



WMSC Inspection Report 20260716

ISSUED 7/20/2026

Inspection Details

Title: L Line Bridge Inspection

Location: L'Enfant Plaza (F03) to Pentagon (C07) Track 2

of Inspection: 7/16/26

Time of Inspection: 7:30am to 12:30pm

Announced (Via email to Assistant Director of Track and Structures on July 13, 2026)

Risk-Based (Investigation)

Functional Area: Track, Roadway Worker Protection

Hazard Rating: 1C

Overview

On July 16, 2026, the WMSC conducted a track walk inspection of the L Line Bridge, track 2. The goal of the inspection was to assess the overall track conditions, identify whether any gauge rods¹ are present, and to observe roadway worker protection rules compliance.

This is a risk-based inspection based on the July 4, 2026 derailment (Safety Event Code A-5²) that occurred near College Park-U of Md Station (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 for a period of 14 days or less. 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 identified all gauge rods throughout the system and is in the process of mitigating the track defects that required the gauge rods in the first place and thus removing all gauge rods throughout Metrorail. The inspections

¹ 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.

² 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).



verified that the gauge rods are correctly installed and continue to fulfill their intended role of offering interim gauge restraint.

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 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 the need for the gauge rod originally.

On July 13, 2026, Metrorail stated there were 5-gauge rods in this segment, which includes the L line bridge. During the inspection, none were identified, which suggests Metrorail completed work in the area since it was reported to the WMSC. After completing the inspection, the WMSC reviewed Maximo (20563009), which confirmed that 5-gauge rods were removed.

After concluding the inspection, the WMSC conducted a debrief with the Track and Structures Inspector 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

Metrorail Track and Structures Department relies on the TRST-1000, Track Inspection and Safety Standards, which rates various track defects by severity using a color-coded system (section 102.2):

102.2. Level of Serviceability (Condition Rating)

(A) **Green** (Minimal wear): This condition of serviceability exists when the track structure is maintained well within the limits of track tolerances. This will be denoted on subsequent charts and reports as “G” for “satisfactory” and indicated, if necessary, by the color Green.

(B) **Yellow** (Damage and/or Wear): This condition of serviceability exists when damage or wear exists such that one or more of the components of a section of track have broken down or worn to



the point of rapidly approaching tolerance or is at tolerance but does not exceed tolerance. This will be denoted on subsequent charts and reports as “Y” for “needs attention” and indicated, if necessary, by the color Yellow.

(C) **Red** (Severe Damage/Wear, Exceeds Tolerances): This condition of serviceability exists when a given component is severely worn or a given condition has exceeded tolerances to an extent that serviceability is possible with failure expected in the near future. Restricted Speeds may need to be implemented based on the nature of the defect or at the discretion of the qualified person inspecting the track. This will be denoted on subsequent charts and reports as “R” for “immediate remedial action” and indicated, if necessary, by the color Red.

(D) **Black** (Failing/Failed): This condition exists when something in the track structure could lead to instantaneous service interruptions, derailment, loss of life, injury, or property damage. When such a condition is discovered, the qualified person inspecting must make every effort to correct the condition immediately and must decide whether to allow operations to continue under supervision or to remove the track from service. If operations are allowed to continue, the qualified person must remain at the location of the defect until relieved or until the condition is corrected. This will be denoted on subsequent charts and reports as “B” for “immediate remedial action” and indicated, if necessary, by the color Black.

Defect 1

WMSC observed 9 consecutive fasteners with loose washers at chain marker L2 139+30 to 139+70 on the left rail. As per TRST-1000, Table 107.5A, this defective condition meets the criteria of a level **red**.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Photos



Photo 1: Defective fasteners with loose washers at L2 139+50 to 139+70, left rail.

Defect 2

WMSC observed fouled ballast causing excessive pumping³ on 9 consecutive concrete ties at chain marker L2 136+50, right rail. See TRST-1000, 103.2 Drainage.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Photos

³ In rail, the term pumping refers to the vertical up-and-down movement of railway ties and track under the weight of passing trains.



Photo 2: Fouled ballast area at L2 136+50.

Defect 3

WMSC observed missing or damaged cover boards of the third rail at the end approach due to excessive pumping at chain marker L2 136+30.

Hazard Rating: 4C

Photos



Photo 3: Missing or damaged third rail cover board.

Defect 4

WMSC observed 9 consecutive fasteners with loose washers at chain marker L2 120+30 to 120+50 on the right rail. As per TRST-1000, Table 107.5A, this defective condition meets the criteria of a level **red**.

Table 107.5A: Direct Fixation/Restraining Rail Fastener Guidelines: Minimum Non-Defective in 40 ft.

Tangent to 2500 ft Radius	2500 ft. to 800 ft. Radius	<800 ft. Radius	Max Distance between Non-Defective Fasteners	Level	Operating Speed
12	13	14	Up to 60 inches	Green	Normal
10	11	12	More than 60 up to 90 inches	Yellow	Medium
7	8	9	More than 90 up to 120 inches	Red	Slow
Less than 7	Less than 8	Less than 9	More than 120 inches	Black	OOS

Notes:

- This table refers to Minimum Non-Defective Fasteners in 40 ft. of Rail (Total are 17)
- Two defective fasteners that are consecutive and are directly opposite on each rail is a red condition and requires a Slow speed.
- All non-defective fasteners must be well-distributed throughout the 40 ft. of rail. All standards for main track will apply to any track in which passengers are carried.
- Any track in which no passenger traffic is carried and speed is 15 mph or less the following standards apply: Maximum of 10 well-distributed defective support units (fasteners) per 40 ft. of Rail.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Photos



Photo 4: Shows loose washers on fasteners at L2 120+30 to 120+50.

