



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metrorail train 302 that encountered heavy smoke in the tunnel between the L'Enfant Plaza Station and the Potomac River Bridge on January 12, 2015

GROUP	
EXHIBIT	

Agency / Organization

Title

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA
STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.
JANUARY 12, 2015

Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004

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Interview of: MATTHEW BUCHAN

Washington, D.C.

Saturday,
January 17, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: DAVID BUCHER
Railroad Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

RICHARD DOWNS, JR., Survival Factors Investigator
Chairman, Survival Factors Technical Working Group
National Transportation Safety Board

SHARMILA SAMARASINGHE, Vice Chair
Tri-State Oversight Committee

DORSEY ADAMS, Manager of Rail Safety
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

HERCULES BALLARD, Managing Director Rail Transportation
WMATA

THOMAS LITTLETON, FTA Investigator In-Charge
Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:25 a.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident
4 Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, and
5 this is the interview of Matt Buchan, a police officer for Metro
6 Transit Police. It's January 17, 2015, approximately 9:25 a.m.,
7 and the interview is related to the WMATA incident at L'Enfant
8 Plaza on January 12, 2015. The NTSB accident number is
9 DCA15FR004. To my right, I have?

10 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Sharmila Samarasinghe. I'm with the
11 Tri-State Oversight Committee, the TOC. I'm the Virginia full-
12 time member.

13 MR. LITTLETON: Thomas Littleton. I'm the Associate
14 Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight at the Federal
15 Transit Administration and the FTA's Investigator-In-Charge.

16 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard, Managing Director of
17 Rail Transportation with Metro.

18 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams, Washington Metro, Manager of
19 Rail Safety.

20 MR. DOWNS: Rick Downs, Survival Factors Group
21 Chairperson, NTSB.

22 OFFICER BUCHAN: Officer Matthew Buchan, Transit Police.

INTERVIEW OF MATT BUCHAN

23
24 BY MR. BUCHER:

25 Q. Great. Okay, Matt, like I said before, if you would

1 just go back to the 12th and give us a rundown of your involvement
2 with the incident at L'Enfant Plaza?

3 A. Yes, sir. On that day, I was assigned to work Baker 26.
4 That's a downtown area covering L'Enfant Plaza to Navy Yard area,
5 down Eastern Market, that kind of area. I had just cleared roll
6 call. It was about 1515/1520. I was at the Navy Yard station.
7 While I was at Navy Yard, I remember a call went out. Officer
8 Kent had called out first. He's a foot officer, Badge 551. He
9 calls out hearing a large explosion of some sort while on the
10 route tracks, on the platform.

11 MR. DOWNS: Where was he at the time?

12 OFFICER BUCHAN: He was at Anacostia. He hears a large
13 explosion. He does a canvass of the station. This is all what
14 he's saying on the radio. He does a canvass of the station. His
15 canvass of the station was negative. I don't know if he touches
16 base with a train that's there or a supervisor, a rail supervisor
17 of some sort, but it was told to him, because he relays it over
18 the air, that it was a collector shoe off one of the trains had
19 blown off and that's what the explosion that he heard was.

20 I say that because that kind of raised my suspicions
21 that, hey, there was something. Let me start going there for an
22 explosion of some sort. You know, when you hear that, that's
23 not -- I have 10 years on. So to hear that, that's not normal, so
24 it kind of piqued my interest a little bit. But when they said it
25 was nothing, we left it at that. I didn't respond over there.

1 Minutes after that, again, the time in my head, guys,
2 it's so fluid. I can't remember exact times. We then get a call
3 from a female officer, I'm not sure which one, that she is on a
4 train with smoke. I don't remember where she said she was at
5 exactly, because it didn't sound like she was sure where she was
6 at. But then we had another officer, Officer Colin Jackson, who
7 was working an overtime detail at Woodley Park. He called out
8 that he has a train holding on the platform. The operator was
9 told to hold because they have a report of smoke. I don't know,
10 maybe they were hearing the radio. I can't speak for them, and
11 I'm not going to say what they thought.

12 But I started thinking, boy, what the heck's going on?
13 Then it comes out that -- I forget if the dispatchers told us that
14 the train that those officers were on was holding near L'Enfant
15 Plaza or if the officers remembered last leaving L'Enfant, but I
16 started towards L'Enfant Plaza, lights and sirens are activated.
17 You know, I started coding there. I didn't realize it at the
18 time, but I was the first one on the scene from Transit Police
19 aside from those two officers.

20 I pulled up to the 7th and Maryland side, ran down into
21 the station. To kind of set the scene from what I was thinking in
22 my head at first, I pulled in and I thought -- all the fires and
23 stuff that we normally get, and smoke events, we have an insulator
24 that's arching, or a light ballast, a little smoke. I've been on
25 for 10 years, in patrol the whole time. I've run a lot of calls.

1 I get down the 7th and Maryland side to where you start
2 to get to the kiosk, and I go past the kiosk and I am seeing --
3 you know, L'Enfant Plaza, if you guys haven't been down there,
4 it's a split-level station. I'm sure you guys have now. It's a
5 split-level station. I can see, looking down the end, to my best
6 estimate, maybe a third, if you break down the platform length, a
7 third of that platform is already starting to be covered in a
8 thick gray smoke, grayish-brown smoke.

9 I get on the radio. If I remember -- if I said that --
10 but I do believe -- I know I radioed in saying we have a lot of
11 smoke coming into the station. I can't remember exactly because,
12 again, it was so fluid running in and seeing that, if I asked
13 trains to stop at that time. I can't remember. But it instantly
14 turned into, hey, this isn't -- again, this is not that smoking,
15 smoldering light fixture; this is a lot of smoke. People are
16 leaving now.

17 The question about the officers and their training, this
18 is where things started getting a little hectic down there; is
19 that, you know, our tunnels have varying lengths. Some stations,
20 you can look right at the platform and you can see there's the
21 next station through the tunnel. The problem here is that the
22 smoke was already starting to come in so thick when I'm going
23 on -- when I'm up top, going down to the platform that I could see
24 the smoke coming in, but it was already so thick that I didn't --
25 I couldn't see if the train was 5 feet in the tunnel, 10 feet, 500

1 feet, or 1,000 feet in the tunnel.

2 I knew we had officers there, but the transmissions from
3 the officers were not consistent. We have -- and it's very well-
4 known. We have extreme radio problems here in this department,
5 and as an agency as a whole, to the point where you can be
6 standing in one spot, radio's completely dead, completely. You
7 move over 5 feet, the radio works. Extreme officer safety -- it's
8 an extreme safety issue to start with, but the officers were not
9 constantly in radio contact, so I didn't know where in fact they
10 were.

11 With that being said, as an officer with my -- I'm just
12 trying to let you guys know the thoughts going through my head at
13 the time. With just my duty belt, you know, the vest and the gun
14 and the radio, never being really involved in a fire before, the
15 thought going through my head is, hey, this tunnel that's full of
16 smoke that I can already see billowing out of it, to charge
17 headlong into that, you learn as a first responder you make no
18 good -- you know, you do no good if you just blindly charge into
19 the darkness. I hate to say it because my officers were on there,
20 citizens were on there. I took this job to save people, to help
21 people.

