



WMSC Inspection Report 20260901

ISSUED 9/3/2026

Inspection Details

Title: Greenbelt (E10) to Fort Totten (E06) Heat Ride Track Inspection

Location: Greenbelt (E10) to Fort Totten (E06)

Date of Inspection: 9/1/2026

Time of Inspection: 9:00am to 2:00pm

Announced (Via email to Assistant Director of Track and Structures on August 31, 2026)

Risk-Based (Investigation)

Functional Area: Track

Hazard Rating: 3C

Overview

On Tuesday, September 1, 2026, WMSC Inspectors planned to conduct a track inspection (by observing WMATA's weekly track inspector walk) at College Park Station (E09) to assess repairs implemented following the July 4, 2026, derailment. While on the route to College Park Station, a radio outage affected the entire Metrorail system, which led to WMATA's track inspection being cancelled. During this time, ambient temperatures reached or exceeded the 90°F threshold that requires heat rides be conducted in accordance with WMATA SOP 208-06. The WMSC re-focused this inspection to observe WMATA conducting heat rides.

This is a risk-based inspection based on the July 4, 2026, derailment (Safety Event Code A-5)¹ that occurred near College Park-U of Md (E09). Based on preliminary investigation information, a heat kink may have contributed to the derailment. A heat kink (also known in the industry as a sun kink or track buckle) is a sudden sideways bend or distortion that forms in railroad tracks when extreme heat causes the steel rails to expand. Metrorail follows Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 208-06 to conduct heat rides to mitigate the risk of high temperatures on the rails. Heat rides are conducted with a track inspector in the railcar's operating cab making visual observations of the track while the railcar is moving. The heat rides also include checking temperature readings of both the ambient temperature and the rail surface temperature using magnetic thermometers at set

¹ 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).



locations around the system. This inspection observed WMATA performing these heat ride activities as the ambient temperature rose to a level that required heat rides be conducted.

After concluding the inspection, WMSC Inspectors conducted a debrief with the Track 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

WMSC Inspector observed the heat ride inspection from just outside the operating cab with a view into the cab through the window. In the operating cab was only the rail vehicle operator and the track inspector. The heat ride was being conducted in manual mode. The speed at which heat ride was being conducted was not observable to the WMSC Inspector.

WMATA's heat rides standard operating procedure is SOP 208-06.2:

6.2 Ambient Temperatures Reach 90° When ambient temperatures reach 90°F in any of the above ground areas, and Heat Ride Procedures are determined to be necessary, then following actions will be initiated:

6.2.1 Assigned Track Inspection Supervisor will distribute a notification email or phone call requesting Track Inspectors to begin Heat Ride inspections.

6.2.2 Assigned Track Inspection Supervisor will notify Consequence Management via email: "Heat rides have begun". Consequence Management Email

6.2.3 Assigned Track Inspection Supervisor creates a Special Inspection (SPIN) work order in Maximo that will be used to record all Heat Ride inspections for this date.

6.2.4 Assigned Track Inspection Supervisor will add the Job/Plan "TKIN HEAT" to the SPIN Work Order and relate the 'SPIN' work order to the MICC Incident Work Order.

6.2.5 Metro Integrated Command Center (MICC) will then create an Incident work order.

6.2.6 Track Inspection personnel shall request permission from MICC to perform riding heat inspections.



6.2.7 MICC Rail Section Supervisor and Train Operators shall allow Track Inspection personnel access to the operating cab for riding heat inspections. Track Inspection personnel will ride in the cab of the train and visually inspect the tracks for:

- Conditions per SOP 208-04: Track Inspection Procedure; and
- Possible heat-related defects, such as the formation of heat kinks

6.2.8 Track Inspection personnel will perform hourly heat rides in the lead cab of a train for each of the outdoor segments as defined below:

