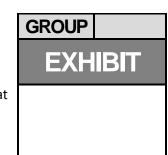


NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD Investigative Hearing

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



Agency / Organization

Title

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Interview of: JONATHAN JOHNSON

D.C. Fire and EMS - Fire Operations Center 500 F Street, N.W., 2nd Floor Washington, D.C.

Monday, February 2, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RICHARD DOWNS, JR. Survival Factors Investigator

APPEARANCES:

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

RUBEN PAYAN, Accident Investigator National Transportation Safety Board

KIMBERLY BURTCH, Senior Program Analyst Office of Transit Safety and Oversight Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

DENTON ROURKE, Operations Manager Office of Emergency Management WMATA

DERRON HAWKINS, Deputy Fire Chief D.C. Fire and EMS Homeland Security & Special Operations Division

JAMES GORDON, Secretary International Fire Fighters Association Local 36 (Representative on behalf of Mr. Johnson)

I N D E X

ITEM			PAGE
			IAGE
Interview	of Jon	athan Johnson:	
	By Mr.	Downs	6
	By Mr.	Rourke	14
	By Mr.	Downs	15
	By Mr.	Rourke	17
	By Mr.	Downs	20
	By Mr.	Rourke	21
	By Mr.	Payan	22
	By Mr.	Downs	23
	By Mr.	Payan	24
	By Ms.	Burtch	28
	By Mr.	Downs	32
	By Mr.	Hawkins	32
	By Mr.	Downs	35
	By Mr.	Hawkins	36
	By Mr.	Downs	37

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ITEM

1

INTERVIEW

Today's date is February 2, 2015, and the 2 MR. DOWNS: following is an interview being conducted in reference to NTSB 3 investigation number DCA-15-FR-004, which relates to an accident 4 involving a heavy smoke release and train evacuations that 5 6 occurred in and near the L'Enfant Plaza Station of the WMATA 7 Metrorail System in the District of Columbia on the afternoon of January 12, 2015. This interview is being conducted with a member 8 9 of the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services 10 Department, as conducted by the NTSB Survival Factors Technical 11 Working Group of the investigation.

My name is Richard Downs, Jr., and I'm a Survival Factors Investigator with the NTSB, in which I also serve in the role as the Survival Factors Technical Working Group chairperson. I will preside over this interview, which is being recorded for the record and which a transcript may also be compiled of the recording as a permanent docketed record of the interview.

Additionally, I'd like to mention that the purpose of the investigation is to increase safety and not to assign fault, blame or liability, and that the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate actions.

Further, pursuant to the criteria under 49 C.F.R. 831.7, the interviewee may have one representative of the interviewee's choice accompany him or her at this interview, in which a representative may not testify for the interviewee. It's also

requested that comments of the interviewee's representative should
 be limited, and objections expressed by the interviewee's
 representative are not grounds for the NTSB to refrain from asking
 questions.

5 I'll now ask that our interviewee, our witness, please 6 identify themselves, their employment affiliation and job position 7 title.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Employed with Washington, D.C. Fire and 9 EMS Department. Name is Jonathan Johnson, currently assigned to 10 the rank of lieutenant at Engine Company 13, Platoon Number 2.

11 MR. DOWNS: Thank you. And thank you for joining us 12 today. And are you accompanied in this interview by anyone today? 13 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir, I am.

MR. DOWNS: I'd like to have that person identify themselves for the record.

16 MR. GORDON: My name is James Gordon. I'm secretary for 17 Local 36, and I'll be his union representation for this day.

18 MR. DOWNS: Thanks very much.

19 I'll now ask the participants of this interview, who
20 will also have an opportunity to present questions to the witness,
21 to please individually identify themselves, their employment
22 affiliation and job position title for the record.

23 MR. ROURKE: Good morning, Lieutenant. My name is 24 Denton Rourke. I'm with WMATA. I am the Operations Manager in 25 the Office of Emergency Management.

1 MR. PAYAN: Good afternoon. I'm Ruben Payan. I'm one 2 of the investigators with the NTSB, and I'm out of the Washington, 3 D.C. office also.

MS. BURTCH: Hi. I'm Kim Burtch from the Federal 4 5 Transit Administration's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight. 6 MR. HAWKINS: Good morning. Derron Hawkins, Deputy Fire 7 Chief, D.C. Fire and EMS, Homeland Security Division. 8 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning. 9 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Thank you, Chief. INTERVIEW OF JONATHAN JOHNSON 10 BY MR. DOWNS: 11 12 Q. And as my first question for our witness, would you 13 please briefly describe for us your role or involvement in this 14 event? 15 Α. Sure. At approximately --

16 Q. No. Just your role. Correct me if I'm wrong; you were 17 the command officer in charge of Engine 13?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. That's what we're looking for.

