



WMSC Inspection Report 20260923A

ISSUED 9/28/2026

Inspection Details

Title: Emergency Fastener Renewal Work Procedure Inspection

Location: Smithsonian (D02) to L'Enfant Plaza (D03) Track 2 (Inbound)

Date of Inspection: 9/23/2026

Time of Inspection: 11:00pm on 9/22/26 to 4:00am on 9/23/26

Announced (via call to Senior Director, Track and Structures)

Risk-Based (Investigation)

Functional Area: Roadway Worker Protection, Vehicles, Track

Hazard Rating: 3C

Overview

On the night of Tuesday, September 22, 2026, through the morning of Wednesday, September 23, 2026, WMSC Inspectors observed a Metrorail Track and Structures (TRST) crew addressing an emergency condition: rail fasteners required urgent replacement in the area from Smithsonian Station (D03) to L'Enfant Plaza Station (D03) on Track 2. This type of work requires using roadway maintenance machines to perform the work.

This is a risk-based inspection based on several recent safety events involving roadway maintenance machines:

Safety Events Involving Roadway Maintenance Machines

The April 22, 2026, collision between a prime mover flatcar (work equipment) and a stationary Metrorail Silver Line passenger train at Metro Center Station is presently under a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation with the WMSC and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) parties to that investigation. NTSB published the [preliminary report](https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/RRD26FR015.aspx) in May 2026.¹

¹ NTSB Preliminary Report: <https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/RRD26FR015.aspx>



Subsequently, On August 14 and 15, Metrorail reported two additional collisions that met the threshold for safety event code A-3 (b) Collision between two rail transit vehicles.² On August 14, 2026, at approximately 9:40pm prime mover (PM50), while towing a flat car (F520), struck track vehicle NSP01 in West Falls Church Yard (K99). There were no injuries. Additionally, on August 15, 2026, at approximately 3:23am three roadway worker maintenance machines (PM41, T006, GC02) collided between East Falls Church Station (K05) and West Falls Church Station (K06) on track 1. There were three minor injuries reported. All injuries were non-life threatening, and all individuals have been released from hospital since the event. All three of these collisions continue to be investigated. The April 22, 2026, collision that resulted in patron injuries is being led by the NTSB. The two more minor collisions that occurred August 14 and 15 by the WMSC and WMATA, respectively. These investigations are ongoing.

On Sunday, September 20, 2026, the tamper machine (T005) derailed at L2 137+00 while mitigating a fouled ballast condition in the RSA work zone (Pentagon Station (C07) to L'Enfant Plaza Station (F03)).

The purpose of the inspection is to assess Metrorail's compliance with established Roadway Worker Protection (RWP) requirements, Roadway Maintenance Machine (RMM) movement and operating procedures, and other required communication protocols during the RSA work zone. The inspection focused on whether work was being performed in accordance with Metrorail procedures and whether adequate protections were in place to control the risks associated with personnel, on-track equipment, and train movements within the work area.

After concluding the inspection, WMSC Inspectors 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

² In accordance with WMSC [Program Standard](#) (Rev. 8) section 7.B Metrorail must "...report all safety events outlined in the Safety Event Notification Matrix in the timeframe and manner specified for each safety event type."



Defect 1

At the On-Track Safety Briefing (OTSB) conducted on the platform at Smithsonian (D02), the roadway worker in charge (RWIC) verbally reviewed the relevant sections of the OTSB form. However, the RWIC failed to address the good faith challenge section contained within the OTSB form. The RWIC is required to mention this procedure (Roadway Worker Protection Manual section 1.8.5). WMSC Inspectors raised this issue with the RWIC after the OTSB was completed.

Hazard Rating: 3C

Observation 1 (Mitigated)

WMSC Inspectors observed a Metrorail Track and Structures (TRST) work crew addressing an emergency condition with defective fasteners at D2 045+10 track 2 (inbound) on the left rail. A gauge rod³ was observed at the location to maintain standard gauge and prevent lateral movement. The gauge rod was placed at the location on 9/20/2026. As per maintenance bulletin 20160929-05, gauge rods are a temporary fix and must be removed within 14 days of installation (unless a track director permits extension). The TRST crew mitigated the emergency condition by replacing the defective fasteners and removing the gauge rod on site.

³ 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.



Photos



Photo 1 (Left): Fastener location with a gauge rod present to hold the standard gauge at D2 045+10.
Photo 2 (Right): Area after work was completed, and the gauge rod was removed.

Observation 2

WMSC Inspectors observed that the Equipment Operator and Flag person on the roadway maintenance machine used the appropriate radio communication and hand signals while safely positioning the RMM into the designated work area according to Metrorail Operating Rulebook (MOR) 13.11. Once the RMM entered the work zone, the Equipment Operator and Flag person secured the unit to begin work.

Observation 3

The Flag person appropriately placed wheel chocks on the work flat to ensure stability and prevent unintended movement during crew operations according to Metrorail Operating Rulebook 12.12.2.



Photos



Photo 3: Shows the proper placement of wheel chocks to prevent any unintended movement on the work flat.

Observation 4

WMSC Inspectors observed that the roadway worker in charge (RWIC) used the required, compliant Class O electrical safety gloves under the August 27, 2026, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Program 4480-2-02/02.



Photos



Photo 4 (left): Shows RWIC installing shunts using the required Class O insulated gloves. Photo 5 (right): Compliant Class O insulated glove.

Observation 5

WMSC Inspectors verified the correct placement of the roadway worker protection (RWP) equipment per the Roadway Worker Protection Manual (RWPM) section 1.22 (Exclusive Track Occupancy (ETO)). The limits of the track occupancy were explicitly defined and secured using the safety equipment and visual indicators described below:

1.22.3 Exclusive Track Occupancy Set-Up 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.

The presence of the required safety equipment mitigates the risk of rail vehicle movement, in this case, unauthorized rail vehicle entry.



Photos



Photo 5 (left) and Photo 6 (right): Shows the correct placement of the shunting devices accompanied by two (2) red lanterns or e-flares, and “End Work Area” mats.

Next Steps

Please respond **by Thursday, October 1, 2026**, to acknowledge receipt and to convey responses to the WMSC regarding what, if any, actions will be or have been taken in response.