



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

<b>GROUP</b>	
<b>EXHIBIT</b>	

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: JAMES CURLEY

Washington, D.C.

Thursday,  
January 15, 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)

ROBERT JOE GORDON, Investigator-in-Charge  
National Transportation Safety Board

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

JOEY RHINE, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

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

SHARMILA SAMARASINGHE, Vice Chair  
Tri-State Oversight Committee

JOSEPH TEBO, Program Manager  
State Safety Oversight  
Tri-State Oversight Committee

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

HERCULES BALLARD, Managing Director Rail Transportation  
WMATA

BRIAN VAUGHN, Special Agent  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

MARLENE FLEMINGS-McCANN, Assistant Business Agent  
for Rail Operations  
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

JAMES MADARAS, Safety Officer  
ATU Local 689

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:55 a.m.)

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2  
3 MR. BUCHER: Okay. This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident  
4 Investigator for NTSB. This is the interview of Mr. James Curley,  
5 Train Operator for Train 302. And this will be accident number  
6 DCA-15-FR-004, WMATA L'Enfant Plaza accident, January 12, 2015.  
7 To my right I have --

8 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State  
9 Oversight Committee Virginia, full-time member.

10 MR. LITTLETON: Thomas Littleton, the Associate  
11 Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight from the Federal  
12 Transit Administration.

13 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Marlene Flemings-McCann, Assistant  
14 Business Agent for Rail Operations, Local 689.

15 MR. VAUGHN: Brian Vaughn, Special Agent with the Bureau  
16 of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

17 MR. MADARAS: Jim Madaras, Safety Officer, Local 689.

18 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard, Managing Director, Rail  
19 Transportation, Washington Metro.

20 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams, WMATA Manager of Rail Safety.

21 MR. DOWNS: Rick Downs, NTSB, Survival Factors Group  
22 Chair.

23 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB Investigator-In-Charge.

24 MR. BAKER: Dion Baker, Train Operator and Shop Steward  
25 for Train Operations for Local 689.

1 MR. BUCHER: And we have a couple observers in the back.

2 MR. TEBO: Joseph Tebo, Maryland Department of  
3 Transportation, Tri-State Oversight Committee, observer.

4 MR. RHINE: Joey Rhine, NTSB.

5 MR. WALLEY: Yeah, Rick Walley, Local 689, Shop Steward.

6 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Thanks everyone. James, pretty much  
7 like I said if you could just tell us the story of the 12th and  
8 when you went on duty, go through your day a little bit.

9 MR. CURLEY: Okay. I started my day, I was working, the  
10 first part of my day, I was working the rush plus, which is the  
11 trains that go from Springfield to Greenbelt. Pretty much there  
12 was nothing going on as far as anything different that day, just a  
13 normal workday.

14 Once I completed that block, I went back to Huntington  
15 on my break, sat and ate, relaxed and then got back on the train  
16 to cushion down to Fort Totten to pick up, I believe it was, it  
17 was either 301 or 302, whichever one that was, I believe it was  
18 302, that leaves from down Fort Totten to make their way back to  
19 Huntington.

20 Pretty much I went down there and picked it up and like  
21 I said everything was pretty much normal. Like I say, my day was  
22 fine, I didn't have no problems, there was no complaints. Pretty  
23 much on my way back to Huntington on Block 302, I had initially  
24 had called Central and notified them at a chain marker at 114 plus  
25 00 that there was like a little small little type of a brush fire

1 there. And by the time I had seen it and I was already over top  
2 of it I had asked them what they wanted me to do and they told me  
3 to continue on. And I heard --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me, where is this chain  
5 marker outside of that tunnel or elsewhere?

6 MR. CURLEY: This is before L'Enfant Plaza.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Before.

8 MR. CURLEY: Yes, sir. And I can't remember what  
9 station it was I was going to pull into but I remember the chain  
10 marker. And I remember hearing them contacting the train behind  
11 me just to give them a track special (indiscernible), but that  
12 person who was on that train, I don't know who it was, saying that  
13 they didn't see anything. So, I guess, it was a like a little  
14 small, it wasn't even nothing big so I guess I may have put it out  
15 or whatever when I went over it or whatever making my way to  
16 L'Enfant Plaza.

17 I heard also on the radio that someone called in saying  
18 that there was a little bit of smoke at L'Enfant Plaza. I really  
19 didn't think nothing of it. Usually, you hear stuff like that all  
20 the time ranging from bad brakes or whatever the case may be,  
21 brake odor, things like that. So when I actually went into Fort  
22 Totten it was a little bit of smoke, it wasn't all like that or  
23 nothing out of the ordinary. We got to the station, loaded people  
24 up.

25 As soon as I closed up making my way to the L line



1 bridge and as soon as I went around and bent the corner, the next  
2 thing you know the smoke was just -- it was real thick, real  
3 heavy. It wasn't visible from -- but the smoke wasn't visible  
4 from when I was on the platform before I even went into the  
5 tunnel. Like I say, when I left and went around the corner, got  
6 down past (indiscernible) and it was right there.

7           And like I said, as soon as I saw it I immediately  
8 stopped the train, notified Central, 302, heavy smoke, zero  
9 visibility, need to reverse ends and try to make my way back to  
10 the platform. They said to me, they gave me permission to key  
11 out, reverse ends. And as I was doing that, you know, I was  
12 keeping the customers calm and everything because at that time  
13 there was still some smoke, not as heavy as it was but there was  
14 still some smoke still coming into the train.

15           I was trying to advise the customers to be calm,  
16 trying to get them back to the platform as soon as I possibly  
17 could. When I got to the other end, I met the interlocking at the  
18 signal, Central, 302, reverse ends, need an absolute block back to  
19 the platform. Central kept telling me to stand by, stand by,  
20 stand by. We're trying to clear the tracks, trying to clear the  
21 platform, trying to get you back to the platform.

22           While they was still initially telling me that I was, at  
23 the same advising the customers what I was doing, trying to get  
24 them back to the platform, trying to keep them calm, advising them  
25 to please do not open the doors because if they did more smoke

1 would come into the train. And at the same time kept doing that  
2 with the customers, I kept repeating myself over and over and over  
3 with Central, Central, I need an update, I need an update, I need  
4 to get back to the platform. What's going on? They are saying,  
5 stand by, stand by, stand by, we're trying to get a platform  
6 clear, trying to get a platform clear.

7           And I was going back and forth with them saying,  
8 Central, be advised I got people on the train they're saying they  
9 can't breathe, they're coughing, they're vomiting, I need to get  
10 back to the platform, I need to get back to the platform. And  
11 they just kept telling me, stand by, stand by, stand by. I kept,  
12 you know, informing the people, customers please be advised I'm  
13 trying to get everybody back to the platform as soon as I possibly  
14 can. I'm in communication with Central Control as we speak.  
15 Please do not open the doors. If you open the doors more smoke  
16 will come in, but please stay calm, please stay calm.

17           I'm trying to get everybody back to the platform and at  
18 the same time people coming on the intercom yelling, of course  
19 understandably so, yelling, screaming, kicking and banging on the  
20 glass doors talking about, what's going on? Let's go, et cetera,  
21 et cetera. So, again, I'm still in constant communication with  
22 Central. Central, 302, Central, 302, I need to get back to the  
23 platform, need to get back to the platform.

24           And then at that point they had said something to me  
25 about Transit was not letting them remove the train that was on

1 the platform at L'Enfant Plaza. So then I came on the air and I  
2 said, well Central, I have two Transit cops on board, they need to  
3 get in contact with the Transit cops on the platform so they can  
4 move the train.

5           So then I got on the intercom and I spoke to the Transit  
6 cops on the train saying, you all got -- Central is telling me  
7 that the Transit officers on board the train is not trying to  
8 remove the train from off the platform. Can you all get in  
9 contact with them? She said, we're trying to get in contact with  
10 them now. And after that, they didn't say anything to me other  
11 than that. They were two small females, they were Transit cops  
12 but they were still two small females dealing with a packed train,  
13 so they was getting bombarded with the people back there also.

