

WASHINGTON METRORAIL SAFETY COMMISSION

Date: Tuesday, September 16, 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 September 16, 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, and Conklin.
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 highlighted how to detect signs of fatigue. When tired, reaction times slow, judgment becomes impaired, and mistakes are more likely. These errors can lead to injuries, damage to equipment, or life-threatening situations. Recognize the signs of fatigue—such as yawning, difficulty concentrating, or irritability—and act before it has an even greater effect on performance. Take regular breaks, get enough sleep, and speak up. Remember, asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. All contribute to creating a culture in which it is okay to talk and seek support.
3.	Approval of the minutes of the August 5, 2025 Public Meeting and Notice of Closed Meetings. Farrar-Dyke. Farrar-Dyke sought comments on the proposed minutes. Hearing none, she moved for approval of the minutes of the August 5, 2025 Public Meeting. The minutes of the August 5, 2025 Public Meeting were approved unanimously; Commissioner Conklin abstained as he did not attend the August public meeting.

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.
5.	Chair’s Remarks. Hart. Hart started with congratulations to Commissioner Rouse following Governor Youngkin’s renewal of Rouse’s appointment to the WMSC, which is through June 2029. Next, he highlighted that the meeting includes updates on the WMSC’s ongoing safety oversight activities and the actions taken daily to ensure that Metrorail upholds its safety commitments and strives to continuously improve the safety of its system. He reminded that he appreciates the ongoing communication and coordination that the WMSC staff conducts with Metrorail at all levels of both organizations. This includes the ongoing work related to audits and corrective action plans, safety certification, investigations, and inspections. Last, he reminded the Commissioners of the discussion of the revised WMSC Program Standard and recommendation from staff to adopt it.
6.	CEO’s Remarks. David Mayer, Chief Executive Officer. Mayer began with an update on the WMSC inspection of Metrorail records in July, as part of the ongoing Track, Structures, and Roadway Worker Protection Audit, in which staff found records did not support that some WMATA personnel are qualified to setup and be in charge of roadway worker safety. He stated that these nonconformances represent a safety deficiency because Metrorail has no other basis for assuring that its roadway workers meet its own written qualification requirements to access the roadway. This qualification is the primary mitigation for the hazards of train movement and the electrified third rail that all Metrorail roadway workers face conducting work on the rail right of way. After immediately raising this issue to Metrorail, it acknowledged these non-conformances, and it focused on correcting them. On September 4, the WMSC issued a finding, as set forth in our Program Standard. Issuing the finding enables the WMSC to holistically document the safety concern and to provide clearly defined minimum corrective actions that Metrorail is required to complete, and it provides Metrorail the opportunity to propose a comprehensive correction to resolve the safety issue. Metrorail was provided 7 days to propose such a plan, and, on September 8 Metrorail provided its proposed corrective action plan. The WMSC evaluated and provided feedback for further refinement on September 12. Once this proposed corrective action plan meets the required minimum corrective actions, we will approve it for Metrorail to fully implement the corrections. Mayer reported that on September 12, the WMSC notified Metrorail that its Rail Traffic Control/Radio Control Consolidation project is designated for in-depth review per the WMSC Program Standard. Last, on September 15, at the invitation of the FTA, the WMSC provided a briefing on our corrective action plan program to the FTA staffers and project management oversight contractors. We answered a number of questions about how CAPs are developed and managed, and we appreciate FTA’s interest in our CAP program.