22 When I realized that I couldn't get to those people -- I
23 could. Would I have made it or not? I don't know. But it
24 started to turn into people are leaving, people are leaving,
25 because smoke -- I can't say it enough how quick the smoke was

1 just pouring in gentlemen, and ma'am. The smoke was rapidly
2 filling. So it turned -- and citizens -- I know you guys have
3 seen it in different calls you guys have run throughout the years,
4 you know, when crises or emergencies like this happen, you see all
5 type of reactions from people. There were some people who pulled
6 out their cameras. They were videotaping us. People were still
7 sitting down on benches waiting for the next train to come in.
8 Some people were crying and starting to run. It turned into, hey,
9 nobody is staying here. Smoke is filling this quickly, everybody,
10 go, go, go, go.

11 I had various officers by this point now -- to where I'm
12 at now, I'm down on the platform. I'm in the middle. I'm towards
13 the end. I say, guys, this is maybe 5 minutes or so that have
14 gone by. Two or three other officers were there with me. Where
15 they came from, if they came off a train, I don't know. I assume,
16 because I only saw one other mobile guy with me, Officer Yeh. But
17 it was we have to go, we have to go; get people out.

18 There were still people -- trains were coming in, in and
19 out, nonstop, on the bottom. Nonstop like it was normal service.
20 At least the couple times I peered over it seemed like, with
21 regularity, they were still coming in. And the smoke was going
22 down on the bottom, but all of my attention was on the top,
23 because that's where the smoke was so thick. Five, 6 minutes in,
24 again, the smoke now was -- when I first got there, again, it was
25 a third on the platform. I'm sorry if I'm jumping around so much.

1 BY MR. BUCHER:

2 Q. That's all right.

3 A. I'm trying to remember it. Five, 6 minutes later, the
4 smoke was more than halfway covering. And I'm telling you,
5 quickly getting to the point where it's not a little, you know,
6 fire smoke from when, you know, you do a campfire. This is thick.
7 If you stand in it, you can't see your hand in front of your face
8 type of smoke. At this point -- and we're making various
9 transmissions over the radio about the situation, how rapidly
10 deteriorating it is. At this point, a train pulls in the
11 platform, on the green platform.

12 Yes, sir?

13 MR. DOWNS: That's what's now identified as the 510
14 Train?

15 OFFICER BUCHAN: Is that? I don't know. They were
16 saying train numbers and stuff like that. I don't remember. But,
17 yes, sir, on the top platform a train pulled in. Now, we have
18 people -- I don't know how much you guys would be able to see on
19 the video and stuff. We have people, of course, panicking,
20 running, fleeing. We are yelling at everybody; get out, just go
21 to that exit. I'm sending people back to 7th and Maryland, where
22 I came in at. Leave, get out of here. I'm yelling at the top of
23 my lungs, as well as my other officers are.

24 That train pulls in, and if it was 30 seconds, it seemed
25 like 5 minutes, but they sat there with the doors holding.

1 MR. DOWNS: Closed?

2 OFFICER BUCHAN: Closed. Perfectly closed. And I
3 remember looking in through the train car and seeing, obviously,
4 the smoke. As I mentioned a minute ago or so, how thick the smoke
5 was, where you're starting not to be able to see your hand in
6 front of your face. Patrons on that train are seeing this and now
7 they're starting to panic. You know, most patrons who pull in on
8 trains just sit there. You know, they just wait for the doors to
9 close again and they go to the next stop. Patrons, at this point,
10 on that train are standing up, starting to see the panic in the
11 station. I remember them vividly banging on the -- some of them
12 were banging on the glass, banging on the doors.

13 At that point, as quick as the smoke was continuing to
14 come in, I told my officers who I was with, two or three of them,
15 we have to get people off this train. The unknown -- again, I
16 didn't know if that fire -- going back to not being able to see in
17 the tunnel, I didn't know if the fire and the train, again, was 5,
18 10, 20 feet, 1,000 feet ahead. I thought, hey, we can't send
19 these patrons in to possibly, you know, be sandwiched and trapped
20 behind another train.

21 So, you know, it's hard to say it now, because I knew
22 there was still that train there, but our focus had to shift to
23 this train that's now pulled onto the platform because the smoke
24 is still not thick enough to where, hey, I'm sorry, now I'm out of
25 here. But it was this train is full of people, I can't leave

1 them; let's get these doors open; let's go. And every single
2 person we got off.

3 MR. DOWNS: That's the train that had just pulled in?

4 OFFICER BUCHAN: Yes, sir, the train that had just
5 pulled in. Because when I realized that my attempts to try to get
6 into the tunnel to access the stranded train would probably not be
7 the safest for me, again, not having a re-breather, a mask or
8 anything like that -- because I was already coughing, feeling
9 lightheaded, feeling like I was about to pass out as it was. And
10 this is a huge station, gentlemen, you know, where the air is a
11 lot more open than in a closed tunnel.

12 I was, you know, telling my partners we have to get this
13 door open. I don't remember which officer it was. There was an
14 officer at the front of the train. And a lot of times when --
15 every time when trains pull in, you know, the operators open the
16 window, they look down the line to make sure everything is safe;
17 then they open the doors. But we told them, hey, open these
18 doors; we've got to get these people off; we have to go. We
19 evacuated everybody and we say go, go, go. We told them just to
20 run, to go to 7th and Maryland.

21 Now, the only people that weren't able to run, there
22 were some elderly or disabled people. I remember one elderly
23 black gentleman, I had to help him out. And again, making various
24 trips, two or three trips to the fare gates and back. But as
25 people were coming off, the train operator, I remember was a

1 female, a short, black female. No, was it a guy? I can't
2 remember. I'm sorry, guys, I really can't remember. I saw so
3 many people that day. But the operator of that train that had
4 pulled in was wanting to stay in the cab of that train. Again, I
5 can't speak on what their rules and protocol and stuff is like
6 that, but we made the decision, no, we're not leaving you here.

7 I know in my 10 years I've worked a lot of incidents and
8 I've heard a lot of stuff on the radio. I know how hard of a
9 situation sometimes it can be to even simply reverse a train.
10 Sometimes reversing a train could take 2 or 3 minutes to simply do
11 that; walk into a cab. Who knows what was behind that train. Who
12 knows what was in front of it. I didn't know the track structure.
13 I don't know if there was a simple pocket track behind. You know,
14 because the situation is so fluid, we can't stop and take out a
15 manual and check the track layout.

16 So we made the determination at that time, no, you're
17 not staying on this train, you're out of here, too. We don't know
18 what's in front of you, how far it is. We don't know what's
19 behind you, if there's a train behind you. For your safety, we
20 are not going to let you stay on here and possibly be another
21 casualty or a victim. We're all leaving.

22 Once the operator left, we did -- and this is maybe 10
23 minutes now, and now the smoke, guys, has darkened the whole
24 place, from the top -- I never went to the lower platform. On the
25 top platform, I can say now it's like all the lights were shut off

1 and it was completely black on the platform. We did a sweep of
2 the station. On the 7th and Maryland side there was a couple
3 station managers there. I said we're out of here. They wanted to
4 go in and -- I give them credit. They followed their, I assume,
5 protocol in checking the back rooms and stuff like that. They
6 wanted to do that, too, almost to a T, when it's like, hey -- you
7 know, it's just like if there was a fire, you know, go. We'll do
8 that. We'll check it. Just get out of here. The priority was
9 getting out of here.