14           So they were dealing with that. So the next thing you  
15 know, by the time they was doing all that the train dumps. So now  
16 I'm trying -- I'm informing them, Central, 302, train BIE'd. Can  
17 I recharge? They had me to go back and cut trucks. I said,  
18 Central, roger. I went through the smoke and everything walking  
19 through people going back to 6134, 6135 trying to cut the trucks,  
20 trying to not step over people. People laying on the floor,  
21 walking trying to step over people, trying to keep them calm,  
22 letting them know what's going on, I'm trying to get back to the  
23 platform. I just lost all my air; I'm trying to get back to the  
24 platform. Let me get back here and do this so I can get everybody  
25 back to the platform.

1           And they still -- they're scared, they're yelling,  
2 they're screaming and I'm trying to keep them calm. I cut the  
3 trucks. By the time I go back to the third car to recharge I'm  
4 seeing people walking with their cell phones with the light on  
5 their cell phone walking toward the aerial-line bridge. I get on  
6 the intercom saying, no, no, no, no, please do not go that  
7 direction that you're going to. You're going into where the  
8 danger is. You're going towards the aerial-line bridge. I'm  
9 trying to get you back to the platform, which is the opposite  
10 direction.

11           So that's when I came over the radio, I said, Central,  
12 be advised customers have already, have self-evacuated the train.  
13 Transit is stating to me, the officers on board, saying that they  
14 need to evacuate this train now. And they came back and said,  
15 roger, Transit is being advised that the train needs to be  
16 evacuated.

17           So at this point, I'm trying to get the people from  
18 stopping from where they were on the little edge outside of the  
19 train, trying to tell them to go back the other way. I'm on the  
20 intercom saying, I'm trying to get everybody off the train. I  
21 need everybody to assist with Transit to go through the bulkhead  
22 doors. I'm going to go to the front and get everybody off the  
23 train.

24           And by the time I got to the front, the doors, like I  
25 said, it was already open and firefighters and EMS people, well

1 firefighters I'm not going to EMS, firefighters was already out  
2 there helping people off the train. So I was also helping people  
3 getting off the train and, you know, they couldn't hardly see  
4 anything with, of course, the smoke and plus with the tunnel and  
5 everything assisted but, you know, with the flashlight, help them  
6 get back to the platform. Some people couldn't walk. Some people  
7 couldn't make it.

8 I carried a couple of people from the train up to the  
9 platform. I kept telling them that there was a wheelchair person  
10 on my train and let them know that there was a wheelchair person  
11 down there, I think he had a mechanized wheelchair at that. So  
12 they -- I definitely, I kept making sure that they wouldn't forget  
13 him.

14 And like I say, I kept going back and forth, back and  
15 forth trying to help people get back to the platform and they kept  
16 telling me to go up top, go up top and I just kept going back and  
17 forth trying to help, make sure everybody got off the train. And  
18 by the time everybody was off that's when the Transit officer had  
19 grabbed me and was like, I didn't feel it at first, he grabbed me,  
20 he was like, no you need to go back, everybody is off you need to  
21 go back up.

22 Like I say, I didn't just leave. I was trying to help  
23 with the evacuation. So when I got upstairs and I was really  
24 starting to feel it then and that's when they rushed myself and  
25 the other two Transit cops in a little EMS vehicle to GW. And

1 that's where I got treated there for everything from upper to  
2 lower respiratory, x-ray of the chest and everything like that.  
3 And then they said I was fine or whatever and then pretty much  
4 after that went down to WMATA Medical to do the post-incident,  
5 whatever, and then did that.

6 And then by the time I was clear with that went back to  
7 my division, filled out the incident report about everything that  
8 had happened. And then once I did that, went home and I was  
9 exhausted, tired and showered and went to sleep and pretty much  
10 reported to my division the next day at 10:00.

11 MR. BUCHER: Thank you.

12 MR. CURLEY: You're welcome.

13 MR. BUCHER: It was very detailed. We're going to go  
14 around the room and I'm sure we have some questions. We're going  
15 to try to draw out a little more information.

16 INTERVIEW OF JAMES CURLEY

17 BY MR. BUCHER:

18 Q. My first question is, this is Dave Bucher, when you took  
19 over the train, 302, there were no mechanical issues with it, no  
20 train handling problems, air brakes worked fine?

21 A. Yes, sir. There was no problems that I had with the  
22 train.

23 Q. Okay. And I guess next would be other than the brush  
24 fire, which you mentioned already, did you mention or see any  
25 other defects in the track as you approached L'Enfant Plaza?

1 A. No, sir.

2 MR. BUCHER: Okay. All right. I'm going to pass it off  
3 to my right and we're just going to give you some questions.

4 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Mr. Curley, I'm Sharmila  
5 Samarasinghe, Tri-State Oversight Committee. Just a couple of  
6 questions.

7 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

8 Q. The first one being, you said that as you were reversing  
9 ends or walking through the train to reverse ends, did you see  
10 smoke inside any of the passenger compartments on any of the cars?

11 A. There was smoke coming in and there was smoke coming  
12 into the train pretty much everywhere as I was reversing there  
13 trying to get back to the platform.

14 Q. Were there any doors open at that time by any of the  
15 passengers?

16 A. No, not at that point in time.

17 Q. So all the car doors were closed and there was smoke  
18 coming into it?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Okay. Thank you.

21 MR. LITTLETON: No questions.

22 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Marlene Flemings-McCann, 689.

23 BY MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN:

24 Q. First of all, I want to say thank you for keeping your  
25 composure, your training. You showed that you are a really

1 outstanding employee.

2 A. Thank you.

3 Q. I want to say also that we appreciate you. No more  
4 questions.

5 A. Thank you.

6 MR. VAUGHN: Brian Vaughn with ATF.

7 BY MR. VAUGHN:

8 Q. I agree with what you just said. The question I would  
9 have is regarding the woman who passed; did you see her at any  
10 time on your trips through the train?

11 A. To be truthfully honest, it was so dark and pretty much  
12 the smoke was everywhere. I saw many people laying on the train  
13 floor but I couldn't recognize one in particular. Like I said,  
14 at that point I knew they was on the floor because they were  
15 trying to not inhale all of the smoke or whatever. I was just  
16 pretty much trying to get everybody back to the platform.

17 Q. Okay. And no one said to you at any time that, we have  
18 a woman who is laying on the ground, she's not breathing. Did  
19 they notify that at all?

20 A. There was plenty of people who were saying that they are  
21 on the floor, that they couldn't breathe and they felt like they  
22 were about to pass out. As I was going through every car, pretty  
23 much one or two people kept telling me the same thing. I kept  
24 telling everybody, I understand, I'm in this here with you. I'm  
25 trying to get everybody back to the platform, just please stay



1 calm; I'm trying to get everybody to the platform.

2 Q. Okay, thank you.

3 MR. MADARAS: Jim Madaras, Local 689.

4 BY MR. MADARAS:

5 Q. Were you instructed by Central Control to turn off the  
6 ventilation system in the train?

7 A. The EV circuit breaker, yes.

8 Q. You were?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And was the smoke still coming in the train after that  
11 happened?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Could you see where it was coming in from? Was it just  
14 coming in from the bulkhead doors or from the regular doors or --

15 A. To be --

16 Q. -- it was just so thick you couldn't tell?

17 A. Yes, sir. Once I did that, like I said, it was so thick  
18 I just told them that the visibility was zero. I couldn't see  
19 anything. So it was just like coming in from all over.

20 Q. I want to reiterate what Marlene said. I really applaud  
21 you for your composure. I think that in those types of situations  
22 it's very difficult to act with rational mind because people get  
23 alarmed and they're not sure about what the environment may bring.  
24 So I want to commend you for that.

25 A. Thank you.

1           Q.    How long were the discussions that you were having with  
2 Central Control from the time you alerted them of the heavy smoke  
3 until the time that you actually started to tell people it's time  
4 to evacuate the train? Can you give an approximation?

5           A.    From my understanding, like I said, I wasn't really  
6 keeping track of the watch because of everything that was going  
7 on. But it wasn't nothing quick. From my understanding, I was  
8 down there from, some people kept telling me they kept hearing me  
9 talking to them for, anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour.

10                    So, like I said, I really wasn't paying attention to how  
11 long, I was just pretty much trying to, like I say, keep my  
12 composure and trying to keep everybody else calm and trying to  
13 keep them informed of what was going on, what I was trying to do  
14 for them and keeping in contact with Central stating as far as  
15 pretty much trying, in layman's terms, putting the pressure on  
16 them saying I need to get back to the platform. I'm trying to get  
17 back to the platform.