20 A. Okay. That's --

Q. Okay. Following that, could you please describe for us, in your own words and to your best recollection, what occurred on the day of the event relative to your actions and involvement at the L'Enfant Plaza Station, or wherever you responded to, commencing at the time you were alerted to respond to the site?

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6

A. Yes. On the day of question, I believe January 12th, 2 2015, we were -- at approximately 1520 hours, we were dispatched 3 as the first due engine company on a local alarm assignment for 4 smoke coming from a vent.

5

Q. A vent shaft?

A. A vent shaft. Well, this was prior to any box alarmbeing dispatched to any Metro station.

Q. And you knew straightaway what the vent shaft meant in terms of response? You had a pre-familiarity with the vent? A. Not any -- to be honest with you, no. I mean, it was just respond to an investigation of smoke that someone saw. We didn't know if it was a Metro shaft or not. I mean, they have a lot of vents in the city.

14 Q. Just a vent?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Smoke coming out from a vent, and they gave you an 17 address?

18 A. They did, of 9th Street and Water Street, S.W.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And that's it.

21 Q. And you responded your company to that site?

A. Yes. We responded, arrived on the scene. We did not see any smoke; however, there was a witness, because they're doing construction for the new waterfront, and it was a construction worker that approached us. And he stated that he had saw smoke

prior to our arrival and he backed that up with footage on his
 video camera. He had taken a video of sorts, you know.

3 Q. On his cell phone?

A. Yeah, a video or pictures, but he had footage he showed us, myself and the officer from Engine 7. And so we made our way on to the vent shaft, again saw no smoke, but you could smell an odor of something burning. We could smell smoke.

Q. Okay. Let me ask you this. You mentioned the 9 construction worker there. Is that area under a construction site 10 right now?

11 A. Yes, it is.

12 Q. When you pulled in with your rig, your apparatus, did 13 you have any trouble accessing the location at all?

14 A. Not at all. They did a great job, did not block that 15 off.

Q. Okay. So there's enough of a roadway there, even though it's a construction site, you were able to pull reasonably close to what you later determined was the vent shaft site?

19 A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you were approached by this construction worker who pointed out the situation, showed you some video or photos on his phone, and you were able to walk over and examine the vent shaft. Would that be a correct characterization?

A. That is correct.

25 Q. Okay. And you smelled what could have been an odor; you

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1 weren't sure?

2 Yeah, we smelled something burning. I mean, of course, Α. 3 we didn't see smoke, but you could smell something burning. 4 Ο. Were you on top of the vent shaft at that point, looking 5 down? 6 Α. At that point, yes, we were. 7 Did you feel any air coming up out of the shaft itself? Ο. There was air coming out of the shaft. 8 Α. 9 Ο. Definitely a positive flow in some manner? 10 Α. Yes. 11 Please continue at that point. Q. Okay. 12 Α. Okay. So we identified that the vent shaft/emergency 13 evacuation shaft was a Metro shaft, relayed that to our commanding 14 officer, our battalion chief, Number 6. And we had a Metro --15 Ο. And that's Chief Hull? 16 Chief Hull, correct. And we proceeded to use our tools Α. 17 in our Metro bag. Every company is assigned a Metro bag. And we 18 got the keys out and identified we could unlock that vent for that 19 shaft. So you could just use a key rather than have to cut it 20 Ο. 21 or anything like that? 22 Yes. Yes. Α. 23 And did you have any trouble at all with the keys? Q. 24 Α. Not at all. Not at all. I mean, you know, we went 25 through a series of keys. We found the one and we unlocked it,

notified the chief of so, and he said do not open it, just leave
 it unlocked.

3 Q. Okay.

A. And at that point we were on standby. And shortly thereafter, I would say within 5 or 10 minutes, he notified us that he was monitoring another box alarm that had been dispatched to L'Enfant Plaza. And so he told us to monitor both channels, which we did. We stood by for a while. I couldn't tell you the approximate amount of time, say, somewhere maybe 20 or 30 minutes, maybe. Okay.

11 Q. Something in that --

12 A. Something in that area. While standing there, nothing 13 changed, and we started to hear voices from below.

14 Q. In the vent shaft?

15 A. In the vent shaft.

16 Q. Voices?

17 Α. We started to hear voices. We thought we did. We 18 weren't sure, and we kept looking, and then we saw two citizens, 19 and they eventually -- they were two grown men, approximately in 20 their forties, and one was military. He had on a military outfit. 21 The other guy we think was military or a cop. He had a gun and a 22 badge, but he was kind of -- we were unable to identify him. And 23 we notified this to the chief. The chief said, okay, help them 24 out. We opened the doors.