10 I can't speak what they were seeing on the other
11 platforms. I never went over to the other sides. I just was on
12 the 7th and Maryland platform the whole time, on that side. The
13 whole time I was there I never saw fire personnel there that
14 passed me. I personally never saw them. That was striking to me
15 because I still heard officers calling out various times on that
16 train. It scared me to death because I thought -- one, the
17 situation was scary, but I thought I was hearing my coworkers
18 making their final transmissions that they're trapped on this
19 train. I thought, you know, where's the fire department to go?
20 They have the re-breathers, they have the masks. Where are they
21 at to go?

22 I never remember seeing them, like I said. When we got
23 everybody back upstairs, we waited at that time for -- you know,
24 by this time, guys, I, you know, really feel like I was going to
25 pass out; couldn't breathe, coughing up a storm, about to throw

1 up. I just went -- I made sure all the officers on my side were
2 out. And I should make a note of this, guys. I still don't
3 understand why to this day -- I don't remember where I was at, but
4 I was in the station. The announcement was made over our radio to
5 switch channels. Normally, we broadcast on MTPD-1 on the radio.
6 That's the main -- both districts share it. It doesn't make a
7 difference if you're at Shady Grove or you're at Huntington,
8 everyone's on the same radio traffic, mobile officers, foot
9 officers.

10 Right in the height of this incident, they said every
11 unit working the L'Enfant Plaza or every unit involved in L'Enfant
12 Plaza switch to MTPD-2. Right there, that instantly -- I don't
13 know if you guys want me to talk about this now, too, but
14 instantly, that takes the whole situation -- and I talked about
15 the radio being bad. If I may have been in the spot to not hear
16 it over here, I may not have heard that transmission. If I was
17 those officers in the tunnel, I might not have heard to switch
18 over. If resources are switching channels one to the second,
19 you're already splitting us up right there in the height of
20 everything.

21 So I remember that transmission being put out while I
22 was in the station. I wanted to get that out if you guys had any
23 questions. But that struck me as -- the more and more I think
24 about it now -- you know, at the time, I didn't think about it
25 because it is done so common that -- you know, for major incidents

1 like that. I'm a crime scene officer. Like for example, when we
2 have people who jump in front of a train, take their own life, all
3 units involved with that switch to -- it's just something you hear
4 and you switch. But now thinking about it, it's a pretty major
5 thing.

6 But I made sure everybody was out. That train that had
7 pulled in, we removed everybody from that train. We removed every
8 patron. Now, I had come in 7th and Maryland. When I exited, I
9 was whatever the side is with the stairs. You go up the stairs
10 and they got the little shops up there. I can't remember what
11 side it is right now. 9th and --

12 MR. DOWNS: Well, that's the L'Enfant Plaza.

13 OFFICER BUCHAN: That is. That is it itself. I
14 remember walking upstairs. That building now, that lower level
15 was filling with a lot of smoke coming up the escalators. And I
16 remember getting upstairs with a bunch of my officers. I was
17 trying to account for all them, that we were all together, that
18 nobody was left in the smoke. I remember Metro personnel up
19 there, supervisors. I remember somebody coming over the radio,
20 saying can you bring the train operator over somewhere.

21 That request -- remember, I told you earlier, guys, I
22 can't remember if the operator of the train that pulled in was a
23 male or a female, because upstairs it was not a short, black
24 female. We escorted her over to 7th and Maryland, I believe,
25 because that's where I spent the other couple hours till I went to

1 the hospital. And that was pretty much it.

2 Again, I left knowing that my officers were on that
3 train, still, when I left. If they had evacuated, if patrons had
4 evacuated, I heard reports that passengers were wayside. I didn't
5 know if that included our officers. But I left, unfortunately,
6 knowing that our officers were trapped somewhere down there. If
7 it was, again, 5 feet, gentlemen, if it was 10 or 1,000 feet, I
8 don't know where they were in that tunnel. It's hard to just
9 leave, but I knew that myself or other officers would be a
10 casualty, possibly, if we went down into darkness.

11 I took a little video on my phone when I was leaving,
12 because I guess this is the crime scene in me, the officer in me.
13 I took a second video of -- when I emptied that train, I took a
14 video for my records, just to show, because I knew -- I'm always
15 trying to collect evidence, but just to show the vast darkness was
16 there and now I'm out. Because another thing, people -- I knew
17 how serious it was. I wanted to try and help -- at that point,
18 how thick the smoke was. So I went upstairs, 9th and Maryland --
19 or 9th and D, I'm sorry; walked over to 7th and Maryland, and
20 that's where I stood.

21 BY MR. BUCHER:

22 Q. Thank you.

23 A. Yes, sir. I'm sorry I bounced around so much. It was
24 just an extremely fluid situation.

25 Q. Yeah. I appreciate it.

1 A. Yep.

2 Q. A lot of great information.

3 MR. BUCHER: Rick, do you want to start?

4 MR. DOWNS: Yes. Yes.

5 MR. BUCHER: We're going to go around the table.

6 BY MR. DOWNS:

7 Q. Thank you, officer, for your testimony.

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. I'm going to go back a little bit and we'll try to go
10 step by step and fill in some of the elements here, okay?

11 A. Yep. Let's do it.

12 Q. You had described you were on the platform when you saw
13 a train pull into the station, upper level L'Enfant Plaza.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. You've now identified that as Train 510. The operator
16 gave us testimony the other day to the effect that she was pulling
17 her train into the station routinely, got a distance down the
18 platform and realized the far end of the platform was smoke. She
19 paused her train halfway or so, debating whether to proceed. She
20 pulled up as far as she could, slowly, and she stopped.

21 She then indicated to the effect that an officer,
22 transit officer with a flashlight approached her in the cab. She
23 then dialoged with that officer to the effect to ask the officer
24 to guide her to pull the train forward as far as he could guide
25 her using his flashlight. So between the two of them, him on the

1 platform, walking, and her driving the train, operating the train,
2 they were able to pull the train forward to some point to where
3 the officer indicated that he could go no farther. Was that you?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. That was not you?

6 A. That was not me directing. Most of my positioning on
7 that upper platform was right in the center of it. In fact, I
8 carry -- if any of you guys have law enforcement background, I
9 carry a Streamlight style flashlight, one that -- a lot of our
10 foot officers have a small flashlight about the size of an iPhone
11 that fits in a little pouch on their belt. My flashlight being
12 the length that it was, thinking that I was first going into a
13 small little smoky -- my flashlight was in the car. I say that
14 because the flashlights that I saw officers using, they were foot
15 officers that I remember seeing, guys with flashlights. The only
16 time I saw -- my first interaction with the operator is when I
17 went in to -- when the train doors did open and I went up to the
18 operator, through that car's doors.

19 Q. Okay. Good. Next, I'd like to touch on the topic of
20 respirator masks.

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. We heard testimony from your colleagues the other day
23 that when you're -- let me digress a little bit, get off the topic
24 of the event itself.

25 A. Yep.

1 Q. Training; how long have you been with the organization?

2 A. Ten years.

3 Q. Ten years. Prior to joining WMATA PD, what did you do?

4 A. I was a mall security guard.

5 Q. Mall security?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. And prior to that?

8 A. Just a college kid.

9 Q. College?

10 A. I came on when I was 22. So I was right out of high
11 school, college, and worked mall security.

12 Q. College degree?

13 A. No, sir.

14 Q. Okay. And you went through the routine PD training?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. And that involves a whole litany of different emergency
17 scenarios and such?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. You're issued respirator masks at the time, do you
20 recall?