18                    And, of course, I couldn't move until they said  
19 something to me. So at that point, like I said, the passengers  
20 had already taken it upon themselves to evac. I just wanted to  
21 make sure that they weren't going towards the danger, trying to  
22 get them back to the platform and helping people getting off the  
23 train. Like I said, at that point the train already had dumped so  
24 I was trying to get people off the train with the firefighters.  
25 Like I said, I was just trying to help out.

1           Q.    Did you ever get to a point where you, personally, where  
2 you were going to say that this was a non-fire, I was ready to get  
3 out of this train.  It was just -- the smoke was too heavy.  I  
4 mean, at what point did you say to yourself, you know, look this  
5 is such an emergency and heightened situation I'm going to take  
6 some personal action.  Did you ever get to that point where you  
7 were saying that?

8           A.    I initially had, yes, I initially had thought about it  
9 as far as ranging from, like I was explaining to my shop stewards,  
10 pretty much taking it upon myself before the train even had dumped  
11 as far as running the signal even though I would have hate them  
12 days as far as being out in the street, just run the signal just  
13 to get a train back to the platform and get the people off.  I had  
14 thought about that but I didn't.

15                   The main focus was I was trying to keep them abreast  
16 upon what was going on and what myself and everybody else, I would  
17 assume, was trying to do as far as keeping them safe.  By the time  
18 they did do the evacuation, at that point, when they self-  
19 evacuated I knew from that point right there, from letting them  
20 know that they did do a self-evac, it's time to get everybody off  
21 the train.  So speaking with the Transit cops on board, they said  
22 let's get these people off the train, letting them know what they  
23 wanted to do and, like I say, I was trying to help everybody get  
24 off the train as safely and quickly as possible as they could.

25           Q.    Did you ever feel threatened by any of the passengers

1 when you were walking through the train?

2 A. No. They pretty much -- there was no one who was making  
3 any kind of threats or anything. The only person that was really  
4 doing anything was pretty much a gentleman, that was pretty much  
5 banging on the window trying to, he would be like, come on move  
6 the train, let's go, this, that and the third, but he wasn't  
7 nothing like threatening towards myself or anything like that, no.

8 Q. Did you notice any standing water in the area where the  
9 train ultimately stopped prior to you getting there?

10 A. Again, when I stopped I couldn't see anything. The  
11 smoke was just; it was incredibly thick even with the high beams  
12 on you couldn't see nothing in front of you.

13 Q. Okay, thank you.

14 A. You're welcome.

15 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro.

16 BY MR. BALLARD:

17 Q. Mr. Curley, based on your performance on Monday I'm very  
18 proud of you as a human being and as an employee. I was a train  
19 operator many years ago and you are a much better train operator  
20 than I ever was, so thank you for what you did.

21 A. Thank you, sir.

22 Q. One question. After you reversed ends on the train, how  
23 long approximately, I know you don't know exactly, how long  
24 approximately before the train BIE'd? When you first reversed  
25 ends and keyed the train up, did it BIE almost immediately --

1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. -- or some time had passed?

3 A. No, sir. That's why I kept asking to get back to the  
4 platform because I still had everything at that point. I just  
5 needed their permission and to speak I need to get back to the  
6 platform. So from that long period of time from me going back and  
7 forth with Central literally saying, hey, what's going on? I need  
8 an update, I need updates, let me know what's going on, I need to  
9 get back to the platform. I still had (indiscernible) at that  
10 point and it didn't just dump right away, no sir.

11 Q. Okay. That's all I have, thank you sir.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams, WMATA.

14 BY MR. ADAMS:

15 Q. Mr. Curley, at what point did they tell you to cut the  
16 ventilation? In what part of the process did they tell you to cut  
17 the ventilation?

18 A. When I got to -- when I reversed ends. When I first  
19 notified them of the smoke they pretty much, I asked for  
20 permission to go back and reverse ends to get back to the  
21 platform, they gave me the permission. I went back there and as I  
22 got back there they were telling me to stand by, stand by. After  
23 me kept saying it, they were saying, drop the EV and then just  
24 stand by we're trying to get back to the platform. So that didn't  
25 happen until after I reversed ends.

1 Q. And you had power at that time?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. Just a couple more questions. Where did you pick  
4 up the train from, initially, when you started your day?

5 A. The 302?

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. I think that's the one I picked it up at Fort Totten,  
8 yes sir.

9 Q. Okay. Are there times when you picked a train up in the  
10 yard?

11 A. The only time I took a train from the yard was early in  
12 the morning when I did the rush plus.

13 Q. Okay. Is some kind of inspection performed before you  
14 take the train out?

15 A. Yes, sir. You're supposed to do an interior/exterior  
16 inspection ground walk around of the train to make sure the train  
17 have everything that it needs and make sure nothing, no lights --  
18 yeah, there's definitely an inspection before the train is  
19 supposed to leave the yard.

20 Q. Is the intercom system checked?

21 A. Supposed to, everything, yes, sir.

22 Q. How do you check the intercom system?

23 A. You radio check the tower. How do you copy, loud and  
24 clear, it's things like that.

25 Q. So how do you determine that each car works?

1 A. As far as the intercom system?

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. Well, I don't know how they're supposed to verify each  
4 one of them, at least one is working.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But you are supposed to check to make sure that at least  
7 that --

8 Q. From the cab?

9 A. Right. From the lead and from the -- both ends.

10 Q. Were all your communications done from the console or a  
11 radio with ROCC?

12 A. Most of it was done when I was in reversed ends; it was  
13 all from the console. Then there was some, what I did with the  
14 handheld.

15 Q. You didn't do any from the ETS box, the landline?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. All right. That's all the questions I have for now.

18 MR. DOWNS: Richard Downs, NTSB. Thank you, Mr. Curley,  
19 for joining us.

20 BY MR. DOWNS:

21 Q. To go back on your testimony here, you indicated that  
22 part of the L'Enfant Plaza station heading southbound there  
23 routinely, you didn't see any smoke as you entered the tunnel at  
24 that point, correct?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. You got at some point into the tunnel, the smoke became  
2 visibly evident?

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. Okay. And at that point, you stopped the train?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Is that per your training, your instructions, your  
7 operating instructions?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Okay. And the density of the smoke, how far ahead could  
10 you have seen it at that time? Do you recall?

11 A. No, sir. It was incredibly thick. Like I said, I  
12 couldn't see nothing at all in front of me. I wasn't trying to  
13 take a chance as far as going through it or trying to bypass and  
14 not knowing what was in front of me.

15 Q. So proceed on the side of safety and stop the train and  
16 take other actions?

17 A. Stop the train. Inform Central of what was going on and  
18 advise them that I am going to need reversed ends to get up to the  
19 platform.

20 Q. At that point, did you turn the ventilation system off  
21 or what happened?

22 A. I turned it off when I reversed ends back, when I was  
23 trying to get back to the platform.

24 Q. Approximately how much time between when you stopped the  
25 train and when you reversed ends?



1 A. Not even a minute. I was running through the --

2 Q. A minute. So you stopped the train, contacted OCC --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- requesting to reverse ends. Did they indicate  
5 permission to reverse ends?

6 A. I asked permission to reverse ends to get back to the  
7 platform and they gave it to me.

8 Q. They gave it to you. So you immediately went from the  
9 lead-end cab to the opposite end of the train working your way  
10 through the train?

11 A. Yes, sir. And informing the people what was going on,  
12 trying to keep them calm and then once I got back there notified  
13 them that I was on the reverse ends trying to get back to the  
14 platform.

15 Q. I see. And as you're going through the train  
16 approaching the opposite end of the train, the ventilation system  
17 was still on?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. Okay. And you were noticing the smoke was being drawn  
20 into the cars at that time?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Okay. How dense was the smoke at that time?

23 A. When I first initially got there it was visible but it  
24 was not as thick as it was from sitting in there.

25 Q. Okay. You went immediately to the opposite end of the

1 train. You informed the passengers on the intercom system and  
2 verbally as well as you're passing through the train?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. When you got to the opposite end of the train you  
5 contacted OCC again?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. And requested authority to reverse, go back into the  
8 station and it still was not forthcoming; is that correct?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. Okay. Personally, how much time ensued between then and  
11 you first saw firefighters?

