 equivalent SSO agencies across the country: The WMSC is the only SSOA that is an independent, self-sufficient agency. All other SSOAs are established as part of a larger agency, such as a state Department of Transportation or a Public Utilities Commission. As a result, these other SSOAs are able to rely on other departments within these larger agencies for organizational support. The WMSC's full time staff perform technical SSO work as well as organizational support and management activities, such as preparing grant applications, financial management, communications, information technology, and providing its own legal representation.

Although some organizational needs such as delivery of our human resources program are supported by external contractors, WMSC staff remain responsible and accountable for the success and proper oversight of all activities. The WMSC continues to enhance our capabilities through ongoing evaluation of staffing needs as the organization matures.

More information about the WMSC and its safety oversight may be found on the WMSC's public website, www.wmsc.gov.

WMSC Work Program

As the state oversight agency (SSOA) for the Metrorail system, the WMSC carries out its important work through a robust safety oversight program that includes audits, inspections, safety event investigations, Corrective Action Plans (CAP) oversight, safety certification oversight, and emergency management oversight.

The WMSC's priority is ensuring that WMATA fulfills its responsibility to continuously improve the safety of the Metrorail system for riders, workers and all others who depend on the system's proper maintenance and operations. This clearly defined mission guides the WMSC's safety oversight work.

The WMSC's work program reflects the work necessary to provide the most effective safety oversight of the Metrorail system, to confirm that Metrorail is prioritizing the safety of Metrorail riders, employees, contractors,



first responders, and others who interact with the Metrorail system. Staffing levels and planned tasks reflect workload estimates. These estimates are prepared with WMSC's experience as an independent SSOA, the resources necessary to execute the mandate in the WMSC Compact, scaled to match the size, scope and complexity of the Metrorail system. The WMSC expects this work to include, among many other areas, overseeing Metrorail's safety certification of the Auto Doors & Activation of Automatic Train Operations (ATO), implementation of the automated wayside inspection system (AWIS), the Metrorail corrective actions required by WMSC orders on train operator certification, 7000 series rail car wheel migration, from the NTSB investigation into the 7000 series rail car derailment in October 2021, and WMSC review and approval of all Roadway Worker Program changes.

The WMSC maintains 24/7 operations to align with Metrorail, which moves trains and conducts inspections, maintenance, and repairs continuously. WMSC staff receive notifications around the clock regarding safety events that occur in the system. In some cases, the WMSC staff mobilize to these event locations as part of our role in investigations. WMSC staff are constantly assessing the issues raised and determining what additional investigative action is necessary. Conducting rail safety oversight of Metrorail involves overseeing WMATA's practices and procedures that are designed to ensure the safety of physical assets that make up the system such as track, structures, railcars, stations and ancillary facilities, and the readiness of several thousand Metrorail employees who have roles in operating, inspecting, maintaining, training personnel, and engineering the Metrorail system.

Key Work Program Activities

The WMSC Compact and federal regulations require the WMSC to publish, review and revise and adhere to the WMSC Program Standard. The WMSC Program Standard describes the processes and procedures that the WMSC uses to carry out SSO activities, and the processes and procedures that WMATA must use to comply with WMSC requirements. The WMSC reviews and updates its Program Standard annually. The Program Standard along with all audit, inspection, and safety event investigation reports, as well as official action documents are publicly available on the [WMSC website](#).

Likewise, WMATA is required to develop, maintain, and adhere to its Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP). The WMSC, as the regulation mandates, is to evaluate that the PTASP is prepared in keeping with the regulations and the National Public Transportation Safety Plan and is consistent with the WMSC Program Standard stipulations. The WMSC reviews each PTASP update and provides feedback. Once WMSC staff review has been completed, the WMSC Commissioners approve WMATA's PTASP.,

The list below describes the core SSO functions that are governed by the WMSC Program Standard and explains how these functions provide oversight of WMATA's implementation of its PTASP. The WMSC will continue to carry out these efforts in FY 2026:

1. Conducting or causing to be conducted investigations into safety events such as accidents, incidents, and occurrences, as defined by federal regulations and the WMSC Program Standard. In FY 2024 the WMSC investigated, and the Commissioners adopted 75 safety event investigation reports. Our investigations team works with WMATA to continuously improve the investigation process, resulting in more timely completion of investigations and more comprehensive reports.