25 Q. And to make sure I understand, you can see through the

1 grate down below?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. There's no obstruction, visual obstruction?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Can readily see down? Okay.

A. Yes, sir. And these two guys self-extricated themselves
out, self-evacuated.

8 Q. And the door was unlocked so they were able to just push 9 it open?

A. Yes. Thank God, we were there so they were able to come out. And we helped them out. They had visible soot around their nostrils, their mouth and their eyes, but they were okay. I mean, they were troopers. They were like, man, we're just trying to get home; we're good.

15 So notified the chief what we had. EMS evacuated them. 16 And the chief at that time instructed myself and one of my members 17 on the backstep to go down to the track bed, to make our way 18 downstairs so that if any other patients were coming out, we could 19 help them out.

Q. When you say the two of you went down the vent shaft, did you suit up in any way?

A. Well, we were already fully -- we had all our gear on.
Q. Your turnout gear. Did you have air bottles on?
A. SCBA, correct.

25 Q. Were you using the air bottles going down the shaft?

1 No, sir. There was no smoke. It was --Α. So it was a case where you had that instantly available, 2 Ο. 3 but you did not actually go on air? 4 Α. Yes. Yes. And you went all the way down to the bottom of the vent 5 Q. 6 shaft? 7 Now, once we got to -- so we went down one level, Α. Yes. a lot of fans. I looked to see if any of them were in, say, 8 9 system or automatic or whatever. I couldn't find the panel to 10 show that. So we just continued to go down one more level --11 Let me interrupt. Were the fans operating at that time? Ο. 12 Α. They were operating. All four fans? 13 Ο. 14 Α. Yes. 15 Q. All four were positively operating? 16 All four were positively operating. Α. 17 Q. Very good. Please continue. 18 Α. Okay. So we made our way completely to the bottom of 19 the -- to the track bed, and there we encountered two Metro employees and six members from Tower 3, Truck Company 3. The two 20 21 members with Metro were on track number 2 making their way toward 22 the train. And the six members from Tower 3 had, I quess, just 23 arrived coming from up track 1, and they initially were on a 24 standby mode and then they were instructed, I believe, to go to 25 the train. So three members, the officer and both technicians,

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12

1 made their way to the train. The three other members -- one 2 member, I think, needed medical care, so the other two assisted 3 that member upstairs, up to the street level, and we stayed there. The firefighter from Tower 3, what was the nature of the 4 Ο. 5 distress, do you know? 6 Α. To be honest with you, I was unsure that anything was 7 even wrong until after the incident. I was told that they had gained medical attention. I mean, they didn't appear to be 8 9 physically, you know, incapacitated, but I quess something was 10 going on. 11 Was it a respiratory based, do you think or do you know? Q. 12 Α. I'm not sure. 13 Ο. You're not sure? 14 I don't want to insinuate. Α. 15 Q. Okay. 16 Can I interject a question? MR. PAYAN: 17 MR. DOWNS: Go ahead. 18 MR. PAYAN: Okay. What was the total number of members 19 you saw come from Truck 3? 20 MR. JOHNSON: It was six. 21 MR. PAYAN: Six from Truck 3? 22 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. Due to other reasons within our 23 department, they were riding with an extra body that day. 24 MR. PAYAN: Okay. I was making sure I heard six instead 25 of five.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

2 MR. PAYAN: Okay.

3 MR. DOWNS: Normally it's five?

4 MR. JOHNSON: Normally it's five.

5 MR. PAYAN: Okay.

6 BY MR. DOWNS:

7 Q. Plus there were two Metro employees, and this was on 8 track 2?

9 A. Track number 2, yes.

10 Q. Positive it was track 2?

A. Yes, track 2, the track that the train was on. Ibelieve that was Track 2.

13 BY MR. ROURKE:

14 Q. Rourke from Metro. You said the firefighters came up 1 15 and then went back down 2?

16 A. I'm sorry?

Q. The firefighters from Truck 3, the crew from Truck 3,came up 1 and then went back down 2?

A. Yeah, because when we -- well, when we got there, they were on track 1. The Metro workers, I believe, was on track 2. Whichever track the train was on, that was the side that the Metro guys were --

23 Q. Right. That was track 2, right.

A. The Tower 3 guys were coming from the opposite train. So I guess they checked both sides to make sure they got --

1 BY MR. DOWNS:

2

Q. The opposite track.

3 A. Right.

4 Q. And you're positive they were on the opposite track --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. -- when you first saw them approaching?