12 A. I would say 30 or 40 minutes.

13 Q. Thirty or 40 minutes, okay.

14 A. It was a long time that I didn't see anybody.

15 Q. And during that time, you made multiple contacts to OCC  
16 expressing a real danger and so on and so forth?

17 A. Expressing that I needed to get back to the platform,  
18 that the customers were complaining about they couldn't breathe.  
19 And like I said, I already had turned the EV off at that point,  
20 but they was saying how they couldn't breathe, they needed to get  
21 back to the platform, expressing to them as far as not opening the  
22 doors because more smoke would come into the train. And pretty  
23 much keeping them informed of what was going on, that I was in  
24 contact with them and trying to get them back to the platform as  
25 safely as I possibly could.

1           And at the same time informing Central that I needed to try  
2 to get an update as far as what was going on, trying to get back  
3 the platform. And that's when they was telling me at first  
4 initially, stand by, stand by, stand by, trying to clear the  
5 platform, trying to clear the platform. And then at one point  
6 they were saying that Transit was not trying to let the train on  
7 the platform move for whatever reason.

8           Q.    I see. Could you see from that rear-end cab, the  
9 operator's cab, the closest to the station, could you see the end  
10 of the platform at that point?

11          A.    No, sir.

12          Q.    Okay. We did a measurement in the tunnel and it was  
13 about 386 feet between that end of the train and the end of the  
14 platform there. Could you see the lights or whatever --

15          A.    From the train that was on the platform?

16          Q.    No, no. From your location in that rear cab when you  
17 reversed direction --

18          A.    Yes, sir.

19          Q.    -- okay. Back to the station, it was about 386 feet.  
20 Could you see the lights of the station and such at all or no?

21          A.    Not really. Like I said, there was smoke.

22          Q.    Just too much smoke?

23          A.    Yeah.

24          Q.    I see. Okay, thank you. Roughly, how crowded was your  
25 train? Can you put an estimate on was it half full --

1 A. Very, very.

2 Q. Very crowded?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay. Would it have been feasible, everybody is Monday  
5 morning quarterback in here, but would it have been feasible to  
6 try to relocate the people to as many of the rear cars as possible  
7 in order to make them close as possible to the platform or was the  
8 train just too crowded?

9 A. It was crowded in all the cars. It wasn't like some  
10 cars were empty and some cars were full. All the cars were full.  
11 Like I said, at that point initially my process was getting the  
12 train back to the platform and getting everybody off safely.

13 Q. I see.

14 A. And, of course, with protocol you can't move or do  
15 anything without Central telling you of course, so like I said, my  
16 main focus was myself trying to stay calm, keep the passengers  
17 calm even though it was a rough situation going on with them.  
18 Keeping them abreast about what was going on, trying to keep them  
19 calm and then trying to pull the train back to the platform.

20 Q. Are the cars supplied with any kind of respirator  
21 equipment for the operator in the event of a situation like this?

22 A. You mean, like a --

23 Q. Like an air bottle or anything like that, like a  
24 firefighter would have?

25 A. No.

1 Q. They call it an escape respirator.

2 A. No.

3 Q. There's no equipment of that sort you're saying?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. Training, what kind of training was provided for  
6 you regarding passenger emergencies like this evacuation? Can you  
7 describe some of your training you might have undergone?

8 A. Well, as a train operator you have gone through many  
9 assessments as far as fire evacuation from a train, fire  
10 evacuation from a station, proper procedure as far as informing  
11 Central as far as what's going on and what needs to be done. We  
12 have had training as far as what will happen when it comes to  
13 fire, smoke, things of that nature.

14 Q. Okay. When was your most recent training; do you  
15 recall? Do you have annual training or something like that?

16 A. We go through a certification every 2 years.

17 Q. Every 2 years, okay. And do you recall when your most  
18 recent one was?

19 A. I just recently went through one in January of last  
20 year.

21 Q. Last January, okay. In retrospect, is there anything  
22 that you would recommend to the Metro system that they could do,  
23 maybe, to help out other than the obvious provide some sort of  
24 mechanism for you to get back, your train back to the platform  
25 that never came?

1           A.    No.  Like I said, I'm just an operator.  Like I said, I  
2  don't really have any kind of recommendation or authority.  They  
3  got people for that.

4           Q.    Well, it's always helpful to hear from the train  
5  operators in the field feedback.  You're the folks that have to  
6  deal with it and there's always subtleties involved in an  
7  emergency that sometimes aren't obvious when you're sitting in a  
8  different environment, kind of reviewing the situation.

9           A.    Um-hum.

10          Q.    How long have you been with Metro?

11          A.    Almost 15 years.

12          Q.    Fifteen.  And train operator all the time or --

13          A.    No, sir, I was a bus operator first.

14          Q.    How long have you been a train operator?

15          A.    Almost 4 years.

16          Q.    Four years?  Great.  Okay.  That concludes my questions.

17                MR. GORDON:  Joe Gordon, NTSB.

18                BY MR. GORDON:

19          Q.    Mr. Downstouched on the training and what would you  
20  say, as far as the training was given, did this go as a scenario  
21  that you guys would have gone through in your training, I mean,  
22  can you point to anything that, okay, this is what we were trained  
23  to do in this scenario given this event and this is what happened?  
24  Can you point to any gaps, anything that went differently from the  
25  training as to what actually happened on the day of the incident?

1           A.    As far as any gaps is concerned, I don't see as far as  
2 any gaps.   Every situation is different.

3           Q.    Right.

4           A.    As far as when it comes to the training is concerned,  
5 like I said, they teach us to remain calm so we can remain calm  
6 for the passengers as well as, you know, when it comes to certain  
7 things like ventilation EV, you know, turn that off.  There was  
8 certain things that had, as far as evacuation, as far as showing  
9 the proper way to get the people off the train so to avoid third  
10 rail.

11                   Of course, the power had been dropped at that point but  
12 still nonetheless, showing the proper way as far as how they  
13 evacuate getting them off the train, keeping them safe, keeping  
14 them calm, having your proper equipment as far as, because you  
15 know the tunnels are dark, make sure you got, you know, the best  
16 light, everything.  So like I say, every situation is different.  
17 Like I said, that scenario right there, the main thing was just to  
18 keep everybody as calm as I much possibly could and try to just,  
19 you know, just do my part and just keep everybody safe.

20           Q.    Okay.  When you spoke, you're the expert on this, when  
21 you spoke about the BIE, is that a brake fault or is that a loss  
22 of power?

23           A.    Air pressure.

24           Q.    Okay, air pressure.  Okay.  How many trips -- is this a  
25 normal trip for you on the yellow line either northbound or

1 southbound?

2 A. I work the board so I do a different route pretty much  
3 everyday.

4 Q. Okay. How often would you say you make that run on the  
5 yellow line given maybe the last couple of weeks?

6 A. Like I said, I really can't say.

7 Q. It just really varies?

8 A. It varies.

9 Q. But you, I mean, you've made that run several times  
10 recently would you say?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Your last trip through there, so the last trip  
13 through the tunnel southbound from L'Enfant toward Huntington,  
14 anything stick out to you in the tunnel at all as far as outside  
15 of the norm, outside of anything that -- more of the track  
16 structure, anything like that? Does anything stick out --

17 A. No, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Okay. I have no further questions?

19 MR. DOWNS: May I have a follow-up?

20 BY MR. DOWNS:

21 Q. Mr. Curley, you mentioned you made one run down to  
22 Huntington earlier that day, are you saying, or is that -- I  
23 misunderstood something?

24 A. I'm trying to remember the run that I had. It was  
25 basically where after my break from Huntington I was supposed to



1 pick up, I'm trying to remember, I was supposed to pick up a train  
2 from Fort Totten, I believe, it might have been the 301, take it  
3 back to Huntington and then, I believe that's what it was. I  
4 would take 301 from Fort Totten to Huntington and then from  
5 Huntington back to Fort Totten, then pick up 302 from Fort Totten  
6 back to Huntington.

7 Q. The reason I ask is that had you passed by that same  
8 location earlier in the day by chance or no?

9 A. I went through it, like I say, when I come through  
10 there --

11 Q. That morning or --

12 A. Well, that morning, yeah, when I was on the rush plus I  
13 went --

14 Q. Yeah, that's my question. Out of curiosity, did you  
15 happen to see anything along the track side ahead of where the  
16 train stopped later, where your train stopped later, that would  
17 have been unusual?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Nothing along the --

20 A. Early that morning, like I said, I was on that block  
21 early in the morning and everything was fine.

22 Q. Okay, great. When we do the, an inspection of the  
23 tunnel we did see a lot of water, about 1,100 feet further down,  
24 this is where the par cables we found were heated up, okay.  
25 There's a lot of water in the side of the tunnel and the tunnel is

1 quite deep at that point.