21 A. I do remember being issued a gas mask and an escape
22 hood.

23 Q. An escape hood (indiscernible) --

24 A. I do remember that. The thing about the escape hood, I
25 remember something expiring. If I'm correct -- I don't want to

1 go -- you know, hold down any exact things, but I remember us
2 being given those at a time.

3 Q. So one or the other, or both maybe, were issued to you
4 years ago?

5 A. Yes. When I came on, yep.

6 Q. When you came on.

7 A. Ten years ago. I was hired in '05. I've never been
8 given anything new since.

9 Q. Do you normally carry your respirator mask and escape
10 hood with your daily gear?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. Okay. So that would be the normal protocol, not to
13 carry it?

14 A. I don't know.

15 Q. You don't know. But you would normally not carry it?
16 It would just be more equipment that you would --

17 A. Yeah, it would be with me in my bag and stuff like that.
18 It wouldn't be something that's carried on my person.

19 Q. And where would the bag normally be?

20 A. In the cruiser.

21 Q. In the cruiser?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. And you're with your cruiser during the day?

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. You go from location to location?

1 A. Yep.

2 Q. So could you have gone back to your cruiser to get the
3 respirator?

4 A. I could have. I didn't have it that day.

5 Q. You just didn't have --

6 A. I didn't have it that day.

7 Q. -- that day, that day?

8 A. No, sir, I did not have it that day.

9 Q. But most days you do carry it with you?

10 A. Yes, sir. In fact, there is a foot officer, Officer
11 Curran (ph.), who actually -- the masks that we wear in this
12 environment that we work in with terrorism being something it is,
13 that we have to be honest about, he would actually carry his on
14 his belt. Our official actually ordered him not to carry it on
15 his belt anymore.

16 Q. Why is that?

17 A. I do not know.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I do not know. Our antiterrorism unit, I saw them
20 months ago, they used to wear theirs on their belt all the time.
21 Our officer, who is one of those guys who's always thinking five
22 steps ahead, he would wear his around his belt, because it has a
23 belt holster with it. He would wear it, you know, strapped to his
24 leg, like it's made for. He was told not to wear it.

25 Q. Not to wear it. Okay. All right. Training drills;

1 does the PD conduct annual or whenever training drills regarding
2 evacuations?

3 A. No, sir. We do a yearly in-service covering various
4 topics that I believe the states require us for our certification
5 to keep. Like, I know this past year we did one on -- it's always
6 like a legal refresher. There was, you know -- it's various
7 refresher courses like that. If there's a rail safety block in
8 there, maybe it's an hour. It's nothing more than sometimes a
9 PowerPoint presentation. A couple years ago, I think, to get
10 recertified we had to maybe do a track walk, but I'm not sure. We
11 did, actually. We had to do another track walk a couple years
12 back.

13 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you. You mentioned radio issues.

14 A. Major.

15 Q. Major radio issues. How long has this been going on?

16 A. From day one on here.

17 Q. From day one on here.

18 A. Yep.

19 Q. Now, we understand that PD had been -- well, for that
20 matter, WMATA had issued new radios, digital radios in January of
21 '13, I think it was.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. And that there are some problems that's unique to the
24 new digital radios. Is there anything additional on the
25 digital -- on radio issues that you'd like to elaborate on, dead

1 spots or --

2 A. Yeah, I would love to. The thing about the radio issues
3 is that I guess it sticks with us more -- and I don't want to take
4 away from my colleagues here with Metro. Us as transit police,
5 we're in a unique environment that, you know, we make contact
6 stops. If any of you guys are prior law enforcement or anything,
7 you know that a situation can turn deadly in a split second. A
8 split second somebody can pull out a gun and shoot us.

9 I say that because these dead spots that we have
10 routinely over the years turned in radio requests, whenever we
11 would have a problem area, we would call in to dispatch, whatever,
12 Shady Grove platform, Dupont Circle, report radio issues. We
13 would tell our dispatchers. The disconnect would happen for us as
14 officers, once we reported it to dispatch, we would hear radio
15 people doing checks and stuff like that. Sometimes in this -- I'm
16 glad you asked me this. Sometimes Radio would come out for Metro
17 to meet us and do radio checks.

18 I had a Radio personnel one time -- it was always two
19 guys from Radio Maintenance. They met me at Gallery Place one
20 time. This may have been a year and a half ago. This is so vivid
21 because they asked me to do radio checks at Gallery because I had
22 called out for a problem. I said great. I took them to various
23 locations. I would call out on my portable, with my shoulder mic,
24 you know, my badge, whatever mobile I was working at the time.
25 Like the day of the incident I was Baker 26. So I'd be like,

1 Baker 26, Gallery Place, radio check. I would call out with it.
2 Dispatch would say, "I hear you loud and clear." But I hear on
3 their radio I'm coming through garbled, on their handheld radio.

4 I go to a different spot, I do a radio check. Dispatch
5 doesn't hear me. The radio guys from Metro doing the check with
6 me, "Oh, it's just your shoulder mic. Take off your shoulder mic
7 and do a radio check." Baker 26, radio check, Gallery Place. It
8 didn't come through then. "Let me check your battery and take
9 that again." It wouldn't work again. "Here, try my radio,"
10 meaning his. That wouldn't work. And then try his partner's
11 radio, that works. "Oh, okay, that spot's fine. It's just your
12 radio. It's your battery, it's not a full charge. Your shoulder
13 mic doesn't work. Don't use a shoulder mic. You have the
14 improper antenna, too short, too long. There's a problem with --"
15 we would hear excuses all the time. The repeater in the tunnel is
16 bad. There's wire issues. There's a problem because you're in-
17 ground and above ground.

18 Those same radio techs told me if you have radio at 7th
19 and F, right here at Gallery Place, where, you know, you see the
20 fare gates, they're here, and the escalator is going out to the
21 street, he says, oh, you can't expect the radios here to ever work
22 well because it doesn't know if you're above ground or in-ground.
23 Now, you're hearing that as an officer. Imagine stopping somebody
24 who has that gun that one time, just like with this fire. You
25 need that radio to work fine. They couldn't say that it was.

1 Q. Okay, anything else on the radios?

2 A. Just ever since day one it's been -- I've been told from
3 guys who trained me the first day that it's always been bad, no
4 matter what system, no matter how many calibrations our radios
5 have. No matter what new fandangled little discs or receivers or
6 amplifiers they put in, it's always bad.

7 MR. DOWNS: Okay, let's move on to the next question.

8 BY MR. ADAMS:

9 Q. Dorsey Adams.

10 A. Yes, sir?

11 Q. When you first got on the scene, you were the incident
12 commander, correct?

13 A. I don't remember. I don't remember.

14 Q. Well, explain to me the process of the incident command
15 when you get on site.

16 A. The first one on the scene assumes incident command.

17 Q. Were you the first one on scene?

18 A. I was. I was. But let me also say this: To establish
19 an incident command, incident command, sir, is setting up, okay?
20 You know, Baker 26, I'll be incident command, L'Enfant Plaza.
21 That means if you ask me for an incident command, removing
22 yourself from that situation to go to a central location,
23 providing a phone number for contacts to call you, and waiting for
24 other units to come to you; then you start delegating stuff like
25 that. That's what incident command is.

1 But with a situation like this that I ran into, I knew
2 there was a lot of units coming. I knew there was. I knew there
3 were sergeants right around the corner coming to this, also. My
4 first thought was, yes, incident command probably needed to be set
5 up, but my first thought is saving the patrons right there.

