

WASHINGTON METRORAIL SAFETY COMMISSION

Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2026

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 January 20, 2026](#). 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, and Commissioners Robert Bobb, Devin Rouse, Donald Drummer, and Alternate Member Kitty Higgins.
1.	<b>Call to Order.</b> Chair 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.	<b>Safety Message.</b> Darrell Braxton, Program Specialist, Operations.  Braxton suggested that the new year is a good time to refocus on winter weather awareness, carbon monoxide poisoning, and emergency preparedness. Ice and snow increase slip, trip, and fall risks. Wear appropriate footwear with good traction, clear walkways, and use salt or sand on icy surfaces. Drive cautiously in winter weather and reduce speed and increase following distance. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, remember that heating systems work harder in winter. Ensure furnaces, fireplaces, and space heaters are properly maintained. Install carbon monoxide detectors and never use grills or generators indoors. Last, keep an emergency kit in your car and home with blankets, water, and a flashlight. Review your workplace and household emergency plans.
3.	<b>Approval of the minutes of the December 9, 2025 Public Meeting.</b> Sec.-Treas. Conklin.  Conklin sought comments on the proposed minutes. Hearing none, he moved for approval of the minutes of the December 9, 2025 Public Meeting. The minutes of the December 9, 2025 Public Meeting were approved unanimously by the voting Members.

<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Public Comments.</b> 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><b>Chair’s Remarks.</b> Hart.</p> <p>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. He recognized the ongoing communication and coordination that the WMSC staff conducts with Metrorail at all levels of both organizations, including work related to audits and corrective action plans, safety certification, investigations, and inspections. Hart focused on the 2024 Fitness for Duty and Occupational Health Programs audit, for which the WMSC filed an action to enforce the subpoena that was required to obtain responses to the initial document requests for this audit. He asked General Counsel Silbaugh to provide an update on the legal action. General Counsel Silbaugh reported that the assigned Magistrate Judge from the United States District Court for the District of Columbia granted the WMSC’s request to enforce the subpoena, specifically finding that the scope of the subpoena was within the WMSC’s oversight authority and the requests were not burdensome. WMATA filed an objection to the Magistrate Judge’s Order, and the WMSC filed a response to those objections. A District Court Judge will rule on those objections, but there is no deadline to do so. Finally, Hart reminded the Commissioners that they will review and vote on a resolution for the adoption of the WMSC Fiscal Year 2025 annual independent financial audit.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>CEO’s Remarks.</b> David Mayer, Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>Mayer overviewed the safety audits for the coming year, including revenue vehicles, automatic train control, and roadway worker protection. Inspections will continue so the WMSC has an ongoing awareness of the health of Metrorail operations, infrastructure, systems, and personnel. The WMSC will publish our annual safety report in spring. And with a focus on continuous improvement, we will perform our annual review of our program standard. At the December meeting I said that, working together, the WMSC achieved a regulatory milestone of approving a compliant WMATA roadway worker protection program. In providing that update I also noted that the FTA Rail Transit Roadway Worker Protection, or RWP, program regulation required both achieving an approved program and implementing it, and that as of December 9, Metrorail had not begun operating under its newly approved RWP program. However, Metrorail submitted an implementation proposal with a launch date of April 1, 2026 for the new RWP program. The WMSC responded that this date is absolute. This means that WMATA must assess its progress and adjust its plan as necessary to ensure that its implementation date is met, and if there are Metrorail personnel who are not trained and qualified under the new RWP program by April 1, those individuals are prohibited from conducting themselves as roadway workers on the rail right of way, until they are trained and qualified to the appropriate level under the new program. Until WMATA implemented its approved RWP program on April 1, the WMSC requires updates on</p>