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. Is there a lot of water that collects in that particular  
4 tunnel, do you recall, when you make your routine rescue there or  
5 does it pretty much all drain off, it doesn't really collect?

6 A. Like I said, I don't usually see a lot of water like  
7 that. I'm not a -- like I said, that's -- I don't --

8 Q. Unless the water is coming over the rails it's not  
9 really much of a concern?

10 A. I wouldn't say that. But I'm just simply saying that I  
11 pretty much if there was anything, as far as any kind of mass  
12 amount of water on the tracks at any time that I would have  
13 noticed, I would have said something or --

14 Q. And you didn't notice anything?

15 A. Right. I really didn't.

16 Q. Okay. All right, thank you.

17 MR. BUCHER: Okay. I have one follow-up question.

18 BY MR. BUCHER:

19 Q. Did the lights on the cars go out at any time during the  
20 incident?

21 A. In the beginning?

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. No.

24 Q. No. So they had light on the train?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. And that was on throughout, okay. Thank you.

2 MS. SAMARASINGHE: I do have two follow-up questions.  
3 Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State Oversight Committee.

4 BY MS. SAMARSINGHE:

5 Q. Mr. Curley, you said when you were picking up, starting  
6 your 302 run that day from Fort Totten, either right as you were  
7 starting out or just before you started out, you heard over the  
8 radio that there was some kind of smoke event around L'Enfant; is  
9 that correct?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Someone said over the -- someone came in and they  
13 notified Central, there was some smoke in at L'Enfant Plaza.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I don't know what ID it was or who the operator was.

16 Q. Okay. Around what time would that have been?

17 A. I'm not exactly sure.

18 Q. Okay. All right. And then the other question I had  
19 was, as you were communicating with ROCC about the Transit  
20 Police's decision about whether or not to pull you back to the  
21 platform, you were told that Transit PD was on the platform and  
22 then you knew there were two Transit PD officers on board the  
23 train?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. Your communication with those two police officers on

1 board the train were believed face-to-face or was there any  
2 ability for you to communicate with them over any kind of radio?

3 A. I was speaking to the Transit female officer through the  
4 intercom.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. They were separated in each part of the train. One was  
7 close to the rear, one was in the middle.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And when I had spoken to them, letting them know what  
10 Central had told me, I was trying to tell them to try to contact  
11 the people on the, their people, on the platform on letting us get  
12 back to the platform.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. She told me that she was in touch with them now and then  
15 from that point I didn't hear anything else from that.

16 Q. All right. And so the way that you would -- in the  
17 event that you do have police officers on board the given train  
18 that you're operating, your communication would be either in  
19 person face-to-face or over the on board intercoms; is that  
20 correct, not through their radios or not through your radio  
21 directly --

22 A. You mean in a situation or just normal?

23 Q. Yes. In any situation, either emergency or routine.

24 A. It would be depending upon where they were. If they  
25 were then in the cab where I was at it would have been face-to-

1 face. If they were someone else in the back of the train it would  
2 have been over the intercom.

3 Q. Intercom, okay, but not through any radio mechanism,  
4 handheld radios?

5 A. No.

6 Q. No. Okay, thank you.

7 MR. LITTLETON: No questions.

8 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: It's bad I have a couple. Marlene  
9 Flemmings-McCann, 689 Rep.

10 BY MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN:

11 Q You said you picked up at Fort Totten --

12 A. Yes, ma'am.

13 Q. -- and you were going in the direction of?

14 A. Huntington.

15 Q. Huntington. So when you started in and you got into the  
16 situation where you were getting smoke and you tried to notify  
17 Central, what was their instructions to you that first time?

18 A. When I initially told them about the smoke?

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. That I informed Central that there was heavy smoke, zero  
21 visibility and that I needed to reverse ends and try to get back  
22 to the platform.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. They told me to key down, reverse ends and make my way  
25 to the other end of the cab and that's what I did.

1 Q. Okay. So they never told you to drop your EV?

2 A. I got that when I got to the --

3 Q. Right. But on that first time when you notified them  
4 they didn't say that to you? They didn't give you those  
5 instructions?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. My other question is, who gives you instruction  
8 to drop your circuit breakers down?

9 A. Central.

10 Q. Okay. Do you do it on your own at any time?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. The next thing, I heard that you said over and  
13 over and over you need to get back to the platform over, over,  
14 over and you was told over and over and over to stand by?

15 A. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. Is that normal in the situation when you have a car  
17 filling up with smoke that you just stand by, no other  
18 instructions are given to you?

19 A. That right there, of course, was a first time scenario  
20 for me. So in my saying of that I didn't think it was normal as  
21 far as, I understand maybe the first initial to stand by because  
22 of course they do have to clear the platform or whatever. But for  
23 as long as it took, as far as being down there I didn't think that  
24 was normal.

25 Q. Okay. My other questions are, also again I want to say

1 I commend you for keeping your composure. I do realize that you  
2 all go through extensive training on emergency situations, but  
3 they can tell you to be calm, that came from you, no one can train  
4 you to do that. So you did it on your own.

5 The other thing I wanted to say is, I'm kind of confused  
6 as to why you weren't able to go. Is it L'Enfant Plaza, that's  
7 where you were trying to get back to?

8 A. Yes, ma'am.

9 Q. I'm just trying to figure out why was it that it took  
10 you, took them because it wasn't you, so long to get permission to  
11 get to that platform with a training that still that was smoke and  
12 no other instructions except to stand by. Do you have any idea  
13 why?

14 A. No, ma'am. Like I said, I don't run Central Control. I  
15 pretty much --

16 Q. So without, and I guess I want to ask you this, without  
17 permission to do anything what should you have done from Central  
18 Control?

19 A. Again, per rules and regulations we're not supposed to  
20 do anything unless instructed by Central Control.

21 Q. Okay. I came on the train today and on the train I  
22 noticed WMATA has emergency evacuation signs on the panels.

23 A. Yes, ma'am.

24 Q. And I was reading some of it and it was kind of  
25 interesting that it said that you're safer on the train than

1 outside the train. So when I heard you say that you were telling  
2 people, please don't open the doors, you know, it's safer to be  
3 here on the train and I see that as part of the instructions.

4 The only thing, I guess, I'm having a problem with is  
5 the time limit of you never got a chance to get back to that  
6 platform and I just don't know why. There was a train there that  
7 couldn't be moved because it sounds like you had power for a while  
8 and you could have gotten there had you gotten permission.

9 A. Yes, ma'am.

10 Q. But in the time frame of whatever happened, you BIE'd.  
11 But I also want to know when was power taken down? Did anyone  
12 ever say, now, the track is down, even if you want to move you  
13 couldn't? Was there no way that they could send a train to you  
14 or, you know, I know you could have if you had permission and  
15 there was a train on the platform, if it was at the eight-car  
16 marker and you were given permission quicker, I'm just saying  
17 that --

18 A. Right.

19 Q. -- do you think that you could have did your close end  
20 procedures and gotten to that platform to safely evacuate from  
21 your lead car at that time if you had that permission?

22 A. If I had permission from Central?

23 Q. From Central.

24 A. I believe I could have. Like I said, I was going off  
25 their instructions.



1 Q. Exactly, exactly.

2 A. And pretty much like I said I was informing, I kept them  
3 informed of everything that was going on and pretty much like I  
4 said I was just going off their instructions.

5 Q. Okay. Okay. But that wasn't one of the instructions  
6 you was getting?

7 A. As far as close end to the platform?

8 Q. Right.

9 A. No, ma'am. They kept telling just to stand by, hold my  
10 location.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you, sir, I appreciate it.

12 A. Yes, ma'am.

13 MR. VAUGHN: I have no questions.

14 MR. MADARAS: I have a couple follow-up questions.

15 BY MR. MADARAS:

16 Q. Did the Transit officers that were on board, did they  
17 ever approach you and say, what can I do to help you or how can I  
18 assist or anything of that nature? I mean, did you just kind of  
19 get separated from them and then the only communication was  
20 through the intercom?