2. Conducting safety audits to verify Metrorail compliance with its PTASP, policies and procedures. In FY 2024 the WMSC conducted five safety audits. These audits pertain to Structures Program, Roadway Maintenance Machines Program, Automatic Train Control (ATC) and Signals Program, Power Systems, and Revenue Vehicles (Railcar) Program. The WMSC is currently in its second triennial cycle of audits. All WMSC Triennial Audit Reports are available on the WMSC website.
3. Ordering, reviewing, approving, monitoring, and verifying Metrorail Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) to address safety deficiencies or non-compliance. After the WMSC issues findings, Metrorail must submit proposed CAPs to the WMSC to resolve the issues and reduce the risk of future safety events. As of June 30, 2024, the WMSC is currently overseeing 91 open CAPs, many of which were created to address WMSC audit findings.
4. Conducting independent safety inspections of Metrorail infrastructure, operations, and personnel. The WMSC documents these inspections and provides feedback to Metrorail. In some cases, these inspections lead to official actions to help ensure WMATA addresses safety concerns discovered by the WMSC. Following receipt of FTA approval in September 2024, the WMSC Risk-based inspection program, promulgated by an FTA Special Directive will be incorporated into the WMSC inspections program.
5. Taking any necessary enforcement action to compel Metrorail to adhere to its safety commitments.
6. Ensuring that capital projects, including new projects as well as modernization projects, follow an organized method to identify and mitigate hazards prior to entering service through WMSC oversight of the Metrorail safety certification program.
7. Preparing and providing two annual reports to the three jurisdictions and other stakeholders, including WMATA and the FTA. The WMSC Compact requires an annual report on the safety of the Metrorail system, and it also requires an annual report of WMSC operations. The WMSC makes its annual reports publicly available on the WMSC website. In addition, the WMSC submits required data to the FTA through the State Safety Oversight Reporting (SSOR) tool.
8. Supporting the conduct of an annual independent audit of WMSC finances at the close of each WMSC fiscal year. The WMSC has had five annual financial statement audits, all resulting in an unmodified or “clean” audit opinion.
9. Conducting Public Meetings of the Commission. In FY 2024 the WMSC conducted eight public meetings, which included adoption of safety investigation reports, briefings on safety audit findings, the adoption of revised bylaws and other policies, and the issuance of its annual reports. The public meetings also provide the opportunity for public comment. Video recordings of each meeting is available via the [WMSC's YouTube channel](#). The WMSC plans to hold nine public meetings in FY 2025.

Budget Process, Funding Sources, and Amounts

On October 22, 2024, the WMSC Commissioners approved the draft FY 2026 work plan and budget. The WMSC has made a concerted effort to state its budget needs as accurately as possible. The WMSC's workload assessment and ongoing assessment of work effort, notice of proposed rule making (NPRM) and FTA regulatory changes are factors used by the WMSC to scale fiscal year budget, each year. In particular, data gathered



from each of our program areas that provide indications on emerging Metrorail safety focus areas that would require increased WMSC safety oversight efforts factored into the budget for staff resources, contract resources, training, and information technology needs.

The WMSC Compact states that the WMSC's operations are funded independently of WMATA by the three jurisdictions, and, when available, by federal funds. The WMSC Compact also states that the jurisdictions shall unanimously agree on adequate funding levels for the WMSC and make equal contributions of such funding to cover the portion of WMSC operations not funded by federal funds. On June 15, 2019, the WMSC entered into a funding agreement with the three jurisdictions regarding the budget and funding process.

The funding agreement establishes a four-step budget process:

1. By November 1 of each year, the WMSC shares with the jurisdictions a draft budget for the next WMSC FY.
2. By December 15 of each year, the jurisdictions provide comment on the draft budget to the WMSC.
3. Prior to April 15 of each year, the WMSC provides notice to the jurisdictions confirming unanimous agreement and providing the total share to be paid by the jurisdictions.
4. Finally, no later than June 1, the WMSC Commissioners adopt the budget, and it goes into effect on July 1.