- A10-A15 (Medical Center to Shady Grove)
- B03-B08 (Union Station to Silver Spring)
- J03-C05 (Franconia-Springfield to Rosslyn)
- C09-C15 (Crystal City to Huntington)
- C15-F03 (Huntington to L'Enfant Plaza)
- D08-D13 (Stadium-Armory to New Carrollton)
- E06-E10 (Fort Totten to Greenbelt)
- F08-F11 (Southern Ave. to Branch Ave.)
- G03-G05 (Addison Road to Downtown Largo)
- K04-K08 (Ballston to Vienna)
- K05-N06 (East Falls Church to Wiehle-Reston)
- N06-N12 (Wiehle-Reston to Ashburn)
- L-Line (L'Enfant Plaza to Pentagon)

6.2.9 Track Inspection personnel will exit the train at a location on each of these segments and take rail temperatures. Personnel shall request foul time permission to exit the train and enter the roadway to read rail thermometers.

6.2.10 Magnetic rail thermometers must be used to measure rail temperature. An infrared thermometer ("heat gun") may not be used to record rail temperature. The thermometer must be placed on the web or foot on the shaded side of a rail that is in the sun. The thermometer must be placed on the rail for at least five minutes before the reading can be taken. 6.2.11 Track Inspection personnel will record heat ride results and rail temperature measurements on a digital form as provided by Track Engineering. Track Engineering will distribute hourly reports to relevant personnel.

6.2.12 Anytime a rail temperature reading of 135°F or higher is observed, the Superintendent or designee will request MICC to initiate a system-wide above-ground speed restriction of 35 mph until the rail temperature drops below 135°F.

6.2.13 Track Inspections Supervisors upon verification of two consecutive hours of no rail temperatures at or above 135°F rail temperature shall remove the above-ground speed restriction.



Observation 1

The WMSC Inspector observed the TRST heat ride (track) inspector following correct procedures while requesting permission from the control center to perform a riding heat inspection before the heat ride began. The TRST inspector rode in the operating cab of the lead car (7486) to visually inspect rail, took rail temperature readings using a magnetic temperature gauge from designated locations (for this inspection that was the above ground stations of College Park and Greenbelt), and recorded rail temperature results in a specially designed digital application. This digital application is a documented process that ties heat ride results in Maximo² and requires records and exception forms to provide traceability and verification of heat inspections. The WMSC Inspector confirmed that the TRST inspectors followed all of SOP 208-06 during the heat rides from Greenbelt (E10) to Fort Totten (E06). TRST inspectors did not identify any track defects during this WMSC inspection.

Photos



Photo 1 (left): First temperature recording at Greenbelt showing rail temperature of 110°F. Photo 2 (right): Rail temperature reading at College Park showing 112°F. (If the rail temperature reaches 135°F or higher, a system-wide above-ground speed restriction of 35mph is implemented until temperatures drop below 135°F.)

² Maximo is Metrorail's database for asset management; it tracks, manages, and reports all maintenance activity.



Observation 2

During the heat ride inspection, WMSC Inspectors observed that the shoulders around the ends of the ties were sufficiently dressed with ballast³ along certain sections of track between College Park (E09) and Greenbelt (E10) mitigating risk. Sufficient ballast supports ties, preventing lateral, and vertical movement. WMATA previously noted this segment had insufficient ballast surrounding the ties. This ballast issue has now been mitigated with the additional added ballast to the location.

Photos



Photo 3: Shows new ballast mitigation on the shoulders of the ties between College Park (E09) and Greenbelt (E10).

³ Ballast forms the critical foundation layer beneath and around the wooden, concrete, or steel ties (sleepers) supporting the steel rails.



Defect 1

While waiting for permission to access the roadway for the track inspection, WMSC Inspector observed a defective switch point and stock rail at the College Park (E09) 1B switch during the safety walk. The switch point had chipping depth (more than 3/8") and width (more than 1/8") which is considered a red⁴ condition under Metrorail's TRST 1000, Table 108.3A and Table 108.3B.