21 A. Well, initially we would -- it wasn't like we was all  
22 together anyway. So pretty much, they were pretty much doing  
23 their communication to me over the intercom and when it initially  
24 first started. Then the one Transit officer came up, when I  
25 reversed ends, she came up to the cab and was asking me as far as

1 what are they saying? I kept telling her they kept telling me to  
2 hold my location.

3 So that was the one, I'm assuming, who stayed in the  
4 center of the train. So pretty much, they was coordinating their  
5 efforts as far as keeping, I guess, not trying to have nobody open  
6 the doors or try to keep people themselves calm or whatever, but  
7 outside of that -- they was trying to do their diligence as far as  
8 what I was trying to do.

9 Q. Did you ever hear any of the communications that they  
10 had?

11 MR. BUCHER: Name, we need your name.

12 MR. MADARAS: I'm sorry. Jim Madaras, Local 689.

13 BY MR. MADARAS:

14 Q. Did you ever hear any of the communication they were  
15 having with their communication desk?

16 A. Like I said --

17 Q. I mean, did you ever hear them say anything of the  
18 nature of like, you know, this is an emergency situation --

19 A. Yes. When I had -- the intercom was on for quite a bit  
20 and they was explaining, I could hear them telling people that  
21 upon this emergency situation is trying to get back to the  
22 platform. We need you all to lay down, stay calm and don't open  
23 the doors. They were pretty much going off piggy backing what I  
24 was saying.

25 Q. They were telling the customers that, but you didn't

1 hear them tell their communication desk anything on the radio?

2 A. No.

3 Q. And also, when you were walking through the car,  
4 reversing ends, did you notice any of the ladders, the emergency  
5 ladders, that are in the train that were removed?

6 A. No, I didn't.

7 Q. You didn't?

8 A. No.

9 Q. And one other question, the people that you saw that  
10 were walking toward the aerial-line bridge, how did you  
11 communicate to them to come back?

12 A. From initially when I was getting ready -- when I was on  
13 the third car, I saw them with their flashlights walking. I went  
14 over to the window, banged on the window, I said, no, no, you all  
15 are going the wrong way, open it up, I need you all going back  
16 this way. You all can't go this way. This is the way where the  
17 danger is pretty much; I need you all to go back this way.

18 So by the time they did that, I got on the radio with  
19 Central saying, Central, people already have self-evac'd I need  
20 to --

21 Q. So they did, they started walking back towards the  
22 platform at that point?

23 A. Right. They turned around and they was going back the  
24 other way and then by the time I told Central, Transit said they  
25 need to do an evacuation of the train. I was making my way trying

1 to get past the people as much as I possibly could, stepping over  
2 people; I nearly stepped on some people. By the time I got back  
3 up to the front tried to get and everything, the doors was already  
4 opened. There was firefighters right there helping people off the  
5 train and I was just assisting trying to get them off.

6 Q. Man, you had a lot on your mind. I'm really amazed at  
7 how well your composure was. It's a good thing that you were as  
8 composed as you were.

9 A. Thank you.

10 Q. Because that could have really gotten into a real  
11 chaotic situation.

12 A. Thank you.

13 MR. BALLARD: I'm Hercules Ballard for Washington Metro.

14 BY MR. BALLARD:

15 Q. Mr. Curley, when you do your training inspections in the  
16 yard --

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. -- do you do that with the assistance of another person  
19 or you do that by yourself?

20 A. No, sir, you do it by yourself.

21 Q. Okay. That's all I have, thank you.

22 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams, WMATA Safety.

23 BY MR. ADAMS:

24 Q. Mr. Curley, when you go through your recertification  
25 training, that's every 2 years, correct?

1           A.    Yes, sir.

2           Q.    Does that include emergency evacuation training, that  
3 retraining that you go through?

4           A.    Yeah.  Your -- the recertification that pretty much it  
5 goes through the knowledge of the train both through the console  
6 as well as actual, I'm sorry, not console, as far as the computers  
7 testing on the train, as far as certain knowledge of what needs to  
8 be done on the train.  There are certain questions as far as  
9 emergency evacuations and procedures that are on that testing that  
10 you do.  And then as far as the actual training itself, as far as  
11 certain troubleshooting of the train when something happens and  
12 malfunction problems and things like that.

13          Q.    Okay.

14               MR. DOWNS:  Downs again, NTSB.

15               BY MR. DOWNS:

16          Q.    Just go over make sure your understanding on the  
17 ventilation system shut down.  You are not permitted to shut the  
18 ventilation system off until instructed by OCC; is that correct?

19          A.    When I informed them there was smoke on the train,  
20 Central Control instructed me to turn off the EV circuit breaker  
21 and that's what I did.

22          Q.    I see.  So it's not your trained procedure on your own  
23 initiative to shut it off if there's smoke on the train?

24          A.    Say that again.

25          Q.    It's not something that you would enact under your own

1 initiative to shut down the ventilation system if you saw smoke  
2 coming into the rail cars?

3 A. Not initially, no. And once I got permission from them  
4 and they informed me to do so that's when I turned it off.

5 Q. So you're not permitted under any circumstances of your  
6 own initiative to shut off the ventilation system if you see  
7 smoke?

8 A. If I had not gotten in contact with Central for whatever  
9 reason, I would have done so. But like I said, once I got word  
10 from them then I did so.

11 Q. I see. So make sure I'm understanding, when cases were  
12 -- there's smoke coming into the train. The normal procedure is  
13 for you to contact OCC and notify them of that --

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. -- and then they will notify you or authorize you to  
16 shut off the ventilation system?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And in cases where you can't get in contact with OCC,  
19 the instructions you have, the guidance you have, is to shut it  
20 off on your own initiative, irrespective; is that correct?

21 A. Once again if, like I said, if I had not for whatever  
22 reason gotten in contact with them knowing how much smoke was  
23 coming into the train I would have turned it off.

24 Q. You would have just under common sense --

25 A. Right.

1 Q. -- you're saying. So it's not really an operational  
2 procedure that WMATA would have for train operators; is that  
3 correct?

4 A. No. Everything you do you have to be governed by  
5 Central Control.

6 Q. I see. Okay, thank you. Approximately how many persons  
7 you observed outside the railcar had disembarked the train or  
8 walking in the wrong direction?

9 A. I noticed at least three.

10 Q. Three? Okay.

11 A. At least three.

12 Q. But they did turn around and you motioned to them you're  
13 going the wrong way and did they go back towards the platform?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you.

16 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB.

17 BY MR. GORDON:

18 Q Mr. Downs mentioned earlier that the train was  
19 approximately 400 feet inside the tunnel. When you heard that  
20 from him, was that the first time you had heard how far you guys  
21 would -- did you realize how close to L'Enfant Plaza you were  
22 because, I mean, I know you've got a lot going on operating the  
23 train, does that seem what you would have thought as far as the  
24 location that your train was in relation to L'Enfant or would you  
25 have thought we were further inside the tunnel when you

1 encountered the smoke?

2 A. Again, from how thick the smoke was I couldn't really  
3 estimate how close I was to the platform.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. My initial thought was pretty much trying to get the  
6 train from where I was back to the platform and pretty much  
7 waiting on them to allow me to get back to the platform.

8 Q. Okay. So you didn't really have any idea how far it was  
9 back to the platform, you just knew that was your egress?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. I have nothing further.

12 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucher again. I think we can  
13 probably go around again but we're getting close. Do you want to  
14 take a break and --

15 MR. CURLEY: Yeah. I would like to get a bathroom break  
16 if I could.

17 MR. BUCHER: Okay. We'll take a break and come back.

18 (Off the record.)

19 (On the record.)

20 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher. We're back with the  
21 interview of James Curley.

22 James, I have one question and we'll go around the room  
23 here once or twice yet.

24 BY MR. BUCHER:

25 Q. Did the tunnel lights remain on through the whole time?



1           A.    I believe, like I said, I believe they were, I can't  
2 remember to be honest with you. I believe they were best I can  
3 remember.

4           Q.    Okay. Okay, not a problem. That's all I have right  
5 now.

6           MS. SAMARASINGHE: That's exactly the question I had, so  
7 thank you very much.

8           MR. LITTLETON: No questions.

9           MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: One question. Marlene Flemmings-  
10 McCann.

11          BY MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN:

12          Q.    I know sometimes in the daily operation of operating the  
13 train, brake dust --

14          A.    Yes, ma'am.

15          Q.    -- gets a little thick at times and sometimes mistake it  
16 as smoke and you really don't know the difference sometimes until  
17 it gets really heavy.