6 MR. DOWNS: Evacuation.

7 OFFICER BUCHAN: Exactly. It's just like if we have an
8 active shooter situation at L'Enfant Plaza and I have a guy at the
9 end of the platform shooting, I'm not going to be able to see him
10 down there, let me set up here. I'm incident command; officers,
11 go down there and take care of him. That's it. Almost the
12 exigent circumstance kind of took over that I need to, one, try
13 and see where my officers are at, try and rescue the patrons that
14 are on the platform. That's why I didn't set up incident command.

15 Sgt. Baker, Brian Baker, one of my sergeants, was there
16 within minutes after me. Sgt. Brian Baker established on-scene
17 command at that time, making me his forward liaison.

18 BY MR. ADAMS:

19 Q. Okay. So you never -- I'm not trying to say that what
20 you didn't wasn't the proper thing to do.

21 A. Oh, I know. I know.

22 Q. Right? I'm just trying to establish --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. So you never made a transmission to anyone saying --

25 A. I was on-scene command, no.

1 Q. -- "I'm on scene command?"

2 A. No.

3 Q. But when Sgt. Baker came --

4 A. He did.

5 Q. -- he says, "I'm the incident commander?"

6 A. Yep. Because I remember one of our officials, if I'm
7 correct, went over the air and said who's the on-scene commander,
8 or something like that.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. If I'm correct. I thought I remembered hearing that.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. But see, now, again, in my 10 years, I have worked major
13 incidents. I was the first one on the scene in 2009 for our train
14 accident. I cut through the fence to get to the victims of that
15 train accident. I didn't set up on-scene command then because of
16 the totality of the circumstances, it doesn't allow for it at that
17 time.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. But if this had been a little track fire and I see a
20 little smoke coming up from the roadway, hey, no problem. To me,
21 cool and calm; Baker 26, I'll be on-scene command at L'Enfant
22 Plaza, because you can stand 5 feet from that and be in charge of
23 that scene.

24 Q. I know that the Office of Emergency Management sometimes
25 have drills.

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. And they'll smoke up an area and they'll evacuate people
3 and they'll have medics come in. Have you ever been involved in
4 any of those kind of drills?

5 A. I have not. I have not.

6 Q. Have you ever been asked to be involved?

7 A. The only time we were ever in a drill when they used
8 smoke, boy, was when I got hired, if I'm correct. That's the only
9 time I remember ever going through -- at Carmen Turner, our mock
10 training out there?

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. That's the only time I ever remember being out there.

13 MR. ADAMS: That's all the questions I have for right
14 now.

15 OFFICER BUCHAN: And may I also make a note, too? In my
16 10 years here, I've never, ever encountered smoke like this, ever.
17 I've never been on the scene of a house fire, a car fire -- I've
18 never seen smoke envelope a place like this.

19 BY MR. BALLARD:

20 Q. Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro. When you arrived on
21 the scene at L'Enfant Plaza --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. -- were you in radio communication with the command
24 center?

25 A. With my dispatchers?

1 Q. Yeah, dispatchers.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. When you arrived at the train and you were
4 communicating with the train operator, did you relay to the
5 dispatchers that you were evacuating the train operator from the
6 train?

7 A. I can't speak on that because I don't remember.

8 Q. Also, another question. Did you notify --

9 A. And I'm sorry. To go back to your last question, may I
10 also say that there were times -- he asked me about the radio
11 system working or not. I tried to make transmissions. I say I
12 tried. If they got out or not -- because you know it's a very
13 fluid situation like this, sir. Various people that I can't see
14 are trying to get on the radio, too, all at the same time. So I
15 don't know if my transmissions were even making it out.

16 Q. So are you saying that you may have attempted to notify
17 the dispatcher that the --

18 A. I certainly may have, sir. Sorry to interrupt you. I
19 certainly may have, sir. I just can't remember. And on top of
20 that, also, if I did, if a transmission was made, I never heard a
21 response back. With the situation being as fluid as it was, it
22 wasn't, hey, let me stop here and let me try again, try again.
23 It's just, I'm sorry, we're going. I can tell them in a couple
24 minutes that I have the operator with me.

25 Q. In emergency situations and you are at the scene, are

1 you only in radio communication with the dispatchers, or are you
2 also able to communicate to your sergeant?

3 A. Us as transit police, when we turn on our radio,
4 everybody working should have the radio turned to MTPD-1, which is
5 our main primary channel, to include sergeants, lieutenants,
6 captains, and all the way up to deputy chief and chief, and
7 including everybody in emergency management and everybody else in
8 Metro who has a radio.

9 Q. Okay. So on the day of the incident, did you attempt to
10 notify your sergeant or your leadership that the train operator
11 was being evacuated from the train?

12 A. I don't remember.

13 Q. You said that during the middle of the incident, you
14 were instructed by someone to switch over from MTPD-1 to MTPD-2.
15 Is MTPD-2 your incident channel?

16 A. For this time they made it that.

17 Q. And once you switched over to MTPD-2, were you in
18 communication with --

19 A. One of our dispatchers.

20 Q. Just another dispatcher?

21 A. Um-hum. Because in our dispatch center we have
22 dispatchers, we have a call taker. So some dispatcher assumed
23 radio dispatching duties for that second channel.

24 Q. Okay. And when the operator, the train operator was
25 told to evacuate from the train and the station, was the operator

1 given any specific instruction as to where to go --

2 A. With us. With us. I personally took the operator,
3 because I know how important the operators are in their testimony
4 and stuff like that. You're with us. We took the operator
5 directly upstairs. The operator was one of the last people to
6 leave. We took the operator -- I put one of my officers, actually
7 stay with this operator, take them upstairs. They were taken
8 upstairs to where various supervisors were up there. I could tell
9 by their uniforms they were wearing.

10 Q. And once you and the operator arrived above ground, do
11 you know approximately how long it was before you were instructed
12 to take the operator (indiscernible) --

13 A. Oh, that was one of the first things; "Where's the
14 operator? Bring the operator over here."

15 Q. So almost immediately after?

16 A. Almost immediately, yep, almost immediately.

17 MR. BALLARD: No other questions.

18 MR. LITTLETON: Tom Littleton, Federal Transit
19 Administration. No questions.

20 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

21 Q. Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State Oversight Committee.
22 Officer Buchan, I'm going through -- going to go through some
23 questions, but they are not in order, so I apologize.

24 A. That's okay.

25 Q. I'm kind of going through, picking out items that I

1 needed clarification on based on your testimony. You said after
2 you got there and made that assessment and, you said, you could
3 see maybe two-thirds of the length of the platform but one-third
4 of it was now covered in smoke?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And this is about 5 minutes in to you getting there and
7 kind of assessing the scene. You said that you saw people
8 leaving. Do you happen to know whether that was kind of a
9 commanded, you need to leave, or --

10 A. At that point --

11 Q. -- it was voluntary at that point?

12 A. I'm sorry to interrupt you, ma'am. At that point, since
13 I was the first one heading down, that was just a voluntary
14 evacuation at that point.

15 Q. Okay. All right.

16 A. Because again, like before we started recording, I
17 believe, or I may have said it on the recording, it struck me that
18 some people were -- as thick as the smoke was starting to come in
19 and as quickly, it struck me odd that people were just casually
20 going about their day still when I, I guess maybe from my
21 experience and years on, I knew that, hey, this is not something
22 that you stick around for. This is you go. People in this day
23 and age we live in, people were more worried about videotaping us
24 than trying to get out in some cases. Some people were already
25 panicking and running.