Table 108.3A: Chipped Switch Point Width Standards

Width of Chip	Level	Operating Speed
Less than 1/16 inch	Green	Normal
1/16 up to 1/8 inch	Yellow	Medium
More than 1/8 up to 1/4 inch	Red	Slow
More than 1/4 inch	Black	OOS

Table 108.3B: Chipped Switch Point Depth Standards

Depth of Chip	Level	Operating Speed
Less than 3/16 inch	Green	Normal
3/16 up to 3/8 inch	Yellow	Medium
More than 3/8 up to 3/4 inch	Red	Slow
More than 3/4 inch	Black	OOS

Table 1: 108.3A and 108.3B from the TRST 1000

However, MaxTrax⁵ has the condition listed as yellow⁶ based on the last entry on June 9, 2026. Since that time, there has been no listed progression of the defect even though this track defect should have progressed from a yellow condition to a red condition for required mitigation.

Hazard Rating: 2D

⁴ WMATA's Track and Structures Department relies on the TRST-1000, Track Inspection and Safety Standards, that rates various track defects by severity using a color-coded system. A "red" (Severe Damage/Wear, Exceeds Tolerances) condition is the second most severe condition on the rating scale.

⁵ MaxTrax and Optram are specialized enterprise software solutions used in the rail and public transit industries to manage infrastructure assets, maintain linear track conditions, and handle regulatory compliance. Source: MaxTrax.

⁶ A "yellow" condition is less severe (Damage and/or wear) a condition that is only one level above "green" which represents minimal wear.



Photos

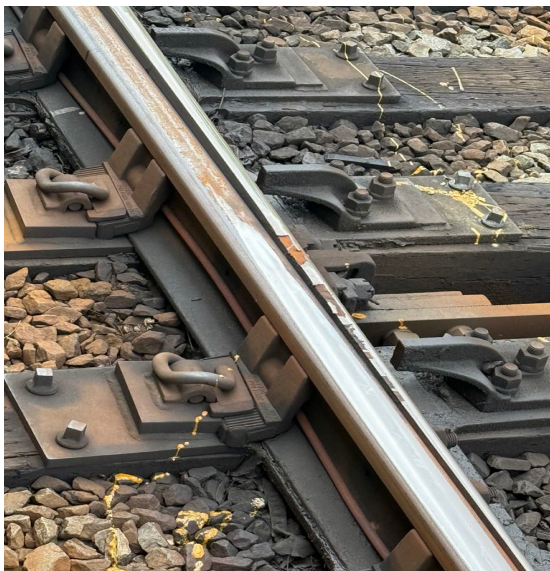


Photo 4: Defective switch point at the E09 1B switch showing chipping⁷ and pitting⁸. The lighter brown indicates newer oxidation. The oxidation can contribute to pitting and loss of material on the surface of the rail. This shows the defect has progressed since the last entry in MaxTrax.

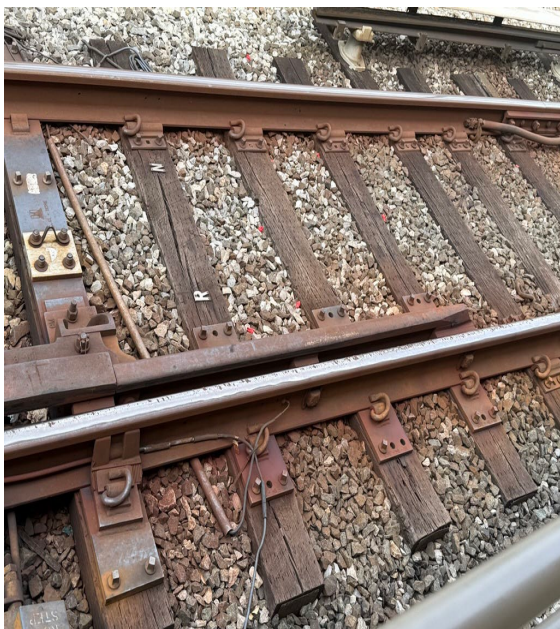


Photo 5: Shows pitting on the stock rail at the E09 1B switch.

⁷ Chipping refers to the mechanical breaking away or spalling of actual fragments of steel from the rail head, gauge corner, or stock rail undercut area.

⁸ Pitting refers to localized surface degradation characterized by small cavities, indentations, or craters formed along the steel surface.



Next Steps

Please respond **by Tuesday, September 8, 2026**, to acknowledge receipt and to convey responses to the WMSC regarding what, if any, actions will be or have been taken in response.