18          A.    Yes, ma'am.

19          Q.    At that time, at first did you think it was just  
20 something mild that got a little crazy?

21          A.    Initially, like I said, it's not that uncommon for rail  
22 operators to communicate with Central Control complaining about  
23 they need to notify the train in front of them that they smell  
24 brake dust or smoke or whatever is coming from the train or  
25 whatever, and they are usually dealing with that. So when I heard

1 that call about smoke being in the tunnel, whoever that operator  
2 was, that was pretty much my initial thought.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you.

4 MR. VAUGHN: No questions.

5 MR. MADARAS: Jim Madaras, Local 689.

6 BY MR. MADARAS:

7 Q. How long was it from the time you saw the smoke  
8 initially until you stopped the train? I don't know if that  
9 question was asked.

10 A. Instantly.

11 Q. That's all I have.

12 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro. No  
13 questions.

14 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams, WMATA.

15 BY MR. ADAMS:

16 Q. Mr. Curley, were you asked to leave the area?

17 A. I'm sorry?

18 Q. Were you asked to leave the area of the train at some  
19 point to go to the platform when they were evacuating, I mean?

20 A. Was I asked to leave the train?

21 Q. Yeah, by MTPD, by the fire department or you just  
22 decided, all right, the train is emptying out it's time to go?

23 A. No. When -- I was pretty much helping with the evac as  
24 far as getting the people off of the train. And then once they  
25 told me that everybody was off, that was when I went to the

1 platform myself. I had to make sure everybody was off especially  
2 the person that was in the wheelchair.

3 I went to the platform and then a Transit cop that was  
4 on there, I don't know who he was, didn't get his name, he just  
5 stood me up, he looked at my face and he was like asking me am I  
6 okay, am I okay and I kept shaking my head. But then he was still  
7 telling me to, you know, get this guy upstairs and I guess to get  
8 him some air. So by the time I got up there and I got some air,  
9 that's when I, you know, feeling the stuff in the chest or  
10 whatever and then that's when they --

11 Q. So at no point did somebody come and say, get off the  
12 train from the fire department or --

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay.

15 MR. DOWNS: Finished?

16 MR. ADAMS: Yes, I'm finished.

17 MR. DOWNS: Downs, again, NTSB.

18 BY MR. DOWNS:

19 Q. Mr. Curley, follow up with the question on the tunnel  
20 lights. By your description of the density of the smoke, were the  
21 tunnel lights at all visible? You said you don't recall but were  
22 they visible, did you notice?

23 A. I didn't notice. Like I said, at that point when I was  
24 helping people with the evacuation I pretty much, I had my  
25 flashlight just trying to help the people to see when they were

1 walking along the edge where the walkway --

2 Q. For the evacuation yourself?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay, great. Are you back on duty now?

5 A. I'm still waiting on my results from my post-drug test  
6 or whatever --

7 MR. ADAMS: Post-incident testing.

8 MR. CURLEY: Post-incident testing. Yeah, today and  
9 tomorrow are my off days so --

10 BY MR. DOWNS:

11 Q. I see. So it's standard procedure when there's an event  
12 you go through a series of tests or whatever --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- and you basically remain off duty but still employed  
15 during that time until the tests come back and everything is  
16 established to be okay?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Is that how it works?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay, great. Thank you. That concludes my questions.

21 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB.

22 BY MR. GORDON:

23 Q. When the evacuation started back towards L'Enfant Plaza,  
24 did everyone evacuate on the high walkway? Was that the  
25 evacuation route --

1 MR. DOWNS: It's called a knee wall.

2 BY MR. GORDON:

3 Q. On the knee wall?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. Nobody was walking between the rails back toward  
6 the station, it was all up on the --

7 A. No.

8 Q. -- knee wall. Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Knee wall, safety walk.

10 MR. GORDON: Up on the safety walk, okay.

11 MR. CURLEY: No, pretty much everybody was pretty much,  
12 like I said, walking along the walkway with myself and other  
13 firefighters down there having the flights and pretty much what is  
14 shouting at people know how long the walkway, I was pretty much  
15 helping people along the walkway. Now, if there were people that  
16 were walking along there beforehand, I don't know. I can't  
17 testify to say as far as that. I just know that I was pretty much  
18 helping people along that way. And like I said, when I was  
19 helping people get back to the platform I was along the walkway.  
20 I was not on the wall. I was walking through the tunnel in the  
21 middle but, of course, I couldn't just carry somebody and be on  
22 the knee wall at the same time, so.

23 BY MR. GORDON:

24 Q. Right, right. And that's a good question about the knee  
25 wall. Did you notice anybody experience any trouble navigating

1 that because I know that's a tight area. I've been in that tunnel  
2 and --

3 A. Well, again, people was walking slow. People was still  
4 coughing and stuff and they was taking their time or they were  
5 still making their way to the platform and everybody was bunched  
6 together. So it's pretty much like follow the brick, basically,  
7 so to speak. So we pretty much guided them, like I say, with the  
8 lights making sure they didn't fall over until they got to the  
9 rail. And once they got there, they knew the step was right there  
10 and made their way up to the platform.

11 Q. And you didn't notice anybody having any trouble with  
12 the obstructions like the, I know there are some boxes mounted on  
13 the walls, some straps on the pipes --

14 A. No. There was only one smaller area where they had to  
15 go around it, but it wasn't like something that was severely  
16 sticking out the way they couldn't get around it.

17 Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you, no further questions.

18 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher, again, I do have one more.

19 BY MR. BUCHER:

20 Q. Did the station lights remain on through the incident?

21 A. I do believe the station lights was on.

22 Q. The platform lights and the --

23 A. I do believe those were still working.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But I'm not 100 percent, but I do believe they were.

1 Q. Okay, thank you.

2 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Mr. Curley, I have one question.  
3 Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State Oversight Committee.

4 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

5 Q. This is a hypothetical. I know you were on the incident  
6 train, but in the event that you're in a train that's disabled  
7 either through a BIE or for whatever fault the train isn't moving.  
8 And at that point, when you're instructed to evacuate the  
9 passengers, and assume that the train is at a platform, when  
10 you're asked to evacuate the passengers off of the train the  
11 standard practice is for you to remain with the train until  
12 mechanics show up and try to get the train moving or it's paired  
13 up with another train and it's pushed out --

14 A. What situation are you referring to?

15 Q. Just a hypothetical, not in a situation where there's  
16 smoke or where there is any danger to the passengers, but where a  
17 train pulls into a platform and --

18 A. And the train is on the platform?

19 Q. On the platform and you cannot go any further because  
20 you have a BIE or something that prevents you from moving the  
21 train. But nothing in terms of an emergency.

22 A. Usually, depending upon what the situation is, a train  
23 cannot be moved or if it's something dealing with can't  
24 (indiscernible) with the doors or anything like that --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- usually the train is pretty much off loaded.

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. Of course, everything is done and governed by Central  
4 Control's instructions. Off loaded, depending upon what the  
5 situation is where they tell you to drop a circuit breaker or cut  
6 a certain circuit breaker or ATP or whatever, everything is done  
7 by instructions through them.

8 And usually if it's something like that, you off load  
9 the train and then wait for the instructions and then pretty much  
10 if after off loading and whatever circuit breakers you do drop,  
11 you are able to move the train then you, by their instructions,  
12 move the train to wherever they have you to go. Usually, a  
13 supervisor would either be on the train or would meet you in  
14 another station to take over. It all is depending upon the  
15 situation.

16 Q. Thank you.

17 MR. LITTLETON: No further questions.

18 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Okay. Marlene Flemmings-McCann, a  
19 few questions.

20 BY MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN:

21 Q. I don't think I got the answer as; did anyone ever  
22 inform you that the third-rail power was down? Did Central ever  
23 come over the air and tell you that the power was down on the  
24 third rail?

25 A. To be truthfully honest, I really cannot remember. I



1 know I asked to be dropped because the people had already self-  
2 evac'd. But by me worrying about them going in the opposite  
3 direction, when I contacted them I was on the handheld at that  
4 point. I can't really say that they may have, may not, I'm not  
5 sure but I did ask for it to be dropped because they had already  
6 had self-evac'd --

7 Q. Right.

8 A. -- and I wasn't trying to have no one else get  
9 electrocuted or whatever, so.

10 Q. My other question was because they did self-evac and it  
11 wasn't you doing it on your own, you did mention that you were  
12 trying to keep your calm, you were trying to help, but you said  
13 the fire department had responded and started telling people, you  
14 know, get off the train, right?