1 Q. And you also said that trains continued to arrive, and I
2 assume this was on the Orange, Blue and Silver Line?

3 A. Below. I do remember -- I never went down there, but I
4 sent some officers down there. But I do remember seeing two or
5 three -- don't quote me on the numbers, but I do remember seeing
6 various trains still servicing the lower level platform.

7 I don't know if you guys will let me say something here,
8 if I can, but it's always struck us in incidents like this that
9 when we have multiple things happening, they're still sending the
10 trains. The trains a lot of times are still running. We will
11 have various calls for men armed with guns and we ask them to hold
12 the trains and they still continue to keep sending the trains. I
13 say that because that struck me. Here we have a serious situation
14 and trains are still coming. I know this -- now, again, I don't
15 work for rail. I'm not down in the command center, I'm not doing
16 that. And I know this is different because it's a split-level
17 station. What may be happening down below may have been
18 completely different than up top.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. I never went down there, so I really can't say how the
21 smoke was and what they may have been seeing on the cameras and
22 stuff there.

23 Q. All right. Then you also said as you were evacuating,
24 you and your fellow officers were evacuating passengers off of
25 510 -- this was the train that was sitting at the platform?

1 A. Yes, ma'am.

2 Q. That either you or the other officers made multiple
3 trips to the fare gates?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Why was that?

6 A. Because the fare gates was the least smoke filled area.
7 And that was also the exit area. Where I came in on 7th and
8 Maryland, that was --

9 OFFICER BUCHAN: The L'Enfant Plaza, guys, is that 9th
10 and D, 9th and --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm not sure.

12 OFFICER BUCHAN: I'm not sure. Whatever side the
13 L'Enfant Plaza is, that was the most direct straight line off the
14 train, this is the way out. So again, I mentioned that elderly
15 black gentleman who I helped earlier. It was let me walk him to
16 here; okay, sir, there's the escalator, or here, go here, go here.
17 It's not, hey, we have time for you to go up this escalator and go
18 out here, it's this is the quickest exit; head out here.

19 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

20 Q. Do you recall whether the fare gates were open?

21 A. I don't even remember that.

22 Q. All right. You --

23 A. Because, ma'am, every time I got to it, it was -- if I'm
24 here, the fare gates are where those TVs are, maybe 15 feet.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. There's the exit, I've got to go back.

2 Q. Understood. You mentioned that sometime within the
3 first 10 minutes you heard over the radio that somebody made the
4 decision to switch over to MTPD Channel 2. Is it standard
5 protocol, without even somebody commanding you all to do it, to
6 switch over when there is an emergency?

7 A. No, ma'am, it is never done -- and may I also say, I
8 know I said 10 minutes or something, but please --

9 Q. Sure. Yeah, that's fine.

10 A. If I'm wrong -- I'm trying to remember times here for
11 something that was extremely -- but, no, the command to switch
12 channels is never done from an officer level.

13 Q. Okay. Okay. So you think it was an officer?

14 A. No, it's all from dispatch.

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. If that's not clear.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. We're working the incident. A dispatcher came across
19 the radio.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. All units on the L'Enfant Plaza incident switch to
22 MTPD-2.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. That was the transition that came.

25 Q. And that is --

1 A. From our dispatchers.

2 Q. Okay. But is that standard? When there is an
3 emergency, that's kind of --

4 A. When it's on this scale, yes. Anything that's going to
5 be taking a lot of airtime, yes.

6 Q. Okay. All right.

7 A. Because, you know, you also have to think about it, too.
8 There's officers out there still stopping fare evaders, still
9 stopping suspects and having contacts for anything. There's still
10 calls going out, so they still need to find those calls -- get
11 those calls out to officers. They can't just tie up the radio
12 for, you know, for hours upon hours.

13 Q. You escorted the train operator topside?

14 A. Yes, ma'am.

15 Q. And then you all were instructed to bring the train
16 operator back down to the station?

17 A. No, ma'am, not down to the station, bring them over to
18 another entrance.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And I believe that was 7th and Maryland. Because we
21 were at the L'Enfant Plaza side; bring them over to 7th and
22 Maryland.

23 Q. Did you have -- were you the one who was --

24 A. Myself and Officer Yeh.

25 Q. Okay. Do you know what happened to the operator once

1 you escorted her (indiscernible) --

2 A. Nope. Nope. I don't remember who wanted to speak to
3 her. I just escorted them over there as instructed.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And when they went, it was --

6 Q. Okay. And nobody told you over your radios what it was
7 that she was being asked to be brought over for?

8 A. No. No. The only thing I can assume, being an officer,
9 was to, you know, preserve her witness testimony and evidence and
10 stuff.

11 Q. Switching back to radios, you characterized radio
12 operations as having extreme problems?

13 A. Extreme, yes, ma'am.

14 Q. Right? And you also explained to us some of the ways
15 that you guys report radio dead spots. Other than calling over to
16 dispatch and saying while you are at a certain location that you
17 are having radio problems --

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 Q. -- is there any other way that you all are expected to,
20 like in a documented form, to report?

21 A. We fill out a report.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But they actually -- we take, of course, police reports
24 for noncriminal matters.

25 Q. Sure. Yeah.

1 A. I don't know exactly why they wanted us not generating
2 an MTP case number for it sometimes, but they had a separate -- if
3 I remember correctly, we have a separate radio report.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. If I'm correct.

6 Q. Okay. All right.

7 A. I remember seeing a form and I remember them filling
8 something out.

9 Q. But there's a distinct --

10 A. There's a distinct form.

11 Q. -- some kind of form?

12 A. There's a distinct form. Instead of generating case
13 numbers for it where it carries a little more weight, I think
14 there was a separate radio repair form.

15 Q. Okay. All right. Last question.

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 Q. Your interaction with other law enforcement and other
18 emergency response agencies, D.C. Fire and others --

19 A. Yes, ma'am.

20 Q. -- aside from meeting them during emergency events,
21 actual events, what other opportunities do you guys have, MTPD
22 personnel have --

23 A. Like training with them, are you talking about?

24 Q. Training with them, any --

25 A. None.

1 Q. None?

2 A. None.

3 Q. Okay. All right.

4 A. If I understand your question correctly, aside from
5 normal calls that we run into and we run into them on the scene of
6 an incident, never.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Never.

9 Q. All right. I lied, I have one more question.

10 A. That's fine.

11 Q. You mentioned that while you were there, before you left
12 for topside, you didn't see any fire department personnel?

13 A. Nope.

14 Q. Okay. At what point, if at all, did you see fire
15 department --

16 A. When I was upstairs.

17 Q. Okay, going into the station?

18 A. No, I just saw their parked vehicles.

19 Q. All right. Okay.

20 A. Because at the L'Enfant Plaza side, when I finally left,
21 when it was impossible to stay in there, it's black as night, it
22 was me upstairs now. I don't know where the fire department was.

23 Q. All right.

24 A. We took the station manager over to 7th and Maryland. I
25 saw a couple vehicles. I still cannot speak on where the fire

1 department was.

2 Q. All right. Okay. Thank you.

3 A. Now, ma'am, again, this is on -- when I entered on the
4 7th and Maryland side, if they were on the other side of the
5 platform, on the other side of the train that was now obscuring
6 me, and on top of the smoke being so thick, they certainly could
7 have been over there. I never saw them.