7 A. Initially when I saw them, yes.

8 Q. Okay.

- 9 A. Yes. Yes.
- 10 Q. Please continue.

A. Okay. So they, the officer and the two members, followed suit behind the Metro guys, and they went to the train. I never saw them anymore. And the three members went up the shaft; I never saw them anymore until after the incident was over. And me and my backstep member, we stayed there approximately 30 or 45 minutes.

17 Q. At the bottom of the shaft?

18 A. Yes, because we were instructed to be there to assist19 any more patrons that needed to find a way out.

20 Q. In other words, you were kind of the forward command, 21 for lack of a better description, and communication relay?

A. No. We weren't told to communicate as far as a relay for communications. Another company was sent down sometime later for the op.

25 Q. Okay.

1 But that wasn't our job. Α. 2 So you were basically to stay there and queue up in case Q. 3 any additional passengers came your way to make sure they got up 4 the vent shaft correctly? 5 Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Α. 6 Ο. Thank you. 7 And during our tenure, no one else came up. And Α. sometime --8 9 Ο. You were there about 45 minutes, you say? 10 Approximately. Yeah, I --Α. 11 Best guess? Q. 12 Α. Yeah, best guess. And shortly thereafter, the commanding -- oh, I'm sorry. When we went down the tunnel, we 13 14 went to the fire ground channel for L'Enfant Plaza. 15 Ο. Okay. 16 We were no longer on the original channel we were Α. 17 dispatched on for our investigation. So I heard the commanding 18 officer say that all members -- all patrons had been removed from 19 the train and that they were starting to bring units back up to 20 the street level. So me and my member made our way back up to the 21 street level also and instructed our chief on what we saw, what we didn't see, what we did, and that was it. 22 23 And by that time your chief had arrived on scene. Q. Did 24 vour chief arrive on --25 He was there before we went down the --Α.

1 Q. Oh, before you went down. I see.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. You went back up topside and what happened?

6 A. The incident was pretty much over for us.

7 Q. Stand down?

8 A. Yes.

9 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Very good. That concludes my 10 questions for the moment. Let's pass it on to the next.

11 BY MR. ROURKE:

Q. Denton Rourke from Metro. I'm going to ask you a few basic Metro questions and then a little bit more about this particular call.

15 A. Okay.

Q. Can you describe for me what Metro training you had, both either with Metro or with the fire department or things that you've done on your own at the company level?

19 Yes, sir. I've been to some training in New Carrollton, Α. 20 I believe it is, or Landover on Pennsy Drive, the training that 21 they do there about, I guess, two times in my career here. The only other training I've had outside of that through Metro, when I 22 23 was studying to get promoted to the rank of sergeant, we were able 24 to meet with a quy similar to yourself, a liaison through Metro, 25 who took us to the Rhode Island Metro Station and showed us some

1 of the inner workings of the Metro system. But we did not go in a 2 tunnel. It was outside. But it was pretty much hands-on, but 3 that's the only training I've had relevant to Metro in detail.

Q. Okay. And how about at the company -- at the station 5 level just internally?

A. Yeah. We tend to drill on Metro kind of frequently because we run so many. Additional to that, we've been on Metro inspections, and I think within the last few months we've done specifically three or four stations right around our station, which would be L'Enfant Plaza included in one of them.

11 Q. Um-hum. And how about have you ever participated in a 12 full-scale Metro drill? This would be something maybe after hours 13 or on a Sunday morning, something like that?

14 A. I have not.

Q. Have not. Okay. Thanks. So you guys were at the fan shafts. You didn't see anything. You smelled smoke, but you didn't see anything. At some point after a few minutes, you switched over to the L'Enfant tactical channel.

19 A. Yes, sir.

Q. At what point did you, if ever, become aware that there was a train stuck in the tunnel? Did you ever hear any transmissions about that or anything?

A. Yes. Just by listening to the tac channel, listening to the command and the units that were operating down there, you could hear every transmission that was made.

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18

1 Q. So your radio worked well there?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. And you could hear -- on the tactical channel, you could 4 hear everything between command and (indiscernible)?

5 A. Yes, sir.

Q. From the base of the fan shaft. Were there any Metro7 employees there at the FL-1 shaft?

A. I do not believe prior to me and my crew entering the 9 shaft, no. Once we came back up top, I believe there were two, 10 maybe three officers that were Metro employees, and --

11 Q. So prior to going down you didn't see any, and then when 12 you came back up some were there?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. So did you have any interaction with them at all?

15 A. No.

16 Q. The Battalion Chief Hull mentioned that Truck 10, he 17 sent them down to do anything. Did you see them?

A. Yes. At some point while we were down there waiting as a liaison to help members up, Truck 10 was sent down, and they also made their way up the same track that the train was on, I believe it was 2, to the train.