Per the funding agreement, the WMSC invoices each jurisdiction for its share in two equal installments: Invoices are issued in June (payment due on July 15) and in December (payment due January 15). Federal grant funds are only available to the WMSC on a reimbursable basis, and a 20 percent local match is required. Additionally, the WMSC relies on additional (overmatch) funds from the jurisdictions to cover that portion of its budget that is not covered by federal grant funds and associated matching funds. Finally, the WMSC maintains a six-month reserve fund. Consequently, each invoice breaks the jurisdiction's share into three categories: Matching funds, overmatch, and reserve funds.



The table below lists the applicable federal grants by federal fiscal year (FFY). The table provides the total value of each grant, the federal portion, and the required local matching funds:

FFY	Total	Federal Share	Local Match	Period Available
2018	\$4,331,546	\$3,465,237	\$866,309	7/1/20-6/30/25
2019	\$4,454,342	\$3,563,475	\$890,867	7/1/21-6/30/26
2021	\$2,630,601	\$2,104,481	\$526,120	7/1/22-6/30/27
2022	\$4,456,843	\$3,565,474	\$891,370	7/1/23-6/30/28
2023	\$4,584,610	\$3,667,688	\$916,922	7/1/24-6/30/29
2024	\$4,053,689	\$3,242,952	\$810,737	7/1/25-6/30/30

The WMSC has been awarded its apportionments for FFY 2018 through FFY 2023 and is applying for the FFY 2024 apportionment. The WMSC FTA Grants Spending Plan forecasts fully expending each of these grants, over the course of a five year period.

In WMSC FY 2026, the jurisdictions will be asked to provide local matching funds for the recently awarded FFY 2024 grant totaling \$810,737, or \$270,246 from each jurisdiction.

In FY 2026, the WMSC also anticipates that the local jurisdictions will be asked to provide overmatch funds. As specified in the funding agreement, the WMSC conducted a carryover analysis and reconciliation. Unspent local funds from the previous year are credited to the jurisdictions before calculating the dollar value of the overmatch that will be needed for WMSC FY 2026. Based on the proposed budget, and the audited carryover balances from WMSC FY 2024, the overmatch portion of the jurisdiction funding is \$2,512,164, or \$837,388 for each jurisdiction.

Likewise, a reconciliation will also be conducted for the reserve fund. At the end of the current FY, the WMSC anticipates that the reserve fund will hold \$2,528,560. Because the funding agreement calls for a six-month reserve fund, using a 12 month "look back" period, the WMSC will require an additional \$311,690, or \$103,896 per jurisdiction. This additional reserve fund need is based on the most recently completed fiscal year, with total expenses of \$5,680,500 which requires a reserve balance of \$2,840,250 (1/2 of the look back period) for FY 2026.



The total projected jurisdiction contribution is broken down as follows:

	FY 2026	FY 2025
Jurisdiction Match	\$ 810,738	\$ 916,922
Jurisdiction Overmatch	2,512,164	2,452,594
Jurisdiction Reserve	311,690	159,506
Total Jurisdiction funding	\$ 3,634,592	\$ 3,529,022
Each jurisdiction amount	\$ 1,211,531	\$ 1,176,341



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Appendix



WMSC FY2026 Budget

ADMINISTRATIVE	
Staff compensation and benefits	<p>\$5,258,000</p> <p>Cost reflects salaries and benefits (health, dental, vision, life insurance, and retirement match) for staffing necessary to ensure the WMSC can carry out its mission and maintain the level of effort required based on 49 CFR 674. Considering the level of effort required by the WMSC’s orders, and changes to regulatory requirements, and emerging Metrorail safety focus areas, we are budgeting to increase one FTE to a total of 25 in FY2026. We are also budgeting staff salary range adjustment that will allow management to stay competitive in recruiting the best candidates for WMSC’s program needs. Our benefit rate is being budgeted at 23.5% of salaries.</p>
Commission meetings	<p>\$35,000</p> <p>Cost reflects statutorily obligated stipends and reasonable travel expenses, meeting space costs, catering, meeting materials, and security.</p>
Office equipment and supplies	<p>\$35,000</p> <p>Purchase of office equipment (e.g., laptops and monitors), office collaboration equipment, office supplies.</p>
Office space lease	<p>\$210,000</p> <p>Cost reflects annual lease of office space and estimated costs for access control and operating expenses.</p>
Business Insurance	<p>\$209,000</p> <p>Cost reflects annual renewal costs for cybersecurity insurance, liability, property, and acts and omissions policies and approximately \$15,000 reserved for cost increases and/or any additional insurance needed.</p>
SUBTOTAL	<p>\$5,747,000</p>