8 BY MR. BUCHER:

9 Q. Okay, David Bucher. To build on the -- just a couple
10 follow-up questions on the fire department.

11 A. Yep.

12 Q. And I understand that you never came into contact with
13 them. How long do you estimate, ballpark, you were in the station
14 before you actually had to evacuate?

15 A. Fifteen minutes.

16 Q. Fifteen minutes? Okay. And did you ever -- during your
17 time in the station, were you ever notified that the power was
18 taken down for the track by anyone?

19 A. Not that I can remember, no. I was never told and I
20 don't remember inquiring at the time, because the power being
21 taken down right in front of us didn't see -- do you know what I'm
22 trying -- it didn't seem to make a difference right in front of us
23 at the time because we have an empty track to start with.

24 Q. Okay. Thank you.

25 A. Yep.

1 Q. Can I change subjects a little bit to the smoke?

2 A. Yep.

3 Q. Because that was a big thing and it was obscuring
4 everything, obviously. You mentioned that it was extremely dark
5 and you were using flashlights. I just want to clarify that it
6 was obscuring the station lights and everything.

7 A. Obscuring everything. When I told you that -- I'm
8 always thinking like a police officer, too. When I got everybody
9 out, I, you know, quickly pulled out my phone. I took a second-
10 or-two video just as evidence, even for myself, to document how
11 thick the smoke was. And this is me on the middle of the
12 platform, and I could show you guys later. If you would like to
13 see it now -- would you like to see it now?

14 Yeah, I can show you later. But I have never
15 experienced anything like that, the burning from the smoke down
16 your passageway, obscuring everything. The only lights I could
17 see was looking back toward 9th and D by the kiosk and the
18 mezzanine by the fare machines going out and the train lights that
19 were directly in front of me.

20 Q. Okay. That's all I have right now.

21 BY MR. DOWNS:

22 Q. Downs, NTSB. Officer, is it normal protocol for the
23 fare gates to be automatically opened by WMATA station personnel
24 in an emergency?

25 A. I don't know their protocol. I can assume because

1 that's what they're for.

2 Q. To expedite --

3 A. To open, right.

4 Q. -- to expedite the evacuation.

5 A. Because each of our exits have only one or two emergency
6 swing gates. If you don't open those gates manually to emergency,
7 then it's processing your cards, you know, or everybody tries to
8 file out through one gate.

9 Q. And you can't get out --

10 A. Not quick, no.

11 Q. Yeah. Okay. Just to help us clarify, the train
12 operator of the 510 train that you brought from that train and
13 helped her to the topside, when you brought her over to the 7th
14 and Maryland location, was that the last time you saw her?

15 A. That was it.

16 Q. Okay. Because we had testimony from her that she was
17 brought back down to try to move that train later on.

18 A. Oh, that was not by me. But if she was, yes.

19 Q. Not by you. Okay.

20 A. Nope. Once I got over to 7th and Maryland, I was
21 topside the whole time, 7th and Maryland, until -- oh, I went and
22 I had to use the restroom at 7th and Maryland. But a gentleman
23 from AFC, ATC, whatever it is --

24 Q. ATF?

25 A. No, the guys who do the fare collection on our machines,

1 he advised me that he was the supervisor. He advised me that they
2 had a room in the tunnel where two or three of his guys may have
3 been working, and I brought him downstairs at 7th and Maryland to
4 where some of my personnel was so he could pass that message along
5 and they could check on those guys.

6 Q. One final question I have is we like to give every
7 witness an opportunity to express any what we call retrospective
8 thoughts.

9 A. Yep.

10 Q. Knowing what you know now, in an effort of kind of
11 lessons learned, is there anything that you would have done
12 differently or any suggestions you might want to offer regarding
13 the process?

14 (Coughing)

15 A. Sorry, every since Monday I've had this bad cough.
16 Thank you very much.

17 Looking back on it, not trying to, you know, second
18 guess or what's the term, Monday morning quarterback the officers
19 who were on that train -- I can't speak for them at all and the
20 situation they had -- if they possibly could have coordinated
21 something with us about trying to evacuate that train.

22 Q. Earlier on?

23 A. Earlier on, exactly. If they said, hey, we are here;
24 maybe one of us stepped out of the train to scout; we're only 100
25 feet; we're only 300 yards from the platform; we're going to try

1 and bring them out, if maybe you could help us with that or
2 something, maybe that, but again, I can't speak for them. And I
3 don't want to even talk badly about that, because I don't know
4 what they were experiencing. If their level of smoke outside that
5 train car was as dark as it was for us in the big, huge station, I
6 don't know what other options they really had.

7 A thing that got me that I want -- did you say what we
8 would do different or just speak open?

9 Q. Speak open and what you would do differently.

10 A. The sense of urgency seemed to really be lacking from
11 people outside of us, other departments outside of the Transit
12 Police. It seemed like the urgency was not there at all for the
13 passengers' safety, rescuing them, for our officers. One, I would
14 not have brought in that train at all. That just complicates
15 matters. Because, hey, you know, people have asked us why didn't
16 they reverse the train out, why didn't they do stuff like that?
17 Well, we can't have 100 victims for smoke inhalation or whatever
18 now doubled or tripled or quadrupled because we leave this train
19 sitting here as we figure out what we're going to do with it.
20 One, I would not have pulled that train in.

21 Two, I would have had more urgency from the fire
22 department to get down there and get to those people. They're the
23 ones who have breathing apparatus to get through smoke. We don't
24 have a firefighter come in when you have an active shooter
25 situation to go do a gun battle with somebody. That lack [sic] of

1 urgency was not there at all. Yes, could we have possibly charged
2 into the tunnel to get to those people? Yes, we could have.
3 Would we have made it? Who knows? And then three, four, five,
4 six of us could have been victims, could have been casualties.

5 Q. And you're not set up with the SCBA anyways.

6 A. No. Exactly. Exactly. You know, we don't have the
7 tools to do that.

8 Q. Anything else?

9 A. The radio situation. If that would have -- I know Metro
10 has all this incident command structure and stuff that they want
11 to try and do and switch channels and try and have things being
12 done in an orderly way. I'm trying to think of the best way to
13 describe it. When the situation like this was so fluid, let the
14 things that can be done later be done later. Give us the radio.
15 Supervisors, management, who aren't even at the scene, who aren't
16 dealing with what we're dealing with, be quiet for a moment. With
17 all due respect, be quiet. Let us handle it. You're tying up the
18 radio from what we're trying to do. I don't know if that answers
19 your question, but that --

20 Q. No, that's good.

21 A. -- but that's a big sticking point. You know, yes,
22 we'll get a command post set up. We'll get a phone number put
23 out. We'll have -- you know, we'll let you know the little
24 details. Let us rescue people and stuff first.

25 Q. Anything else?

1 A. No, sir, not that I can think of right now.

2 MR. DOWNS: Okay, next question. Thank you.

3 MR. ADAMS: No questions.

4 BY MR. BALLARD:

5 Q. Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro. The train on the
6 platform at L'Enfant Plaza, the operator was told to evacuate
7 customers from the train. I think you said earlier that the
8 operator was told to open the doors on the platform side?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. In the interview with the operator, the operator said
11 that she thought that some of the doors were opened by customers.
12 Does it appear that that may have happened, as far as you know,
13 that the customers may have --

14 A. It certainly may have, because when that train stopped,
15 the doors weren't opening quick enough. You know, gentlemen, you
16 know when trains normally pull in -- I know you guys said earlier
17 there was an issue where she had to be escorted up by an officer
18 because she couldn't see where to stop. You know how normally
19 trains pull in, doors open within seconds? The doors weren't
20 opening up fast enough. In fact, I know the cars we were at, we
21 tried to use our keys to manually open them.