7.	Resolutions and Other Actions. Hart. 1. Resolution R-2025-03: The Commissioners reviewed and considered the annual revision to the WMSC Program Standard, which states the requirements and deadlines for Metrorail, and the expectations from the WMSC when conducting its authorities under the Compact. Mayer and Davis Rajtik discussed the process to develop the draft Program Standard, which included inviting and reviewing comments from Metrorail and some jurisdictional partners. Most of the changes fall into four categories: FTA regulatory requirements, updates prompted by actions/activities during the year, clarifications or enhancing existing language, and changes to address comments or concerns. Vice Chair Lauby moved for the approval of Resolution R-2025-03, adopting the Annual Program Standard revision effective on October 1, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.
8.	Audits. John O'Donnell, Program Specialist, Audits and Corrective Action Plans. O'Donnell reported that the WMSC is completing its second triennial cycle of safety audits and has begun the third triennial cycle. He reminded, however, that one audit has not progressed, the 2024 Fitness for Duty and Occupational Health Programs Audit. WMATA has not responded to the WMSC's initial requests when WMATA believes that worker safety information is responsive to the request. The WMSC is seeking relief through the courts. The Control Center and Rail Operations Audit was issued on August 27, 2025. This audit identified 9 findings and 3 recommendations. The first finding is that Metrorail does not have enough rail traffic controllers and turnover is increasing. Currently, the WMSC has two corrective action plans from the WMSC's first control center audit that remain open and now require re-evaluation. C-0049 was intended to address work environment challenges and C-0056 was intended to address inadequate staffing and staff turnover. The second finding Rail concerns traffic controller training. Specifically, that written assessments, final assessments, and certification tests present conflicting data regarding an individual's aptitude. Finding 3 is that Metrorail does not provide refresher training to rail vehicle operators on incidents and emergencies. The fourth finding is that Metrorail's Train the Trainer program for Rail Training is not defined by Metrorail's procedures. The next finding is that Metrorail revised ATC local control procedures without first informing all affected staff including rail traffic controllers. Next, the sixth finding of this audit is that rail traffic controller consoles have been manipulated without their knowledge. Finding 7 identified that Metrorail uses Microsoft Teams chats during safety events but has not demonstrated a review of these records when determining the facts of these events. Finding 8 found that Metrorail documents have not been updated on the required cadence. Last, Finding 9 cites that Metrorail personnel are not following Metrorail radio transmission rules such as train identification and location information. The Audit also includes three recommendations. The first recommendation is that Metrorail 'Service Disruption' calls during safety events are led by personnel who are actively managing the event rather than the designated role (Metro 1). The second recommendation is that Rail traffic Controllers Advanced Information Management system alarms are not standardized across rail traffic controller desks and personnel are not trained how to arrange their alarm screens. Finally, the third recommendation is that Metrorail does not evaluate the effectiveness of Line Platform Instructors. Following the timeline in the WMSC Program Standard, Metrorail has until September

	26th to propose draft CAPs to address each of the findings and recommendations. Moving to other ongoing audits, the Elevators and Escalators Audit draft report was sent to Metrorail on September 2nd, initiating the 30-day comment period. We anticipate receiving comments back by October 2, 2025. The communication systems audit is currently being reviewed internally and once ready, will be sent to Metro for its 30-day comment period. Next, for the Track, Structures, and Roadway Worker Protection audit, the WMSC held an exit conference with Metrorail stakeholders on August 19th. We presented our preliminary findings to Metrorail and as of September 10th, Metrorail has provided additional documents for review and consideration based on those findings. The WMSC is currently reviewing the documents provided. This audit also produced the stand-alone finding issued on September 4, 2025, and the WMSC is working with WMATA as it develops the corrective action plans for the stand-alone finding. Last, the WMSC continues its Audit of Metrorail's Internal Safety Reviews Program. An entrance conference was held on September 4, and interviews and observations are ongoing.
9.	Corrective Action Plans (CAPs). Ashley Rhodes, Program Manager, Audits and Corrective Action Plans and Davis Rajtik, Deputy Chief Operations Officer. Rhodes and Rajtik reported that two CAPs have been closed since the August 5, 2025 public meeting. There are 75 open CAPs and 15 are in development. First, Rhodes explained that the WMSC issued an updated Notice of Non-compliance concerning CAP C-0240 for failure to submit the remaining deliverables by the CAP deadlines. As part of the 2023 WMSC Audit of Roadway Maintenance Machines, the WMSC found that Metrorail is putting its personnel at risk by not ensuring the use of adequate fall protection when working on or around Roadway Maintenance Machines. As a result, corrective action plan C-0240 was developed. C-0240 included 5 Actionable Items, or deliverables. These Items are completed in succession by established deadlines to mitigate or resolve the safety hazard identified. Actionable Item 1 of CAP C-0240 was provided to the WMSC on February 23, 2024. No other Actionable Item was provided; the last was due on August 21, 2025. Therefore, the WMSC updated its previous Notice and re-issued it to address the failure to submit any Items other than the first. Then, Rhodes and Rajtik provided details about the two closed CAPs: C-0214 addressed a finding from the 2022 WMSC Audit of Metrorail's Communication Systems. This finding identified that Metrorail personnel were using incorrect or incomplete processes and forms when conducting maintenance on safety-critical communication systems. And supervisors accepted this practice. C-0220 originated from the 2022 WMSC Audit of Metrorail's Communication Systems. This CAP aimed to address the deficiency that Metrorail did not have schematics, manuals, and other materials in each Communications Room required by Metrorail's Communications Room Bi-weekly Cleaning and Inspection PMI.
10.	Safety Certification Status Report. Paul Smith, Director, System Engineering. Smith discussed four key safety certification projects, the activation of Automatic Train Operations in passenger service, excessive vibration during rides, the WMSC's selection of the Rail Traffic Controller/Button Controller Consolidation Project, and the design of the 8000-series railcars. He started with an overview of the WMSC's oversight of Metrorail's activation of ATO. The WMSC continued to monitor station overruns across all lines operating in ATO, maintaining weekly contact with WMATA to review data, discuss trends, evaluating mitigation efforts including in the field and conducting our own data analysis of station overruns. WMATA continues implementing short term mitigations such as speed restrictions at high station overrun incidence