15 A. Well, by the time the people, when I noticed the people  
16 walking along the platform and I told them to go back the other  
17 way and I notified Central of the self-evac and how Transit wanted  
18 to off load the train and they pretty much gave, said permission  
19 to, gave me permission to have everybody to evacuate the train. I  
20 was coordinating my efforts with the two Transit cops that had  
21 pushed the people from where they were, from the back where it  
22 mostly was to the front to try to get them off.

23 And so by the time I got to the front, the door was  
24 already open. I don't know if it was from the fire department or  
25 from the people who did the self-evac. But when I got there,

1 there was a firefighter standing there already helping people  
2 getting off the train.

3 Q. Okay. And I guess my other question, at that point who  
4 was the on-scene commander?

5 A. I'm not exactly sure, ma'am.

6 Q. Okay. You said you had Transit officers that were  
7 doing --

8 A. There was -- by that time there were a couple of Transit  
9 officers there, there was firefighters there but the only  
10 supervisor that I -- I didn't recognize nobody, of course --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. -- but the only supervisor that I recognized at that  
13 point with everything that happened was Supervisor Scarvey (ph.),  
14 whatever, Scarvey or Scurry, whatever his name is, but that was  
15 it.

16 Q. Okay. Last question and I'm going to stop. Actually,  
17 when you were talking you said that you were trying to help people  
18 off the train and the fire department was the one that instructed  
19 you to now leave the train; is that correct or did I  
20 misunderstand?

21 A. No. When -- as far as myself or getting the passengers  
22 off?

23 Q. You were saying that you were trying to help get the  
24 passengers off and through all the, you know, all the commotion or  
25 whatever and then you said something about the fire department had

1 arrived and was saying, you know, telling people to get off the  
2 train and they were telling you that you had to get off the train  
3 and you said you were still trying to help people.

4 A. Well, when the fire department was there, like I said,  
5 when I worked my way through I just started to evac myself, there  
6 was a firefighter standing right there with the door already,  
7 where the door was already open.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So at that point, I think a couple of people had gotten  
10 off, I got off myself and tried to help the people that was  
11 already off to get to the platform.

12 So when the people that was already off the train got to  
13 the platform, I kept going back and forth trying to help with the  
14 people get from the train to the platform. And there was a couple  
15 of firefighters saying that, you know, you can go back, you can go  
16 back, but I was pretty much trying to help with the evacuation as  
17 far as getting people off, letting them know that there was a  
18 wheelchair person on the train. I didn't know where he was but I  
19 just know I saw him when I came into the platform in L'Enfant  
20 Plaza and that they needed to get him off the train.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And pretty much, like I said, I was just pretty much  
23 trying to help people as much as I could for them to get back to  
24 the platform.

25 Q. Okay. And I guess what I'm trying to get answered is,

1 at that time the fire department is always the on-scene commander.  
2 So at that time where the train -- you were eventually told to go  
3 to the platform, that was after they were telling you to go ahead?

4 A. No. When I got back to the -- the only time when I got  
5 back to the platform was when I had to make sure from asking them  
6 was everybody off?

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And then after that, that's when I went myself back to  
9 the platform after that, especially I wanted to make sure that the  
10 wheelchair guy had gotten off. And once that happened, then when  
11 the last person got off I went to the platform and when I got to  
12 the platform I was pretty much trying to catch my breath and then  
13 the Transit cop that was up there, he pretty much, like I said, he  
14 stood in front of me and he looked at me and said, you know, get  
15 this guy upstairs. And that's when there was another supervisor,  
16 I can't remember what his name was either but I recognized his  
17 face. he walked me from the platform to upstairs, outside to get  
18 some air and then after that, I guess, that's when I really  
19 started to feel it.

20 Q. Well, you did really, really -- you went beyond because  
21 the fire department is the on-scene commander and I think they  
22 were trying to get you to go so you could breathe and you still  
23 wanted to help to make sure that that wheelchair person,  
24 passenger, was safe. So, again, I want to thank you --

25 A. You're welcome. Thank you.

1 Q. -- because you probably should have went at that time  
2 but I'm glad you were healthy enough to continue doing what you  
3 were doing. So I appreciate you. Thank you.

4 A. Thank you.

5 MR. VAUGHN: I have no questions.

6 MR. MADARAS: Jim Madaras, Local 689.

7 BY MR. MADARAS:

8 Q. When the evacuation took place, when did they determine  
9 that there was a woman on there that had passed? Do you know when  
10 that happened?

11 A. I'm not exactly sure, sir.

12 Q. So, I mean, once you left the scene and the fire  
13 department escorted you and you told them that the wheelchair  
14 person was still there, was that, I guess, when the fire  
15 department started going through the train to look for stragglers  
16 or, I mean, how did they know everybody was, you know, off the  
17 train?

18 A. I don't know about that, sir. Like I said, once I kept  
19 letting them -- after I kept helping people to the platform and  
20 told them about the wheelchair person and they said that everybody  
21 was off of the train, that's when I pretty much went to the  
22 platform. I was only going off of what was told to me.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard. No questions.

25 MR. ADAMS: Dorsey Adams. No more questions.

1 MR. DOWNS: Downs, NTSB.

2 BY MR. DOWNS:

3 Q. Mr. Curley, have you ever had any prior emergency events  
4 in your 4 years as a train operator?

5 A. No, nothing like that, no.

6 Q. So no other events at all?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Great, thank you. Radios. You have a train set both  
9 ends of the train, right?

10 A. Yeah. The radio is on both ends.

11 Q. And then you have a handheld radio as well that's issued  
12 to you that you carry --

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. -- for when you're not actually in an operator's cab; is  
15 that correct?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. And the radios to you were working fine in the tunnel?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Thank you. No questions.

20 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB. No questions.

21 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. No more.

22 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State  
23 Oversight Committee. I have one question.

24 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

25 Q. Which cars were the first respondents using to evacuate

1 the passengers and assuming that the car facing the platform --

2 A. The trailing in of, I believe, it was 3030.

3 Q. Third in?

4 A. Car number 3030, I believe what it was.

5 Q. Okay. So they were using the third car in from the end  
6 facing the platform --

7 A. No. The end, the fifth or sixth car facing L'Enfant  
8 Plaza.

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So three cars in is the car that -- three cars in from  
12 the end facing the sixth car facing the platform. So --

13 MR. BALLARD: I think you missed what he's saying. He  
14 was giving you the car number. It was the car that was closest to  
15 L'Enfant Plaza platform.

16 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Okay.

17 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

18 Q. Okay. So from that three cars in; is that what you're  
19 saying or no?

20 A. No, no. The car number -- it was the end car.

21 Q. Okay, got it. Okay. So the end car was what the first  
22 respondents were using to evacuate the passengers off?

23 A. Where the firefighter was standing at getting people off  
24 the train.

25 Q. Okay. Thank you.

1 A. You're welcome.

2 MR. LITTLETON: Tom Littleton, FTA. No questions.

3 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Marlene Flemings-McCann. No  
4 questions.

5 MR. VAUGHN: No questions.

6 MR. BALLARD: No questions.

7 MR. ADAMS: No questions.

8 MR. DOWNS: No.

9 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB.

10 BY MR. GORDON:

11 Q. Someone is probably going to have to help with me the  
12 terminology, but there's a cart on the end of the station  
13 platform, I think, that are used for emergency evacuations. Did  
14 you see that cart being used by the first responders?

15 A. Is that cart for carrying people from wherever the train  
16 was to the platform?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. That comes on wheels?

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. Yes, it was.

21 Q. Okay. You did see them using that?

22 A. Yes, yes I did.

23 Q. Okay. And approximately how many people would they put  
24 on that cart?

25 A. I didn't see how many people got put on that. When I



1 saw it coming down I was literally had someone on my shoulder I  
2 took to the platform.

3 Q. Okay. No further questions.

4 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Dave Bucher again and this concludes  
5 the interview with Mr. Curley.

6 (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 James Curley

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: January 15, 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.

---

Michelle Smiroldo  
Transcriber