22 Q. Right.

23 MR. DOWNS: On that 510 train?

24 OFFICER BUCHAN: Yes, sir, on the 510 train. Again, it
25 should be noted that myself, along with the other officers, the

1 smoke was so thick coming out of the tunnel that we could not --
2 our efforts to try and get to it and get into it weren't possible
3 safely.

4 BY MR. BALLARD:

5 Q. Okay. You just said that you attempted to open the
6 doors?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Using the key?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. When you tried to open the doors, were you not able to
11 open any of the doors or --

12 A. I was not. I wasn't able to at first and then, boom,
13 they opened.

14 Q. So the operator --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Somebody opened the doors.

17 A. And a thing that also -- the operator, I will say the
18 operator, after being a little hesitant to leave the train, the
19 operator was very cooperative with us and went. You know, the
20 operator never once put up a real fight, you know, saying like,
21 oh, I'm staying on this train and I'm going down with the ship, in
22 a sense. The operator was very -- okay, let me put the brakes on
23 and I'll leave with you guys.

24 Q. The question had came up as to whether or not the fare
25 gates were open during this incident at L'Enfant Plaza, at the

1 entrance where you were.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Did you notice any of the customers who attempted to
4 leave the station, was there a backup at the gates that you were
5 aware of?

6 A. Not that I was aware of.

7 Q. You said that the radio is a problem in some situations.
8 I'm not sure if you said with this situation. Did you have any
9 difficulties in communicating on the radio to your dispatcher?

10 A. Extremely.

11 Q. You did?

12 A. Extreme. Extreme.

13 Q. Could you explain that?

14 A. Yes, sir. Whenever you try and call out and you're in a
15 dead spot, the radio gives you an audible beep. It gives you a
16 tone that lets you know you're not radioing out. That happened
17 numerous times, at various points all throughout that station.

18 Q. So when you were faced with that, that you got those
19 beeps that you weren't transmitting out, did you, like, change
20 your location, or what did you do to try to make communication
21 with the dispatcher?

22 A. A lot of us were running around, so yes, it was -- you
23 know, I'm here one second and I'm here the next. I'm trying to --
24 you know, I probably shouldn't have maybe yelled as much on the
25 radio, but the excitement from the situation kind of had me a

1 little worked up.

2 Q. So when you switch over from MTPD-1 to MTPD-2 --

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. -- were you just in contact with the dispatcher, or were
5 there other officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, on that
6 radio frequency also?

7 A. Everybody who heard the transmission at L'Enfant
8 switched, I can only assume.

9 Q. So you would never be in communications with someone
10 other than maybe a sergeant at the scene? There were not any
11 executives on -- well, officials on the radio channel MTPD-2 that
12 gave directives to you all?

13 A. Oh, there were numerous directives being said. But,
14 sir, when you're in a situation like that, a lot of that stuff
15 just kind of turns into white noise in a sense. For lack of a
16 better term, it just -- when you're faced with a situation that's
17 rapidly deteriorating, the things being said on the radio by
18 people not on scene, you kind of blank out first. You kind of
19 zone it out for a second because it's not helping you try and
20 rescue this guy who needs to get off, or it doesn't help you stay
21 safe, stay alive.

22 Q. Are you aware that MTPD emergency management, that
23 there's a liaison in the operations control center, radio
24 operations control center?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Were you ever in radio communications with that person
2 during the incident?

3 A. If they responded to me, I don't know. The only
4 (indiscernible) I remember talking was to my sergeant and a
5 dispatcher.

6 Q. Okay. I have no other questions.

7 A. But, sir, if I can add to that? May I add to that?

8 Q. Yes, please.

9 A. It always strikes me with us and the way radio
10 transmissions are handled here that officers on the scene of stuff
11 trying to call out are always hampered by the protocol or, maybe,
12 the policy of how things should be done the Metro way by people
13 who aren't on scene. They're getting on the radio, blocking it
14 up, asking questions, when us on scene haven't even figured out
15 what's happening yet. And you have somebody miles away or not
16 even at that station who's not seeing it or may be looking on a
17 closed circuit TV at what's happening, and they're trying to give
18 orders to us. You're not here. You know what I'm saying?

19 And that's always been a big sticking point among
20 officers, is that when we have a concise, you know, clear
21 transmission that we'll put out, we'll put that out for you, but
22 let us -- we know that there's things that need to be said. I
23 understand. I know there's things that management for Metro, sir,
24 sergeants from us, and officials, I know that there's things that
25 they know that I don't about policies and things that need to be

1 done, but when there's exigent circumstances like this happening,
2 let us handle it.

3 Q. Thank you very much.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 MR. LITTLETON: Tom Littleton, Federal Transit
6 Administration. No questions.

7 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

8 Q. Officer Buchan, Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State
9 Oversight Committee. When you got to the station and you went
10 down to the mezzanine level --

11 A. Yes, ma'am.

12 Q. -- did you hear any audible alarms or any visual alarms
13 to say that the fire alarm or the smoke alarm had been activated?

14 A. Not that I remember. Not that I remember, ma'am.

15 Q. Do you remember whether the escalators had stopped, any
16 of the escalators that you encountered?

17 A. When I first got on scene and I went down 7th and
18 Maryland, the escalator was -- the down escalator was still
19 working. When I left the station on the L'Enfant Plaza side, the
20 exit with shops, those escalators were going up. They were still
21 working.

22 Q. Okay. All right. And I'm sorry to go back to the fare
23 gates, but I'm just want to establish something.

24 A. Oh, I know. Yeah, it's important.

25 Q. Okay. There is an SOP, SOP-8, which relates to fire

1 alarms and smoke alarms in the station.

2 A. Yes, ma'am.

3 Q. And those, if the smoke alarm or fire alarm is not
4 acknowledged within 15 seconds for the investigation phase by the
5 station manager, those things activate. And activation means be
6 sure audible alarms go off, escalators stop, fare gates open. So
7 that's what I'm trying to understand. When you got to the
8 topside, came down the escalators, do you recall going through the
9 open fare gates? How do you usually get through the fare gates?

10 A. Go through the emergency swing gate.

11 Q. I see. Okay. So you would have done the same this
12 time?

13 A. Because you can see I'm a bigger man.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. And with a duty belt, a gun belt on --

16 Q. Sure. You'd get stuck.

17 A. -- I'm extremely wide. So I would get stuck.

18 Q. All right.

19 A. Yep, I'm big.

20 Q. All right. Okay. Thank you.

21 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. I don't have any more
22 questions.

23 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams. No questions.

24 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard. No questions.

25 MR. LITTLETON: Tom Littleton. No questions.

1 MS. SAMARASINGHE: No questions.

2 MR. BUCHER: Thank you, Matt. And this concludes the
3 interview.

4 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: WMATA INCIDENT AT L'ENFANT PLAZA
STATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.
JANUARY 12, 2015
Interview of Matthew Buchan

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: January 17, 2015

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Lisa Fuerstenberg
Transcriber