22 Q. So to the best of your knowledge, they went up track 2 23 to the train?

A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Were you still downstairs when they came back or not?

1

A. No. We were gone when they came back.

Q. Can you describe for us briefly the fire department procedure for managing third-rail power in general and then anything that you did specifically in this instance in that regard?

6 Α. Okay. Well, as always, our department stresses safety, 7 and as a company commander, safety is always my priority for myself and my members and anybody that we're trying to help. 8 So 9 what we've been taught is members do not enter the track bed until 10 power has been shut off and, you know, we try to get confirmation 11 from Metro at least two -- at least twice, it seems, before we go 12 into the track bed.

13 Q. And in this instance, do you know if that -- how that 14 was done?

A. Specifically, I was not there to -- we were not at the track level during that period of time. By the time we went down there, all power had been confirmed shut off.

18 BY MR. DOWNS:

19 Q. Do you have any hot sticks or WSADS on your -- in your 20 fire company's --

A. Not on the engine companies. The truck companies, the special services, they do.

Q. So you had a WSAD in your group at the vent shaft, at least one WSAD?

25 A. Yeah, Truck 10 would have had a WSAD.

Q.

1

Did it get brought down to trackside by chance?

A. I'm not sure if they brought it -- they had a lot of equipment. It was not dark, but it was dim. I'm not 100 percent sure of everything they had. It possibly could have possibly --

Q. And you're not sure if they WSAD or hot-sticked or
anything like that, but that -- your normal procedure would be to
get confirmation, at least two places.

8 A. Yes. And also, prior to anyone being allowed on the 9 track bed to make way to the train, we would have WSADs set up 10 prior to us even being able to go down, so yes.

Q. So was a WSAD set up in this particular circumstance? A. I could not tell you. I wasn't nowhere -- I was nowhere near that train. That train was between where I was and the station probably, you know, like halfway. We were just at the bottom of the stairs at the track bed. We never made our way to the track bed actually.

17 Q. Thank you.

18 BY MR. ROURKE:

19 Q. And do you have a hot stick on the engine?

20 A. We have a hot stick, yes. No WSAD.

21 Q. And did you all bring that down or use it?

A. We brought it down. No, we did not use it because we never made way to the railway.

24 MR. DOWNS: But you have a third rail at the bottom of 25 the shaft, right?

MR. JOHNSON: There's a third rail that runs through
 those tunnels. Yes, I believe there is.

3 MR. DOWNS: So would it have been appropriate for you to 4 use your hot stick at your location, or you didn't venture out on 5 the tracks or --

MR. JOHNSON: No. Yeah, we were not instructed to go to the track. So we were told to go to the bottom of the shaft and if we saw any people coming up, to direct them, you know, upstairs to the evacuation point.

10 MR. DOWNS: Thank you.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

12 MR. ROURKE: That's all I got right now.

13 BY MR. PAYAN:

14 Q. This is Ruben with NTSB.

15 A. Yes.

Q. If I heard you correctly, you were -- when your group of firefighters arrived, you were the first ones to go down the shaft?

A. After some -- yeah, after a while, we were instructed to go down the shaft. That was after the two members or the two patrons --

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. -- self-evacuated themselves. Yes.

Q. Okay. When you went down the first flight of stairs,
you come up to a big room --

1	Α.	Yes.	
2	Q.	where you see one side of the fans.	
3	Α.	Yes.	
4	Q.	And there's two doors on either side of them.	
5	Α.	Yes.	
6	Q.	Were those doors open or closed?	
7	Α.	They were locked.	
8	Q.	How did you get access to them?	
9	Α.	Our keys, our Metro keys.	
10	Q.	Okay. Did you or did anyone with you have to pry one of	
11	the doors	open?	
12	Α.	Not in my company, no. Not that I'm aware of. I	
13	don't		
14	Q.	Okay. Because we saw one door that was pried open.	
15		BY MR. DOWNS:	
16	Q.	If I may interject? You have a Metro bag you normally	
17	17 bring with you down		
18	Α.	Yes, sir.	
19	Q.	the shaft or when you go into Metro?	
20	Α.	Yes, sir.	
21	Q.	And does the bag contain keys and other Metro equipment	
22	that you m	normally would access or have a need for?	
23	Α.	Yes, sir. It has a ball probe, a hot stick, a Metro	
24	tool, Met	ro maps, and some other miscellaneous tools, also the	
25	keys.		

