



WMSC Inspection Report 20260711

ISSUED 7/15/2026

Inspection Details

Title: West Falls Church (K06) to Vienna K08 Track Gauge Rod Inspection

Location: West Falls Church (K06)

Date of Inspection: 7/11/26

Time of Inspection: 6:00am to 1:00pm

Announced (Via call to Senior Director of Track and Structures)

Risk-Based (Investigation)

Functional Area: Track

Hazard Rating: 1C

Overview

On July 11, 2026, a WMSC Inspector conducted a track walk between West Falls Church (K06) and Vienna (K08) on Track 2. During this inspection, that segment of track between West Falls Church (K06) and was under exclusive track occupancy local control¹ protection. The goal of the inspection was to assess the overall track conditions and identify any gauge rods.²

This is a risk-based inspection based on the July 4, 2026, derailment (Safety Event Code A-5³) that occurred near College Park-U of Md (E09). Based on preliminary investigation information, gauge rods were in use at the site of the derailment. WMATA permits the use of gauge rods to be installed

¹ Local Control (LC): A method of establishing Exclusive Track Occupancy working limits using controlled signals that are placed under the exclusive control of Automatic Train Control personnel. Source: Metrorail Operation Rulebook (MOR) section 17-10.

² Gauge rods should be used for temporary track repair where the gauge is affected by a combination of other defects, such as loose/broken fastener anchor bolts, rail clips, etc. Gauge rods are designed to hold the track in gauge by preventing the spreading and tilting of rails. They are meant for temporary repair only and must not remain in place for more than 14 days from the time of Installation. (See photos below for visual.)

³ In accordance with WMSC Program Standard (Rev. 8) Metrorail must "...report all safety events outlined in the Safety Event Notification Matrix in the timeframe and manner specified for each safety event type." Safety event code A-5 (FTA) is triggered when one or more wheels of a rail transit vehicle unintentionally leaves the rails. Source: WMSC Program Standard (Rev. 8).



for a period of 14 days or less⁴. According to WMATA procedure, for a gauge rod to remain in place longer than 14 days, it must be approved by a track director. Metrorail is presently inspecting the entire system to determine exact location of gauge rods.

Gauge rods reinforce structural brace, bridging the gap between the left and right rails to prevent them from spreading apart (wide gauge) or moving inward (tight gauge). The gauge rods are to mitigate the potential for derailment. Gauge rods are intended to temporarily stabilize a track defect that is identified during track inspections. Installing track gauge rods maintains the track in the correct position and gauge so rail vehicles can pass through this area of track safely and until permanent repairs can be made. Permanent repairs are determined by the conditions but could include concrete fasteners, ties, or whatever led to the track defect and need for the gauge rod originally.

After concluding the inspection, the WMSC Inspector conducted a debrief with the Roadway Worker in Charge (RWIC) 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.

Observations and Defect Determinations

Observation 1

Two gauge rods were installed at West Falls Church (K06), K2 512+90 and 513+90. However, the underlying condition necessitating these gauge rods (defective ties) were in the process of being mitigated through track tie replacement. These two gauge rods were later confirmed as removed based on a Track and Structures (TRST) report that was sent to the WMSC.

⁴ Source: Track and Structures Maintenance Bulletin #20160929-05 "Gauge Rod Installation"



Photos

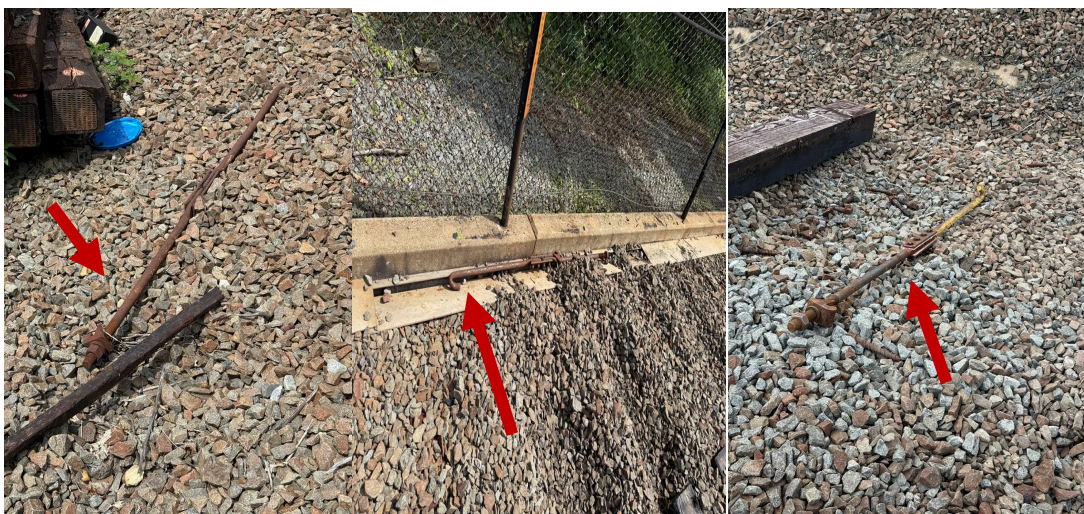


Photo 1 (left) and Photo 2 (right): Photo 1 shows the installed gauge rod at K2 512+90. Photo 2 shows the installed gauge rod at K2 513+90.

Observation 2

Three gauge rods were observed to have been removed to facilitate the installation of new ties. The gauge rods were removed prior to WMSC Inspector arrival at the location.

Photos



Photos 3 (left), 4 (center), and 5 (right). Shows removed gauge rods at the work site.



Observation 3

WMSC Inspector confirmed that the local control roadway protection (ETO) set up within the work site was engaged correctly. In accordance with Roadway Worker Protection Manual (RWPM), section 1.22.3, "Exclusive Track Occupancy working limits supplemental protection, consisting of placement of supplemental shunting devices accompanied by two (2) red lanterns or e-flares, and "End Work Area" mats." This setup occurs at both ends of the working limits, and both ends were properly setup as observed.

Photos



Photo 6: Shows the setup for exclusive track occupancy setup with work mat, e-flares (flashing as required), and shunts in proper position.

Defect 1 (mitigated)

With the presence of multiple tie equipment in use, no watchperson was assigned. As per RWPM 1.11.6, a watchperson is required whenever there is rail vehicle movement within the working limits. This issue was addressed by the roadway worker in charge (RWIC) once it was brought to his attention.

Hazard Rating: 3C



Photos



Photo 7: Work site involving multiple tie equipment that would traverse the work site (these are one type of roadway maintenance machine) with no watchperson present.

Next Steps

Please respond **by Monday, July 20, 2026**, to acknowledge receipt and to convey responses to the WMSC regarding what, if any, actions will be or have been taken in response.