



M E M O R A N D U M

SUBJECT: Management Alert
Track Ballast - Rail Yard
Silver Line Phase 2 (MA-20-0002)

DATE: August 19, 2019

FROM: OIG – Geoffrey A. Cherrington *GA*

TO: GMGR – Paul J. Wiedefeld

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is providing this Management Alert (MA) because of safety, reliability and performance concerns related to the inadequacy of track ballast (ballast) in the rail yard for Phase 2 of the Silver Line construction. In addition, OIG is also concerned that if not properly addressed, this matter will create extraordinary cost, maintenance and operational issues early on once WMATA takes ownership and control of this project. We are bringing this to your attention at this time in light of dates that have been publicized for the anticipated acceptance of this project.

OIG is conducting a review of certain issues surrounding the construction of Phase 2 of the Silver Line that may impact WMATA's acceptance of the project. As a result of the matters uncovered, we have learned that various samples have been taken of the ballast in the rail yard and the results of these tests have identified that the ballast in the rail yard is contaminated by materials which are of inappropriate size and consistency. WMATA's own consultant has expressed concern over this issue.

Ballast forms the track bed upon which railroad ties are laid. It is packed between, below, and around the ties. It is used to bear the load from the railroad ties, to facilitate drainage of water, and also to keep down vegetation that might interfere with the track structure. This also serves to hold the track in place during train movements. If the ballast is badly fouled by fines, the resulting clogging will further degrade the sub-ballast, reducing the ability to drain properly, thus, in turn, causing more fouling. Ballast fouling also reduces the flexibility of the ballast to constrain the track as it moves under traffic. Therefore, keeping the ballast clean is essential.

OIG will be issuing its final report shortly. Based on the facts and circumstances now known to OIG, we believe there currently is a significant deficiency in the composition of the ballast that will impact safety and cost if WMATA were to accept the project as is. OIG believes that a complete survey and testing of the entire ballast in the rail yard would be advisable to determine the depth of the problem.

Accordingly, until our report is issued, OIG recommends that:

- Based on the information known today, WMATA not accept the rail yard until a complete survey and testing is done to determine the extent of the problem with the ballast.
- WMATA require the contractor to replace the portions of the ballast that fail testing and compensate WMATA for any extraordinary issues that cannot be resolved.

cc: COUN – P. Lee
COO – J. Leader