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WMSC Inspection Report 20250806

ISSUED 08/11/2025

Inspection Details

Title: Track and Rough Ride Inspection, Ballston-MU (K04) to West Falls Church (K06)

Location: Ballston-MU Station (K04) to West Falls Church Station (K06) Track 1 and 2

Date of Inspection: 8/6/2025

Time of Inspection: 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Announced (via email on 8/4/25 to Metrorail Track and Structures Director)

Risk-Based (Data Review)

Functional Area: Track and Structures

Hazard Rating: 3B

Overview

On August 6, 2025, WMSC Inspectors accompanied a Metrorail track inspection crew during one of their regular weekly track inspections. The WMSC decided to accompany this track crew because of the location of the track inspection. As part of the WMSC's regular data reviews, WMSC Inspectors reviewed the daily speed restriction report obtained from Metrorail's Maximo system[1] (via WMSC's direct access) on August 1, 2025. Specifically, Metrorail's Maintenance and Material System Speed Restriction data shows speed restrictions were in effect for Ballston-MU Station (K04) since June 23, 2025, both tracks 1 and 2, and East Falls Church Station (K05) since June 30, 2025, both tracks 1 and 2.

In addition, as a result of this speed restriction information, the WMSC searched Maximo on August 1, 2025, for trouble codes: flat wheels (FLAT), rough ride (RIDE), and wheels out of round (WOOR) over the last 365 days to see if any conditions had been reported in the area of the speed restriction. These three codes are typically how rough or uneven rides would be reported. That search returned 69 reports systemwide of maintenance issues that could potentially cause rough or uneven rides, 9 such reports were tagged to the area around East Falls Church.

Subsequent to this data review, but prior to the WMSC accompanying this Metrorail track inspection, on August 5, 2025, the Federal Transit Administration forwarded to the WMSC a safety

[1] Maximo is WMATA's database for asset management; it tracks, manages, and reports all maintenance activity.

concern from a member of the public who had reported a rough ride on July 30, 2025, between Ballston-MU and East Falls Church stations.

WMSC Inspectors convened with Metrorail track inspectors at the Alexandria Yard (C99) office and received the initial safety briefing. The Metrorail track inspection crew was assigned to examine the section from West Falls Church (K06) to Ballston-MU (K04) on Track 2. The Metrorail track inspection crew comprised a roadway-worker-in-charge (RWIC), who also acted as the watchman/lookout, two track inspectors, and two advanced mobile flaggers (AMF). The job safety briefing was conducted at East Falls Church Station (K05). The RWIC identified one segment of foul time track requests. After the safety briefing, the RWIC, the two track inspectors, and the two WMSC Inspectors boarded a train to West Falls Church Station (K06) to initiate the inspection there.

In addition to accompanying Metrorail's track inspection crew for a walking track inspection, WMSC Inspectors also traveled on 7000 series trains in both directions, twice, from Ballston-MU Station (K04) to West Falls Church Station (K06) to gain firsthand knowledge of the reported excessive vibration concerns in this part of the system. Furthermore, another WMSC Inspector rode this part of the system on August 5, 2025, also on 7000 series trains, to observe any excessive vibration. During this additional riding inspection on August 5 the WMSC Inspector did not identify abnormal conditions. However, WMSC Inspectors riding on August 6, 2025, did observe excessive vibration on riding inspections (see Observation 1 below).

WMSC Inspectors conducted a debrief with the roadway-worker-in-charge who led the Metrorail track inspection crew in accordance with Program Standard Section 6.F.1.

Defects and Corrective Actions

WMSC Inspections identify safety issues that may be classified as defects, findings, or recommendations. Findings and recommendations are defined by Program Standard Section 5.E.2 and 5.E.3 respectively. Ordinarily, issues identified in a WMSC inspection report are classified as defects. Defects are specific safety issues of non-conformance/non-compliance that are identified and that require remedial action.

This inspection did not identify any findings or recommendations and therefore does not require a WMSC Corrective Action Plan in accordance with Program Standard Section 5.E.4.

Defect Observations and Determinations

The Metrorail track inspection team adhered to all roadway worker protection (RWP) procedures throughout the track inspection, and each job safety briefing was conducted as required (there was an initial job safety briefing and then a second once the team was in the field).

