



WMSC Inspection Report 20260114A

ISSUED 1/15/2026

Inspection Details

Title: Rail Traffic Controller Granting Exclusive Track Occupancy Protection

Location: (B09)- OPS 1, (D98)- OPS 2, (C10)- OPS 3, (K06)- OPS 4

Date of Inspection: 9/17/2025 through 9/22/2025

Time of Inspection: January 5, 2026, to January 14, 2026 (eight hours)

Unannounced

Risk-Basis: Investigation

Functional Area: Roadway Worker Protection, Operations

Hazard Rating: 1D

Overview

From January 5, 2026, to January 14, 2026, a WMSC Inspector spent approximately eight hours inspecting the actions of Metrorail radio rail traffic controllers using digital tools such as radio playback (radio operations channels 1–4) and Advanced Information Management System (AIMs)¹ playback. This inspection targeted four instances of radio rail traffic controllers granting roadway work crews use of exclusive track occupancy (ETO) protection.² ETO is a form of protection that is included in the WMATA Roadway Worker Protection program. ETO is granted to roadway workers by the control center and is intended to ensure that a roadway work crew can safely perform maintenance without the risk of collision from other trains or on-track equipment or without the risk of electrocution by third rail power.

This is a risk-based inspection to evaluate if the factors that led to the roadway worker protection related near miss that occurred on August 28, 2025, at Anacostia Station, have been mitigated through radio communications practices between the control center and the field, procedural

¹ The Advanced Information Management System (AIMs) is the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system used by Metrorail's control center to manage all rail line traffic, traction power devices and station equipment by receiving information from the field, processing it, and displaying it on workstations and large projection screens on the floor of the control center. AIMs playback function enables the review of historical information.

² Exclusive Track Occupancy (ETO) is “a method of establishing working limits on controlled track in which the movement authority of trains and other equipment is withheld by the rail traffic controller or interlocking operator or restricted by flagman. The authority for movement of rail vehicles within the working limits rests solely with the RWIC of said limits.” (Metrorail Operating Rulebook, Glossary of Terms.)



compliance and supervisory oversight. The investigative steps are complete for the August 28, 2025, safety event, and the investigation report for this near miss is under development. Based on preliminary information from the August 28 event: a rail traffic controller granted exclusive track occupancy protection to a work crew without taking procedural steps to protect the roadway workers from train movement via red signals and prohibit exits.³ Subsequently, the rail traffic controller granted permission for a roadway maintenance machine (RMM) to enter that same work area. The RMM nearly collided with the work crew, but the work crew noticed the vehicle and was able to hastily move out of the way. This safety event was reported to the WMSC as an O-23 (Improper Roadway Worker Protection) in compliance with the WMSC Program Standard, which defines in Section 7.C all reportable safety events in the Safety Event Notification Matrix. O-23 events automatically require a final investigation report. When complete, the WMSC Commissioner brief and the WMATA report attachment will be posted at WMSC.gov. (Oversight > Investigation Reports)

As a result of this near miss, the WMSC began conducting a series of risk-based inspections focusing on rail traffic controllers granting exclusive track occupancy protection for purposes of roadway worker protection. The first inspection report concerning exclusive track occupancy protection was published on September 24, 2025. ([Inspection Report 20250922A](#))

After concluding this inspection, the WMSC Inspector conducted a debrief with the control center's Assistant Operations Manager, 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

For this inspection, the WMSC Inspector relied on Advanced Information Management System playback, the AIMs event log, the General Orders/Tracking Rights System (GOTRS)⁴ records, and radio recordings to check compliance with MICC-ROC-PRO-14 Roadway Worker Protection: Exclusive Track Occupancy.

³ Prohibit Exits are a block that the ROCC initiates on a particular signal in AIMs. Its function is to prevent the signal from displaying a proceed indication. (Metrorail Operating Rulebook)

⁴ GOTRS is a mainframe computer program that is used by WMATA employees to enter track rights requests. (Metrorail Operating Rulebook, Glossary of Terms)



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The table below references all four protection events that were inspected.

Date	Time	OPS/Location	Protected	Radio RTC Rules Compliance	Rule Violation
11/5/2025	1:03am	OPS 1- Forest Glen (B09)	Yes	Yes	None
11/21/2025	12:31am	OPS 2- D&G (D98)	Yes	Yes	None
12/2/2025	1:29am	OPS 3- National Airport (C10)	Yes	Yes	None
12/18/2025	1:18am	OPS 4- West Falls Church (K06)	Yes	Yes	None

Observation 1

On November 5, 2025, at approximately 1:03am, an automatic train control maintenance work crew was granted permission to enter the roadway using exclusive track occupancy protection near Forest Glen Station (B09). This work zone was properly protected by red signals and prohibitive exits, and the radio rail traffic controller used the correct location when granting permission.

Observation 2

On November 21, 2025, at approximately 12:31am, a track work crew was granted permission to enter the roadway using exclusive track occupancy protection near the D&G Junction (D98). The work zone was properly protected, and the radio rail traffic controller provided the correct location and chain markers when granting permission.

Observation 3

On December 2, 2025, at approximately 1:29am, a track work crew was granted permission to enter the roadway using exclusive track occupancy protection near Ronald Reagan National Airport Station (C10). The work zone was properly protected, and the radio rail traffic controller provided the correct location and chain markers when granting permission.

Observation 4

On December 18, 2025, at approximately 1:18am, a plant work crew was granted permission to enter the roadway using exclusive track occupancy protection near West Falls Church Station



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(K06). The work zone was properly protected, and the radio rail traffic controller provided the correct location and chain markers when granting permission.

This inspection did not identify any defects based on information known to the Inspectors at the time of the inspection.

Next Steps

Please respond **by Tuesday, January 20, 2026**, to acknowledge receipt.