Defect 5

Fire Equipment Cabinet N202 at L'Enfant Plaza Station (F03) was blocked by equipment.

Photos



Photo 5: Shows equipment blocking the fire cabinet.

Hazard Rating: 4B



Defect 6 (mitigated)

WMSC found outdated Metrorail track quick access guides⁴ located at the track inspection field office. The open corrective action plan (C-0281) states “Metrorail must ensure that only current copies of its Quick Access Guide/Track Access Guide are available and in use and provide this current document to all RWP-qualified personnel....” Up-to-date track access guides are essential to on track safety.

Metrorail management was informed about the outdated documents and mitigated the situation by disposing them and informing the WMSC that the updated Track Access Guides (TAG) were distributed to personnel. This mitigation was verified when the roadway worker in charge presented the updated TAG to WMSC Inspectors. The current TAG is dated April 1, 2026.

Hazard Rating: 1E

Photos

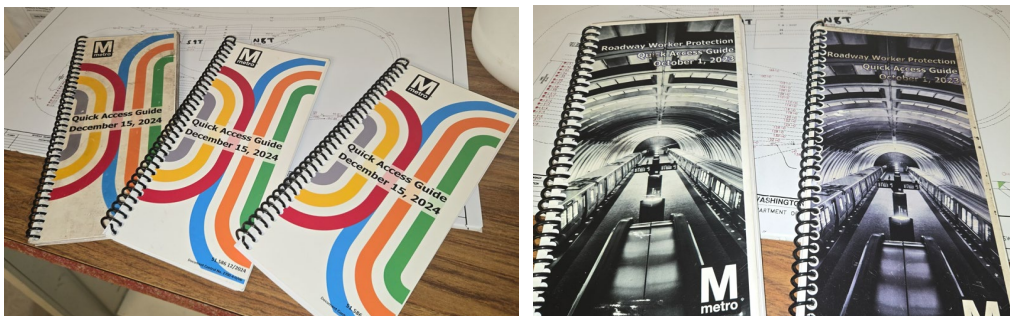


Photo 6: The outdated Track Access Guides.

Defect 7

The employee assigned as the watchperson with the inspection crew assigned to track two of the L-line bridge was not in compliance with the established roadway worker protection manual procedures. Throughout the inspection, the watchperson was observed not raising the W-Disk and not sounding the Air Horn when rail vehicles approached. In addition, the Watchperson did not use the W-Disk or sound the Air Horn to inform the workers to return to work.

METRORAIL ROADWAY WORKER PROTECTION MANUAL

⁴ Metrorail defines the track access guide as “A document that describes physical characteristics relevant to access and safety (e.g., close/no-clearance areas, blind curves, loud/noisy areas)” (Source Metrorail Operation Rules Book 17-7.)



WASHINGTON METRORAIL SAFETY COMMISSION

1.19 HAND SIGNALS

1.19.2 Watchpersons must use the whistle board (W-Disk) in conjunction with a whistle, air horn, or physical tap to warn roadway workers of approaching rail vehicles to provide ample time to workers.

1.19.3 Watchpersons must sound the air horn or whistle while holding the whistle board overhead to signal roadway workers approaching rail vehicle(s) and to clear the track and remain in a place of safety.

Rule No.	Signal Name	Signal Indication	Signal Aspect
1.19.3.1	Clear Track	A rail vehicle is approaching. Personnel must immediately clear track and occupy a place of safety until Resume Work signal is received	
1.19.3.2	Resume Work	Rail vehicles have exited the working limits. Personnel may resume work.	

RWPM-29

Hazard Rating: 1D

Photos





Photo 7: Assigned Watchperson.

Defect 8

Reviewing the On-Track Job Safety Briefing form (version 2700-04-07/02, Approved 12/3/2025) identified that the Roadway Worker in Charge did not provide the date for the current Track Access Guide, instead not applicable (N/A) was populated on the form. Open corrective action C-0281 states "... Metrorail must establish a process, such as recording the revision date relied upon, on job safety briefing forms and checking for the presence of a current guide during regular supervisory oversight, to validate that only current safety instructions are being relied upon."

Hazard Rating: 3D

Photos

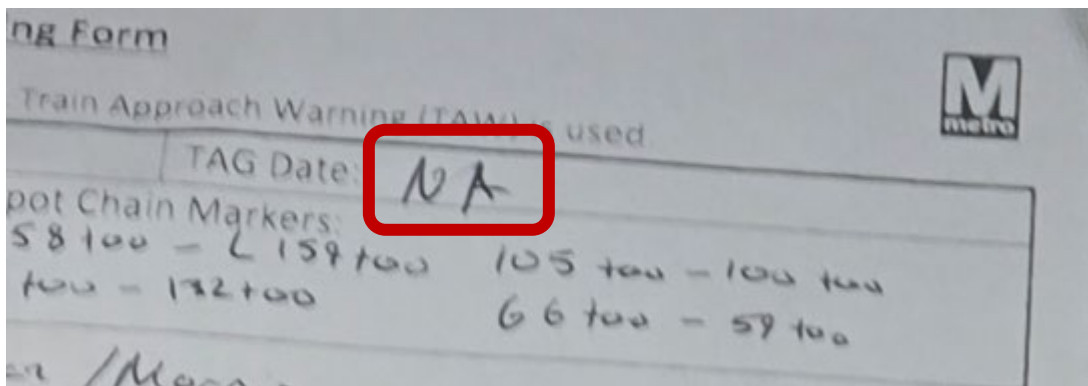


Photo 8: Section 3 of the safety briefing that is intended to note the track access guide date.

Next Steps

Please respond **by Thursday, July 23, 2026**, to acknowledge receipt and to convey responses to the WMSC regarding what, if any, actions will be or have been taken in response.