Observation 1

During the August 6 rides, WMSC Inspectors detected vibrations from East Falls Church Station (K05) to West Falls Church Station (K06) in both directions on cars (7522) and (7466) on Track 1. Additionally, WMSC Inspectors found excessive vibrating on cars (7634) and

(7524) from East Falls Church Station (K05) to West Falls Church Station (K06) on Track 2. No vibrations were observed from Ballston-MU Station (K04) to East Falls Church Station (K05).

Defect 1

WMSC Inspectors noted that four emergency trip station (ETS) box blue lights were not illuminated between K&N Junction (K98) and West Falls Church Station (K06). ETS boxes on track 2 were functioning correctly; however, WMSC inspectors could not verify whether the ETS boxes on track 1 were functioning correctly as the track walk portion of the inspection was confined to track 2. ETS K100 K06-34,44.

Hazard Rating: 1E

Photos:

Photo 1. ETS K100 K06-34,44.

Defect 2

ETS blue lights are out for ETS K99 K06-33,44.

Hazard Rating: 1E

Photo

Photo 2. ETS K99 K06-33,43.

Defect 3

ETS blue lights are out for ETS K98 K06-34,44.

Hazard Rating: 1E

Photo

Photo 3. ETS K98 K06-34,44.

Defect 4

ETS blue lights are out for ETS K97 K06-33,43.

Hazard Rating: 1E

Photo

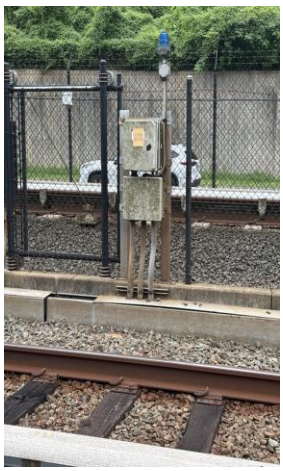

Photo 4. ETS K97 K06-33,43.

Defect 5

WMSC Inspectors noted a defective frog[2] bolt and frog at K&N Junction (K98), 7 switch.

Hazard Rating: 2B

Photos:

Photo 5. The loose middle frog bolt contributes to wear on the frog and causes banging. Because the frog is at the convergence of two lines, replacement and tamping are recommended due to the wear stated in the TRST-1000 section 108.6 (F).

[2] A frog is a section of rail at a switch or turnout that allows train wheels to cross from one track to another.

Defect 6

WMSC Inspectors noted the left rail (high rail) on curve #11 chain marker [K2 416+33] to [434+98] showed major corrugation and spalling.[3] However, it was observed that the new continuous welded rail (CWR) was on location for future replacement of this section of rail.

Hazard Rating: 2B

Defect 7

WMSC inspectors noted several cover boards that were missing or damaged between East Falls Church (K05) and West Falls Church (K06). (See photos 6 through 8.) Metrorail track inspectors confirmed that the cover boards have been previously reported.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Photos:

Photo 6 (left). Missing cover boards.

Photo 7 (middle). Damaged cover board.

Photo 8 (right). Additional missing cover boards.

Next Steps

Please respond **by Thursday, August 14, 2025,** to acknowledge receipt and to convey responses to the WMSC regarding what, if any, actions will be or have been taken in response.

[3] Spalling in track refers to the cracking, chipping, or breaking away of material from the track surface.

In addition, the WMSC requires responses for each of the below items regarding the excessive vibrating condition reported between Ballston-MU Station (K04) and West Falls Church Station (K06) **by Thursday, August 14, 2025.**

1. When was this condition first reported? And by whom?
2. What has WMATA confirmed the underlying condition to be?
3. Is this condition specific to
    a. 7000 series or legacy railcars or both?
    b. Track 1 and track 2, or both?
    c. On tangent or curve track, or both?
4. Are the speed restrictions the initial mitigation for this condition? Are there any other mitigations completed or planned? If so, what are they?
5. Provide the data from all runs of the Track Geometry Vehicle (TGV) (must include track geometry strip charts, defect lists, and ultrasonic information) from K03 to K07, Tracks 1 and 2, since January 1, 2025.