

WASHINGTON METRORAIL SAFETY COMMISSION

Date: Tuesday, December 9, 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 December 9, 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 Christopher Conklin (joined at 12:54 p.m.), and Commissioners Robert Bobb (joined by 12:34 p.m.), Donald Drummer, and Alternate Members Kitty Higgins, and Brad Belzak (joined by 12:34 p.m.). Commissioner Higgins was a voting Member.
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 reminded of safety concerns during end of year activities. When driving, watch for icy roads and allow extra time for travel; ensure your vehicle is winter-ready with proper tires and emergency supplies. When indoors, check that heating systems are functioning safely and keep flammable items away from heat sources and always keep candles away from combustible materials. If decorating outdoors for the holidays, use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use, and never overload outlets. Practice ladder safety when hanging decorations—always maintain three points of contact. Finally, take care to dress warmly, stay hydrated, and watch for signs of fatigue.
3.	Approval of the minutes of the October 21, 2025 Public Meeting. Hart. Hart sought comments on the proposed minutes. Hearing none, he moved for approval of the minutes of the October 21, 2025 Public Meeting. The minutes of the October 21, 2025 Public Meeting were approved unanimously by the voting Members.

<p>4.</p>	<p>Public Comments. Hart.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Chair’s Remarks. Hart.</p> <p>Hart discussed three changes for the Commissioners. First, he acknowledged the service of one the original WMSC Commissioners and its long-serving Secretary-Treasurer Debra Farrar-Dyke. She was appointed in 2017 and helped to stand up the Commission. The initial commissioners formed the selection committee for the WMSC’s first Chief Executive Officer and developed the initial commission policies and bylaws. In 2018, she began her service as the Secretary-Treasurer, which continued through October 2025. With her guidance and oversight, the WMSC has requested and received FTA grant funding and “clean” audits. Her insights during work sessions and public meetings were invaluable. He said that the Commission will miss her service, and he will miss her as a colleague. Second, Hart congratulated and welcomed Commissioner Don Drummer. Maryland Governor Moore appointed Commissioner Drummer in November for a Member term through August 2029. Commissioner Drummer is a retired U.S. Army Colonel, which he followed with senior leadership roles at several federal government agencies, and appointments on both the Washington Suburban Transit Commission and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. His dedication to service is clear and Hart looks forward to his contributions to the Commission. Last, Hart thanked and congratulated Commissioner Conklin, who now serves as Secretary-Treasurer Conklin. Following Commissioner Farrar-Dyke's resignation, the Commission needed to elect another to complete her term. Commissioner Conklin received unanimous support. Hart forecast that the meeting included updates on the WMSC’s ongoing safety oversight activities and the actions that the WMSC takes daily to ensure that Metrorail upholds its safety commitments and strives to continuously improve the safety of its system.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>CEO’s Remarks. David Mayer, Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Mayer congratulated the WMSC and WMATA teams who worked on the RWP Program. The WMSC approved the WMATA Roadway Worker Protection program on December 1. Over the course of the year, the WMSC focused on this project to meet the federal regulatory obligation of overseeing WMATA’s work leading to an RWP program that meets the federal requirements and then to approve the compliant program by the December 2 deadline. Metrorail has not yet begun operating under its newly approved RWP program. On December 2, WMATA GM and CEO sent a letter to the WMSC recognizing the approval of WMATA’s RWP Program and its need to launch it. The letter includes an implementation proposal that the WMSC staff are reviewing, and we will respond to WMATA soon. The WMSC remains available to provide feedback as Metrorail commences and completes training its transit workers on this newly approved RWP program.</p>