1 Q. And you didn't have to -- you just used the keys to open 2 the doors?

3	A. Yes. I'm not exactly sure which key it was. I know we
4	have a 389, a XX barrel key, a few others. But the keys we
5	cycled through the keys and eventually opened up the door, the
6	door that we used. If you came to the bottom of the steps and you
7	looked at the four, there was a door on the left and the right.
8	We went through the door on the right.
9	And it was locked on it was locked from the street
10	side. It was unlocked from the Metro side. So we didn't chock
11	it. We didn't feel the need to chock it because we could have got
12	back out with no problem. So it probably locked behind us.
13	BY MR. PAYAN:
14	Q. Which make sense, since the two passengers came up.
15	A. Right.
16	Q. They were outside that area, right?
17	A. Yes. They were coming from the Metro system to the
18	street, and they were able to get through with no problem.
19	Q. Okay. Did you happen to walk in front of the fans while
20	they were running?
21	A. Yes. We walked well, no, we were actually behind the
22	fans. Initially, we because we came down through the right-
23	hand side, it was okay, so
24	Q. In the big room at the bottom of the first flight of
25	stairs

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- 1 A. Yes. It's four fans.
- 2 Q. Yes.

3 A. It was a door on the left and the right side.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. We went through the door on the right side.

6 Q. Okay.

A. Okay. And the fans were between the other door. So we
8 walked past those fans, those four fans, and the wind was like
9 kind of sucking us toward the fan.

10 Q. Okay. So that's what I was going to ask --

11 MR. DOWNS: It was sucking you toward the fan as you're 12 passing by it?

- 13 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.
- 14 BY MR. PAYAN:

Q. This was already inside the shaft, where you can see down into the shaft, right? Correct?

A. We could see -- yeah. From where we were standing, once we went through that door, we were like right where the fans are and you could see down to the track level.

20 Q. Okay. And then as you walked, it sucked you.

21 A. The fan -- they weren't blowing --

22 Q. So they weren't -- they were exhausting?

- 23 A. Exhaust, yes.
- 24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. DOWNS: Exhausting to the street level?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

2 BY MR. PAYAN:

3 Q. And you say you recall all four working?

A. I recall all four working, yes.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. To the best of my recollection.

7 Q. Sure, sure. A lot of stuff happens. I understand.

8 A. Yes, it does.

9 Q. Are you familiar with the WMATA telephones that they 10 have at different location, like at stations or --

A. Yeah. Every 800 feet within the Metro system issupposed to be a blue light station and they have a phone.

13 Q. Okay. How about in the fan control room there, where 14 you went in? Did you see any?

A. It wasn't a -- it was not a fan control room. I didn't see a phone. I don't remember seeing a phone. And again, like I said, I didn't even see a panel to put the fans in exhaust if they weren't. I looked for it. I never saw it.

19 Q. Okay. Were you ever requested, or did you ever request 20 operation of the fan to be changed?

- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. Fans?

23 A. No, sir.

Q. No? Okay. So as far as you know, they stayed in exhaust the whole time you were there?

1 Yes, because it was hard to hear. It was very loud. Α. 2 Yeah. Ο. 3 Α. I mean, they are so loud. It was very hard to hear the 4 entire time we were there. 5 Now, within your experience -- I'm going to switch Ο. 6 topics here a little bit. 7 Α. Okay. 8 Within your experience as a firefighter, you were here Ο. 9 before the radios got changed over. 10 Α. Okay. 11 Not -- I'm not talking about just Metro, but have you Ο. 12 experienced dead spots, problems with the radio? 13 Α. In Metro or in general? 14 Anywhere. In general. Ο. 15 Α. In my fire service career? 16 Ο. Sure. Yes. 17 Α. I mean, of course. I mean, generally not from outside. 18 It's when you're inside of a structure, depending on the type of 19 construction of the building, primarily like concrete, more like brick or considered like fire-resistant type of construction, yes. 20 21 MR. DOWNS: Or underground in a Metro tunnel? 22 MR. JOHNSON: Or -- sometimes. 23 BY MR. PAYAN: 24 Q. Okay. Now if you had to venture an estimate, would you 25 say the problems increased, decreased or stayed the same when they

1 switched over to the new radios?

2 Personally, I would say they're about the same. I mean, Α. 3 I don't -- I haven't had a lot of problems with radios, period, in my career. I think, you know, personally, I try to get close to a 4 window if I'm inside of a building like that if I have to make a 5 6 transmission. However, if you're like in the Metro system where 7 you can't, generally speaking, my experiences have been pretty good, at least to the platform and the mezzanine level. I've very 8 9 rarely, if ever, operated -- actually never had to operate in a 10 tunnel on an actual incident. So in my experiences, it's worked 11 pretty good. Now, I will say when we got to the bottom of the shaft, some transmissions came in, you know, in and out, but for 12 13 the most part, I could hear what was going on. 14 Okay. But your experience overall --Ο. 15 Α. Been good. 16 -- you really haven't seen a drastic change? Ο. 17 Α. No. I have not. 18 Ο. Okav. All right. Thank you. That's all I have. 19 BY MS. BURTCH: Kim Burtch. Just a couple little questions on 20 Q. 21 clarification. 22 Yes. Α. 23 So you did not move once you got to the bottom of the Q. 24 shaft? You did not move forward any direction; you just stayed 25 there?

