



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Headquarters

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

June 28, 2016

Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld  
General Manager and Chief Executive Officer  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Subject: Between-Car Barriers on WMATA 7000-Series Railcars, FTA Inquiry No.  
2016-0058-IN

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued the enclosed letter dated January 7, 2016, concerning the design of the between-car barriers on the new 7000-series railcars that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has procured for use on the Metrorail System. This was in response to a concern expressed by a citizen regarding the gap between these barriers, estimated at approximately nine inches, which created a potential safety concern for people who are blind or who have low vision.

In the intervening months, we have been working with Mr. Christian Kent, WMATA's Assistant General Manager for the Department of Access Services, to gain a better understanding as to how these barriers adequately prevent, deter, or warn individuals from inadvertently stepping off the platform between cars, as required under 49 CFR 38.63. In the enclosed email dated March 31, 2016, we inquired as to whether or not WMATA had undertaken any testing designed to determine whether the end-car barriers used on the 7000-series cars performed as well as the more traditional barriers used throughout the existing fleet in terms of meeting this requirement. Mr. Kent responded on April 20, 2016, with an enclosure describing extensive engineering tests conducted to determine whether the barriers met WMATA requirements for noise, movement, and contact with each other while the train was in motion. However, no testing appears to have been done concerning the actual detectability of the new between-car barriers by people who are blind or who have low vision in a station platform environment.

For this reason, we are directing WMATA to perform testing of the between-car barriers used on the ends of the 7000-series railcars to determine whether or not they are adequate to prevent, deter, or warn passengers from inadvertently stepping off the platform between cars. Such testing must be done using a cross-section of individuals who are blind or who have low vision, using a variety of mobility aids ranging from white canes to service animals, in an environment simulating that of a 7000-series train at a Metrorail station platform.

Please transmit the results of this testing to me for review at [linda.ford@dot.gov](mailto:linda.ford@dot.gov) by September 30, 2016. If you have any questions, please contact John Day of my staff at (202) 366-1671 or via email at [john.day@dot.gov](mailto:john.day@dot.gov). Please include the FTA inquiry number on any correspondence. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Linda Ford  
Associate Administrator  
FTA Office of Civil Rights



Enclosures (2)