	<p>As required by the regulation, earlier this year the WMSC updated its Program Standard to reflect the WMSC’s methods of overseeing the execution of the RWP program, including annually auditing the RWP program to assess its completeness and effectiveness. We updated and shared our triennial audit schedule with WMATA to reflect these annual RWP audits, the first of which occurred in June 2025. Going forward, the WMSC is prepared to review and approve annual updates to the RWP program. Another milestone was achieved on December 5, The WMSC provided its concurrence for Metrorail to activate a single rail traffic controller staffing configuration at the Control Center operations desk that controls the Metrorail territory for all points west of Courthouse Station on the Orange Line and the Silver Line. Paul Smith will provide additional details on the project and how we reached our decision. Up until this consolidation project, all of Metrorail’s control center desks have been staffed by two controllers. Metro had initially planned to activate this change in March 2026 but then accelerated that timeline to December 2025. The WMSC aligned our work to meet Metro’s accelerated timeline, which provides an example of our collaborative approach to safety oversight. Finally, it has been one year since the WMSC inspections program was revamped by adding risk-based inspections to our inspection toolbox. During the year, the WMSC completed 78 inspections. These inspections cover topics as varied as roadway worker protection practices, rail operation control center activities, train operator certification, safety features in train car wash locations, rail car tool calibration, train control rooms, track and wayside infrastructure, and station platform safety. All inspection reports are available on the WMSC’s public website. These inspections provide the WMSC with an up-to-date and direct awareness of Metrorail operations, maintenance, and training practices, as well as condition of infrastructure. Metrorail is provided our inspection reports so it can take the necessary actions to resolve defects found during our inspection, which we may verify with follow up inspections.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Audits. John O’Donnell, Program Specialist, Audits and Corrective Action Plans and Ashley Rhodes, Program Manager, Audits and Corrective Action Plans.</p> <p>O’Donnell reported that the WMSC is now completing its third triennial cycle of safety audits. 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. O’Donnell and Rhodes reviewed the findings and recommendations from the Communication Systems Audit. They also highlighted several positive practices WMATA has adopted since the prior Communications audit. Finding 1 identified Communication personnel are not consistently completing preventive maintenance on its public address and radio communication systems in accordance with Metrorail’s procedures. Finding 2 identified Metrorail does not have adequate supervisory oversight to ensure adherence to testing and replacement requirements for electrical safety gloves. Finding 3 identified Metrorail rooms that contain communication systems equipment are not maintained in accordance with Metrorail policy to ensure an optimal environment for those vital systems. And Finding 4 identified that Metrorail is not maintaining its self-assessed staffing levels required to maintain its current communication systems. Recommendation 1 suggests that Metrorail should review how it deploys and safeguards vital communications equipment, and Recommendation 2 suggests that Metrorail should review the maintenance tasks related to its communication systems and ensure that all personnel have the necessary equipment to complete them. O’Donnell also reported on the status</p>

	<p>of the next three audit reports. The Track, Structures, and Roadway Worker Protection Audit draft report is in the final internal review stages and is expected to be sent to Metrorail in January. Metrorail will then have 30 days as described in the WMSC Program Standard to review and provide comments on the draft. Once those comments are received back, we will review and consider each comment provided. Also underway is the Audit of Metrorail’s Internal Safety Review and Internal Review Programs. We held an exit conference for the audit on November 6. Additional information was provided by Metrorail on November 14. We conducted an additional interview at the request of Metro on November 20. We also received additional feedback from Metrorail and are considering that information as we finalize the draft report. We expect to send draft of this report to Metrorail for review in late January. Last, for the Revenue Vehicles and Roadway Maintenance Machines audit, we sent the notification and initial requests to Metrorail on November 28th. Documents are expected by December 29. From there we will begin document review and then begin conducting interviews and observations for this audit in late January, continuing into February 2026.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Corrective Action Plans (CAPs). Ashley Rhodes, Program Manager, Audits and Corrective Action Plans; John O’Donnell, Program Specialist, Audits and Corrective Action Plans; and John DeRenzo, Rail Safety Compliance Analyst.</p> <p>Rhodes reported three CAPs have been closed since the October 21, 2025 public meeting. There are 75 open CAPs and 17 are in development. Rhodes connected the recent audit reports and the CAPs under development. Then, Rhodes, O’Donnell, and DeRenzo provided details about the three closed CAPs: C-0266 addressed a finding regarding Power Facility egress paths. WMSC personnel identified several immediate safety concerns during the 2024 Power Audit, three of which were regarding exit pathways including an exit door unable to be opened, corroding exit doors, lighting issues, and water intrusion issues. Metrorail created a new monthly inspection process for Power Department supervisors to evaluate egress path and exit door functionality, including providing evidence of training of personnel on this new requirement. Second, C-0274 addressed a finding that Metro did not follow its operational certification requirements for Car Maintenance Road Mechanics. At the time of the audit, Metro certified road mechanics to operate trains; however, during certification, road mechanics were not directed to complete baseline train operation proficiency requirements such as demonstrating the ability to operate on mainline tracks, the ability to properly select routes, or the ability to conduct an environmental system shutdown in a timely manner. To address this issue Metrorail changed its policies so that now road mechanics cannot operate rail vehicles on the mainline. This has also been updated in the Metrorail Operating Rulebook. Metrorail also created additional tools to track road mechanic training including a tracking matrix. Last, C-0276 addressed the finding that Metrorail was using equipment not calibrated in accordance with its policies and procedures, including for inspection and maintenance of components. Calibration of equipment is required to ensure measurement and tool accuracy. The Office of Car Maintenance made updates to its tool calibration process which included aligning all equipment and tool calibration into one SOP, updating the electronic repository and storage requirements for calibration certificates, and updating supervisory requirements to include calibration checks.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Safety Certification Status Report. Paul Smith, Director, System Engineering.</p>