	stations and targeted operator training reinforcements, as well as more holistic corrective actions including software adjustments, hardware adjustments, and infrastructure modifications, all of which are designed to identify and address the causes of station overruns in automatic train operation. One key area of focus has been the adjustment of third rail end approaches at select stations. When these end approaches are misaligned, they can produce arcing or sparking, which in turn generates spurious radio frequency signals. These unintended RF emissions can interfere with the railcar's ability to correctly interpret marker coil frequencies, which are essential for receiving Program Station Stop information. When the ATO system fails to pick up this information accurately, the train may not execute its programmed stop correctly, resulting in a station overrun. In addition to third rail realignments, WMATA is repositioning marker coils to ensure consistent and accurate train stopping points, refining ATO software and hardware with OEM support, revising operating policies, enhancing operator training, and implementing temporary speed restrictions at high-incidence stations. WMATA is also working closely with their original equipment manufacturers for the rail cars to refine ATO software. Further, temporary speed restrictions have been implemented at stations with elevated overrun rates to reduce the likelihood of incidents while longer-term engineering solutions are developed and deployed. Next, the WMSC is tracking reports of rough ride conditions, which have been noted through a combination of field observations, WMSC staff monitoring, and feedback received directly from passengers through different channels. These conditions include noticeable vibrations, jolts, and irregular train movements that may affect both passenger comfort and system performance. At this time, we are awaiting a formal report from WMATA summarizing the results of its investigation, outlining any contributing factors that have been identified, and explaining the rationale behind WMATA's position that these conditions do not rise to the level of a safety issue, and detailing any next steps WMATA is taking to address or further evaluate these rough ride conditions. Concerning the 8000-series railcars, WMATA submitted several sets of preliminary safety certification documents for the 8000-series railcars. The WMSC's initial review focused on validating that Metrorail conducted a comprehensive hazard identification and mitigations and to communicate to Metrorail any hazards that Metrorail had not captured. Although we anticipated providing formal feedback by the end of August, we were unable to do so because we did not have all the documents referenced in the analysis to complete that work. WMATA provided some of the requested materials in early September, and our review of those materials is ongoing. WMATA claims other documents are in draft and potentially would be misleading; thus, we asked for the dates when the documents would be final and are awaiting an update from Metrorail. We continue to request access to the full set of Preliminary Design Review documents so the WMSC may perform its safety oversight obligations. Last, the WMSC formally designated the RTC/Button Controller Consolidation Project for in-depth review under our program standard. WMATA's intent with this project is to consolidate RTC and Button Controller functions to streamline operations and improve coordination. The WMSC designated this project for in-depth review due to its operational complexity and the need to comprehensively identify and mitigate hazards of changing the mode of rail controller performance, by consolidating control functions. This designation means the WMSC will apply heightened focus to the project's hazard mitigation efforts, implementation, and documentation. WMATA may not implement changes to current RTC and Button Controller assignments without WMSC's concurrence.

11.	Safety Event Investigations. Adam Quigley, Manager, Safety Investigations and Natalie Quiroz, Investigations Analyst. The reports referenced below may be found at the following link: https://wmisc.gov/oversight/reports/. Quigley began with an overview of improper door operations events. In 2024, there were 25 improper door operations events reported by Metrorail to the WMSC. As of September 2025, there have been 27 such events reported, eclipsing the total number for 2024. The improper door operations events presented all occurred while trains were required to be operated in Automatic Door Operation. The causes and contributing factors to the improper door operation events presented today include loss of focus and situational awareness, non-compliance with written operational rules and procedures including those related to door operation and station servicing procedures, and fatigue leading to human error. 1. W-0391 Improper Door Operations at Bethesda Station – November 1, 2024 2. W-0392 Improper Door Operation at Rockville Station – December 13, 2024 3. W-0393 Improper Door Operation at Franconia-Springfield Station – December 21, 2024 4. W-0394 Improper Door Operation at Pentagon Station – December 29, 2024 5. W-0395 Serious Injury at McPherson Square Station – December 7, 2024 6. W-0396 Derailment near Ronald Reagan National Airport Station – April 16, 2024 7. W-0397 Collision near Minnesota Avenue Station – March 19, 2024 8. W-0398 Collision near Minnesota Avenue Station – March 22, 2024 Commissioners moved to adopt the eight reports. The motion passed unanimously.
12.	Adjournment. Hart adjourned the public meeting at 2:47 p.m.