CONTRACTORS	
Legal Services	<p>\$600,000</p> <p>Cost reflects annual cost for outsourced legal services and outsourced government outreach support.</p>
Organizational services	<p>\$263,000</p> <p>Cost reflects outside contract support for human resources, audit and accounting services, procurement, graphics, performance metrics design, managerial development, and employee benefits management services.</p>
IT support services	<p>\$200,000</p> <p>Cost reflects general information technology support services, including laptop configuration and maintenance, website redesign, email domain management, computer security, and disaster recovery planning.</p>
SSOA staffing support	<p>\$500,000</p> <p>Cost reflects contractor support to provide and increasing need for expert technical services for safety audits and high-profile investigations, and as needed at other times.</p>
SUBTOTAL	\$1,563,000

TRAVEL AND TRAINING	
Training	<p>\$45,000</p> <p>Cost reflects travel and tuition for commissioners and staff to obtain required certifications. Training vendors include DOT, FTA, NTSB, and other entities. We have increased this line item from previous years due to the increase in staff designated for training, an increase in available trainings post COVID, and an increase in the WMSC staffing level.</p>
Staff travel	<p>\$45,000</p> <p>Cost reflects reimbursement for travel associated with field work, inspections, and meetings. This line item has increased due to an increase in the WMSC staffing level.</p>
SUBTOTAL	\$90,000

EQUIPMENT & MAINTENANCE	
IT software and maintenance	<p>\$100,000</p> <p>Cost reflects acquisition, maintenance, support, and licensing fees for software and data systems to support the WMSC’s mission and IT infrastructure. This includes legal databases, media monitoring, office productivity and other related software, website domain renewal, and the like. Cost also includes office internet, telephone and video communication services.</p>
Publications and memberships	<p>\$15,000</p> <p>Cost reflects maintaining staff professional licenses and memberships, technical publications, and subscriptions, WMSC organizational memberships (e.g., National Safety Council, American Public Transportation Association).</p>
Personal protective equipment	<p>\$10,000</p> <p>Cost reflects purchase of personal protective equipment and inclement weather gear required for staff to work safely in the rail system.</p>
Tools and instruments	<p>\$5,000</p> <p>Cost reflects purchase of specialized work equipment that may be needed to conduct field inspection activities. This could include, speed monitoring equipment, track measuring tools, cameras, and other electronic devices.</p>
SUBTOTAL	\$130,000
TOTAL	\$7,530,000



The Washington Metrorail Safety Commission

FTE Chart – 2026 budget

Position Title	Number
Chief Executive Officer	1
Deputy CEO/Chief Operating Officer	1
General Counsel	1
Chief Financial Officer	1
Deputy Chief Operating Officer	1
Attorney and Public Engagement Advisor	1
Director, Systems Engineering	1
Program Manager: CAPs	1
Program Manager, Safety Oversight	1
Program Manager, Investigations	1
Program Manager, Information Technology	1
Program Manager, Safety Certification	1
Program Manager, Inspections	1
Program Manager, Engineering	1
SME Operations	1
Program Specialist, Audit and CAPs	1
Communications Specialist	1
Business Operations Manager	1
Investigations Analyst	1
Program Specialist, Rail Safety Compliance Analyst	1
Program Specialist, Rail Systems, Maint., and Practices	1
Program Specialist, Signals and Train Control	1
Program Specialist, Operations	1
Multimedia Specialist	1
Coordinator *	1
Total:	25

*New in FY26