



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**MAY 11 2016**

Mr. Paul Wiedefeld  
General Manager and Chief Executive Officer  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 Fifth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

**Subject: Urgent Repairs Required Prior to Start Up of WMATA SafeTrack Plan**

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld:

During the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) recent investigations and inspections of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail system, FTA safety oversight officials have identified track locations where urgent repairs are required to reduce the risk of smoke and fire events and to ensure the safety of passengers and employees. I am therefore directing WMATA to take immediate action to give first priority to these repairs.

Specifically, WMATA must focus its immediate maintenance repair activities on both tracks along three segments of the Metrorail system:

- Medical Center to Van Ness on the Red Line,
- Potomac Avenue to the D&G junction on the Blue/Orange/Silver Line,
- Ballston-MU to East Falls Church on the Orange/Silver Line.

As communicated previously, for the first two segments, major activities to be performed include: cleaning drains, troughs and manholes; removing mud and debris from tracks and safety walks; sealing cracks and cleaning the tunnel liners; inspecting and repairing drainage pumps; inspecting traction power cables and welds; replacing insulators and third rail coverboards; eliminating third rail expansion joints; repairing fasteners and bolts in the direct fixation system; and replacing corroded rail and defective tie plates.

For the last segment, repair activities will focus primarily on the traction power electrification system, including inspecting traction power cables and welds; replacing third rail, replacing insulators and third rail coverboards; and eliminating third rail expansion joints. In this segment, WMATA also must inspect the tunnel drainage system, and schedule locations out-of-conformance with WMATA track and drainage pumping standards for priority repairs.

For the segment beginning at Medical Center on the Red Line, the FTA appreciates that much of the urgent repair work has been completed between Medical Center and Friendship Heights for both tracks. However, based on track conditions observed by FTA WMATA Safety Oversight inspectors, and the occurrence of arcing insulator and smoke and fire events between Friendship Heights and Tenleytown-AU, and as previously conveyed to WMATA on April 27, the FTA finds that this work location needs to be extended on both tracks to Van Ness.

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From April 23, 2016 to May 10, 2016, and separate from FTA's regular daily inspections, we have investigated 15 safety events, including nine events with smoke and/or fire. Our teams have conducted daily inspections to monitor water intrusion and general track conditions, and to assess WMATA's work progress in several locations.

To address concerns regarding the sustainability of the repairs that WMATA has made, and will continue to make, to its tunnel drainage system and traction power cabling system, WMATA also must provide FTA with its inspection and maintenance procedures for these critical infrastructure components, and a list of designated inspection staff with clear responsibility for implementing these procedures. Also, within 30 days, WMATA must re-establish its program for cleaning insulators and removing debris from the tunnels.

The FTA inspection teams will accompany WMATA in carrying out these inspections and observing insulator cleaning and tunnel debris removal activities. Deficiencies in these activities will be immediately reported to your office by the FTA WMATA Safety Office Director.

Finally, in concert with FTA, I am directing WMATA to develop indicators and establish targets to monitor its safety performance in mitigating the risk associated with fire and/or smoke events. Use of indicators and targets to assess and communicate safety performance is a critical first step to ensuring a stronger safety culture.

This correspondence follows up on both FTA's immediate action letter from April 18, 2016 and Safety Directive 16-3, issued on May 7, 2016, which you and your staff are also working to address. If you have any additional questions, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Sean Thompson, Director, WMATA Safety Oversight, Office of Transit Oversight and Safety at (202) 366-3616 or [Sean.Thompson@dot.gov](mailto:Sean.Thompson@dot.gov).

I commend your commitment to take any and all necessary steps needed to immediately address these safety concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Carolyn Flowers  
Acting Administrator

cc: Pat Lavin, Chief Safety Officer, WMATA  
Andy Off, Acting Deputy General Manager Operations, WMATA  
Angel Peña, Managing Director, Quality and Internal Compliance Operations,  
WMATA  
Sharmila Samarasinghe, Chair, Tri-State Oversight Committee