	<p>WMATA’s progress every 10 days. Additionally, one of the WMSC’s obligations under the RWP regulation was to provide the approved WMATA RWP program documentation to the Federal Transit Administration by January 1, 2026, and the WMSC met this requirement.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Audits.</b> 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, as Chair Hart identified, 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. O’Donnell also reported on the status of two audit reports that have progressed through their exit conferences, and the reports are under review. The Track, Structures, and Roadway Worker Protection Audit draft report was sent to WMATA on January 9 for review and comment. 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. The draft report is undergoing internal review, and we expect to send draft of this report to Metrorail for review in late January. The third active audit is of Revenue Vehicles and Roadway Maintenance Machines. WMATA produced documents in two batches, and the entrance conference is scheduled for January 23, 2026. Following that conference, the team will begin conducting interviews and observations for this audit.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Corrective Action Plans (CAPs).</b> Ashley Rhodes, Program Manager, Audits and Corrective Action Plans; John O’Donnell, Program Specialist, Audits and Corrective Action Plans; and Bruce Walker, Operations Specialist.</p> <p>Rhodes reported eight CAPs have been closed since the December 10, 2025 public meeting. There are 75 open CAPs and 17 are in development or not yet received. O’Donnell explained that actionable items within each CAP are submitted on a schedule, and when all actionable items are completed appropriately, the CAP may be submitted for closure. Then, Rhodes, O’Donnell, and Walker provided details about the eight closed CAPs: C-0129 originated from the WMSC’s 2021 Fitness for Duty Program audit. The audit found that WMATA did not have a documented procedure or training to conduct fitness for duty checks before or during shifts on a regular basis for all covered employees as specified in the APTA Fitness for Duty Standard. The Fitness for duty program assesses the readiness level of employees to safely perform their duties without risk of impairment or incapacitation due to an undiagnosed or uncontrolled medical condition, fatigue, the use of illegal drugs, alcohol; and/or unreported medications or supplements. To address this finding, Metrorail created its Fitness for Duty Governance Board. This board was responsible for the development and implementation of Metrorail’s Fitness for Duty Program. We reviewed the Fitness for Duty Program documents which were based on APTA and DOT guidance. C-0226 is from the WMSC’s 2022 Track and Structures audit. The WMSC found that Metrorail was not following its own track standards for identifying yard defects, and thereby not maintaining track infrastructure in rail yards in accordance with their documented TRST-1000 requirements and related standards. Metro adopted a new mobile application for yard inspections and defects recording called MaxTrax. C-0242 is from the WMSC’s 2023 Roadway Maintenance Machines</p>

	<p>audit and found that Metrorail was not documenting its practices for adjustments to its contractor RMM inspection procedures. To address the finding, Metrorail instituted new notification requirements when a contractor rail vehicle will be utilized, updates to the inspection process, and requirements for review of inspection documentation prior to certifying the vehicle for use. C-0263 is from the WMSC’s 2024 National Transportation Safety Board Order following the 2021 Rosslyn area derailment. Metrorail updated its Parts Action Form Process Procedures and Workflow, which govern determining if newly acquired items are considered safety critical. A “Safety Critical Flag” is added to specific items following multiple rounds of consideration and then managed through assigned special component codes in the electronic Maximo system. C-0269 resulted from the WMSC’s 2024 Order on Train Operator Certification, which found that Metrorail was not conducting retraining of personnel who do not pass certification exams in accordance with internal policies and the Performance Standardization Program Manual. To address this, Metrorail revised its Train Operator Performance Standardization Program Manual to ensure that the training and testing related requirements for each job type were correct, and to clearly define what re-training and re-testing is required based on the results of the initial testing. To validate that the re-training and re-testing process was being properly completed, we reviewed 4 quarters of records which included 265 certifications. C-0277 is from a finding in the 2024 Revenue Vehicles audit, which found that Metrorail was not tracking the shelf life of items or parts that decay over time. Metrorail submitted an updated procedure, Shelf Life Management Program Procedure, which ensures all items that have a shelf-life have their expiration date listed in the database along with other best practices for use, such as only taking the amount needed for specific projects at a single time to minimize leftover items. C-0283 addressed a finding from the WMSC’s 2024 Audit of Roadway Worker Protection, which found that Metrorail was training and qualifying personnel on outdated RWP-related procedures and rules. Metrorail submitted the current materials for its Initial RWP Training, Requalification Training, Student Guides, and Instructor Guides. Metrorail’s Training Department updated its SOPs on training changes and rule updates into a singular document to streamline their SOPs. Then it conducted training to ensure that personnel follow these document control and quality control procedures. C—286, which also is from the 2024 Audit of Roadway Worker Protection, which found that Metrorail was not following its safety rules and did not have adequate training on the use of mobile command. Metrorail began work to address this CAP, but when the Federal Transit Administration’s final rule on Roadway Worker Protection (49 CFR Part 671) issued, Metrorail decided to abolish mobile command procedures. This CAP was closed because the issue was moot.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>Safety Certification Status Report.</b> Paul Smith, Director, System Engineering.</p> <p>Smith began with an overview of why safety certification is important, including that changes to the Metrorail system can introduce unintended systemwide safety risk if not properly evaluated. The WMSC’s role is twofold: to maintain ongoing awareness and understanding of the full range of Metrorail projects that are undergoing WMATA’s safety certification including projects of varying size across infrastructure, vehicles, systems, and operational changes throughout the Metrorail system; and to conduct in-depth oversight of select projects based not only on size and scope, but also on potential safety significance, system interfaces, human-factors considerations, and the risk of unintended consequences. The WMSC’s oversight approach is risk-informed and is applied consistently across projects of all sizes, including during post-implementation operations. Specific to Automatic Train Operations, when utilized on all rail lines, the WMSC and Metrorail saw an increase in station overruns. Station overruns present multiple safety considerations,</p>