1 A. Yes.

5

2 Q. Okay. The bag -- the keys that you had to utilize, were 3 they labeled in any way or did they have different --

4 A. No. They --

Q. -- differentiating shapes to the keys?

A. No. The keys generally -- a few of them are labeled,
but they don't have like a piece of paper on them. I mean, Metro
does have a, like I said, a -- I think it's _____, a ___ barrel key.
Those are the two specific to the books that we read and study.

10 Q. Right.

A. They do open a few different things. But then you have a bunch of other keys that aren't labeled, so you just go for it, and they kind of all look the same.

Q. Well, that's -- okay, so that's my point. So --

15 A. Yes.

16 MR. ROURKE: Denton Rourke. Did your set of keys have a 17 tag attached to them?

18 MR. JOHNSON: A tag? No, sir. No tag.

19 BY MS. BURTCH:

20 Q. That's all on the keys.

21 When you went back through the shaft to exit --

22 A. Yes.

Q. -- did you notice were the door or the cover, was it already open? Did it remain open? You said there was a vent cover, right, you unlocked the --

- 1 A. Oh, you mean the vent shaft --
- 2 Q. Cover on top, cover on top.
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. Yeah.
- 5 A. Was it already open?

Q. Was it gone -- was it moved open, and then when you
qeressed it was --

8 A. Oh, no. We left it open.

9 Q. You left it open?

10 A. Yes, ma'am.

11 Q. Okay. I just didn't know if you could see from the 12 inside if there was a way that a passenger would be able to get 13 themselves out.

A. Technically -- okay, so when you look at the top of the vent, it's a padlock inside of there. And if that padlock is not unlocked, they would not be able to get out. I mean, they could push the doors, and the doors would release, but they would stop at some point because they're being held together by a padlock.

19 MR. ROURKE: If I may? May I?

20 MR. DOWNS: Well --

21 MR. ROURKE: For clarification?

22 MR. DOWNS: -- for clarification, yes.

23 MR. ROURKE: Yeah. I think there is a padlock on top 24 like you're saying, Lieu.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

1 MR. ROURKE: But that's generally just to prevent 2 anybody from opening it up and pulling that cord. 3 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. Safetv. 4 MR. ROURKE: It should still function in emergency 5 egress from the bottom. 6 MR. DOWNS: In other words, to get the doors from the 7 tunnel --8 MR. ROURKE: The panic cord should still open the doors. From the inside. 9 MR. PAYAN: 10 MR. DOWNS: You should be able to push open from the --11 MR. PAYAN: Inside. 12 MR. DOWNS: -- from the inside. Is that what you're 13 saying? 14 Because the half -- yes, the half shouldn't MR. ROURKE: 15 go across. The half should be on one side only covering up that 16 thing. 17 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. 18 MR. ROURKE: I'll check it to make sure. 19 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Let's check it out. 20 MR. ROURKE: Yeah. But generally, they're designed so 21 the lock prevents ne'er-do-wells from coming in and opening them. MR. JOHNSON: Okay. 22 23 They should -- all should still function --MR. ROURKE: 24 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. 25 MR. ROURKE: -- for a passenger from the bottom.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Great. MR. ROURKE: But I will double check that one. 2 BY MR. DOWNS: 3 4 Ο. Now let me interject a question. Downs, NTSB. Just to 5 make sure we're clear --6 Α. Yes. 7 -- when you first arrived, you found the padlock in Ο. 8 place --9 Α. Yes, sir. 10 -- on the top of the door? Q. 11 Yes, sir. Α. 12 Q. And you opened it easily with the keys that you had in 13 your Metro bag? 14 Α. Yes, sir. 15 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Please continue. 16 MS. BURTCH: That was all I had. Thank you. 17 MR. DOWNS: Okay. Chief, questions? 18 MR. HAWKINS: Yes. 19 BY MR. HAWKINS: Derron Hawkins, D.C. Fire and EMS. I have a couple of 20 Q. 21 questions for you. So when you first arrived, and you noticed --22 you say you smelled an odor, but you wasn't sure what it was when 23 you first arrived? 24 Α. Right. Initially, like I said, this was prior to any 25 other alarms being dispatched to the Metro system. So we were

just dispatched on the local for an investigation of smoke coming from a shaft. But once we got there, we didn't see the smoke until the gentleman -- the construction worker came over and showed us footage, and he confirmed that there was smoke at some point, but we could just smell the odor.