	<p>Smith reminded of the general principles of the WMSC’s safety certification oversight work: first, is having an awareness and understanding of the array of Metrorail projects that are presently undergoing WMATA’s safety certification, and second is our in-depth review of select projects. Safety certification is the best way to foresee such risks and mitigate them. Although safety certification is WMATA’s responsibility, it is the WMSC’s role to verify that WMATA conducts its safety certification as specified in its own internal written procedures. We accomplish this through document trails, conversations, meetings, and firsthand verification. Smith then provided updates on four topics: Automatic Train Operations (ATO) performance, 8000-series railcars, Rail Traffic Controller/Button Controller consolidation project, and Automated Wayside Inspection System project. Concerning ATO, station overruns continue. The safety risks associated with station overruns prompted WMSC to require systemwide actions and station-specific mitigations. Both WMATA and WMSC continue monitoring stopping accuracy and investigating persistent challenges at specific stations while analyzing system-wide performance trends with a focus on identifying and preventing station overruns in ATO. WMATA can address the causes of station overruns incrementally from personnel training to engineering modifications of the rail cars and/or wayside equipment. Concerning 8000-series railcars, in 2020 Metrorail awarded the 8000 series rail car contract to Hitachi Rail US. The purchase of these rail cars is being funded by the jurisdictions – Virginia, Maryland, and DC. It is a regional investment in future safe Metrorail operations. As work continues to progress from one phase of this project to another, you have heard reports in past meetings that Metrorail has provided a few documents that pertain to the preliminary engineering work that has been completed. However, additional documentation remains outstanding that is necessary for the WMSC to independently trace and verify that identified hazards have been fully addressed in the design. The WMSC continues to request design criteria and associated engineering documentation necessary to validate the completeness of safety considerations identified in the Preliminary Hazard Analysis and other safety-certification deliverables, and that these are adequately incorporated into the rail car design. WMSC staff remain engaged with WMATA to establish a path forward for obtaining the outstanding documentation required to complete the safety-certification review, but this is becoming increasingly difficult at this stage of the project. The 8000 series rail car project continues to advance while we are left without the associated materials to properly conduct our independent assessment of the appropriateness of WMATA’s Safety Certification. WMATA continues its planned consolidation of the tasks of the Rail Traffic Controller and Button Controller for Ops 4 (points west of Courthouse Station on Orange and Silver lines). The WMSC attended testing, training, and reviewed training and procedural updates for this project. Finally, WMATA is advancing its automated wayside inspection system (AWIS). AWIS refers to a suite of technologies used in the rail industry to automatically monitor the condition of rail cars as trains pass by. These systems detect defects that may be difficult or impossible to identify during manual, stationary inspections of the rail cars. Metrorail is installing six of these automated wayside inspection locations throughout the Metrorail system, to enable real-time rail car back-to-back measurements, and other data. The WMSC staff recently observed training on the data capture system for AWIS, called TrainBase. As it does with other Metrorail operations and inspection systems, the WMSC plans to retain access to this TrainBase data repository to independently view and verify AWIS performance, including how exceptions data are captured, and addressed.</p>

10.	<p>Safety Event Investigations. Adam Quigley, Manager, Safety Investigations and Natalie Quiroz, Investigations Analyst.</p> <p>The reports referenced below may be found at the following link: https://wmasc.gov/oversight/reports/.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. W-0407 Red Signal Overrun at Dulles Rail Yard – February 23, 20252. W-0408 Red Signal Overrun at Vienna Station – February 28, 20253. W-0409 Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Foggy Bottom-GWU Station – October 8, 20244. W-0410 Improper Roadway Worker Protection near the L’Enfant Plaza Station – December 12, 2024 <p>Commissioners moved to adopt the four reports. The motion passed unanimously.</p>
11.	<p>Adjournment. Hart adjourned the public meeting at 2:26 p.m.</p>