	<p>including risks to roadway workers, potential impacts to rail equipment, implications for passenger safety, and challenges related to emergency response and law enforcement access. Smith presented the 15 stations with the highest number of station overruns for the past 90 days. Those stations receive targeted evaluation, mitigation, and monitoring. The WMSC will continue its oversight of the overruns until the data show a sustained decline in overruns. WMATA has implemented a structured, four-stage mitigation framework. The first stage involves evaluating each station overrun to determine root causes and identify patterns. In the second stage, WMATA focuses on people-centered interventions, including updates to operator procedures, enhanced training programs, and clarified operational policies to improve human performance and decision-making. The third stage introduces temporary mitigation plans and engineering verification, where interim solutions, such as software adjustments and operational safeguards are deployed and tested for effectiveness. Finally, the fourth stage involves permanent installations and engineering modifications, including hardware upgrades, long-term software changes, and infrastructure improvements designed to prevent recurrence. Next, the WMSC selected the 8000 series rail car project’s safety certification for in-depth review. It is essential that these rail cars are designed for crashworthiness, for emergency response purposes, to be safe for various demographics of passengers with varying abilities incorporating lessons learned from previous designs as well as investigations into rail car safety events. WMATA provided a limited set of documentation associated with preliminary engineering activities and we continue to work with the WMATA Safety Certification team to obtain all the documents needed to conduct our in-depth review. The WMSC repeatedly expresses its concern about not receiving the materials and our ability to conduct our independent verification of WMATA’s safety certification process. Next, the WMSC continues oversight of operational consolidation associated with the Rail Traffic Controller Radio and Button Consolidation project at Operations Desk 4, which controls all territory west of Courthouse Station on the Orange Line and the Silver Line. This project consolidated radio-controller and button-controller functions into a single rail traffic controller for the Ops 4 desk. WMATA has continued to conduct observations to verify that this project is working as designed. There was one instance of procedural deviation. Metrorail took the necessary steps to address this deviation, reinforcing the requirements for the rail traffic controllers and the supervisory staff. Finally, WMATA has indicated plans to expand the functional use of Automated Wayside Inspection System beyond its original, focused purpose. Rather than serving only as a back-to-back measurement tool, AWIS is now being positioned as a broader railcar condition monitoring and alerting capability, supporting earlier identification of wheel-rail interface conditions such as that could present safety risk if left unaddressed. AWIS supports broader, automated monitoring of rail vehicle conditions as trains operate in service. The system can detect wheel wear and profile irregularities, early indicators of bearing or rotating-component issues, and abnormal truck or suspension behavior that may signal developing mechanical problems. AWIS can also identify undercar equipment concerns, such as loose or mispositioned components, and abnormal thermal conditions that could indicate friction or mechanical binding. The WMSC’s oversight will focus on how alerts are generated, how quickly safety-significant conditions are escalated, and how information flows support independent safety oversight. Oversight will continue through applicable safety certification activities and post-implementation operations.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><b>Safety Event Investigations.</b> Adam Quigley, Manager, Safety Investigations and Natalie Quiroz, Investigations Analyst.</p>

	<p>The reports referenced below may be found at the following link:  <a href="https://wmsc.gov/oversight/reports/">https://wmsc.gov/oversight/reports/</a>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. W-0411 Red Signal Overrun at West Falls Church Yard – February 14, 2025</li> <li>2. W-0412 Improper Rail Vehicle Movement at Grosvenor-Strathmore Station – February 23, 2025</li> <li>3. W-0413 Evacuation for Life Safety Reasons at Waterfront Station – February 25, 2025</li> </ol> <p>Commissioners moved to adopt the three reports. The motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p><b>Resolutions and Other Business.</b> Hart and Kyle Ange, Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>Resolution R-2026-01: Commissioners reviewed the annual independent financial audit for WMSC Fiscal Year 2025, the fiscal year from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. This audit includes an unmodified, or “clean,” opinion on the WMSC’s financial statements through the fiscal year that ended June 2025. The auditors concluded that the financial statements present the financial position of the WMSC fairly in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles. This annual audit is required by the WMSC Compact, and upon adoption, will be transmitted by staff as required by the Compact.</p> <p>Conklin moved for the approval of Resolution R-2026-01, adopting SB &amp; Company, LLC’s fiscal year 2025 independent audit of the WMSC. The motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p><b>Adjournment.</b> Hart adjourned the public meeting at 2:24 p.m.</p>