Q. Okay. Even when you saw the two evacuees with soot
7 around their -- you never encountered smoke?

8 A. We never encountered any smoke.

9 Q. Okay. So you never linked up as a recon group when you 10 responded to that initial fan shaft, correct?

11 A. We never --

12 Q. You were never assigned recon with --

A. No, we were never -- no, we were never given any official, I guess, title or grouping. But we were told to, you know, assist any other passengers -- just two members, myself and one member from my backstep -- to go to the bottom of the shaft, and if we saw any more patients just to help them out, direct them, you know, point them in the right direction.

Q. Okay. And what truck company did you have with you?
 A. Dispatched? It was engine --

21 Q. Inside the fan shaft when you --

A. When we went in? We went by ourselves. Initially, it was Engine 13, Engine 7, Engine 3, Truck 10 and Battalion Chief 6 on our local. And we all arrived -- I know Engine 13 and Engine 7 and Truck 10, we all arrived pretty much simultaneously. And then

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33

1 we were told to, you know, to stage.

2	After we unlocked the shaft and we checked the Metro			
3	maps to make sure where we were in correlation to where the box			
4	was and trying to figure out where the train was, we were just			
5	told just to stage, do not enter the system at all until after			
6	those two gentlemen came upstairs.			
7	Q. So in terms of accountability			
8	A. Yes.			
9	Q was accountability ever established?			
10	A. Yes. Engine 7 was given accountability on that incident			
11	well, at our location.			
12	Q. Okay. And what level accountability was that?			
13	A. It was Level 3.			
14	Q. Okay. Regarding you mentioned about your training			
15	15 experience in Metro.			
16	A. Yes.			
17	Q. Regarding somebody with your experience and some			
18	8 inspections you have done			
19	A. Yes.			
20	Q do you feel as though you have the knowledge and			
21	skills to effectively respond to a Metro incident?			
22	A. I do. I do. I mean, I will say Metro is a different			
23	animal compared to any other regular responses we go on. But I			
24	feel comfortable and confident enough in my knowledge of that			
25	system that we can do our job if need be. But again, safety			

1 first.

2 Okay. And you mentioned you monitored 0-Alpha-3 as the Q. 3 original tac channel, and then you monitored the box alarm on --4 Α. Yeah. I think they were on 7. 5 Seven? Q. 6 Α. We were on 3, yeah, because we went out first. Yeah, so 7 3 and 7. 8 So did you experience any radio problems with --Q. 9 Α. Personally, I did not. But, like I said, once we got to 10 the bottom of the shaft at the track bed, where we were sitting 11 and waiting, I mean, it would come and go a little bit but not for 12 long periods of time. I mean, nothing out of the norm. 13 Ο. Okay. You say out of the norm. What did you mean by 14 that? 15 Α. Well, like long periods of time. I mean, you know, it's 16 a radio system. They --17 Ο. Intermittent? 18 If you have bad weather, it may mess up on you. Α. 19 Q. Okay. 20 MR. DOWNS: Let me interject a question, if I may, 21 Chief. 22 MR. HAWKINS: Yes. 23 BY MR. DOWNS: In comparison, just to get a baseline to, say, cell 24 Q. phone use, which is very good in D.C. --25

1 A. Okay.

9

Q. -- radios would be comparable to a cell phone reception, do you reckon, or less reliable?

A. There are dead spots in different parts of the city, and
you won't know it until you hit it even with Verizon or AT&T,
which tend to be the best cell phone coverages in this region. So
I would say, in my opinion, about the same.

8 Q. About the same or --

A. It just depends on hit or miss.

10 Q. -- because of dead spots, it's not as reliable as a cell 11 phone?

A. Okay. Given on an actual incident, if we're using a radio in a particular structure, again, that may change your -the usage or how good the radio works because it's harder for the signal to get out of that building. If you're speaking on just talking on the cell phone like outside, the radios tend to work great, in my opinion, when you're on the street.

18 Q. It's just when you get in a structure or underground in 19 Metro, then you got challenges?

20 A. Yes.

21 MR. DOWNS: Very good. Thank you, Chief.

22 BY MR. HAWKINS:

Q. So regarding communications, do we have -- what are the
procedures if you start experiencing radio communication problems?
A. So if you have problems on the radio, you notify the

1 incident commander. At that time it's -- the incident commander 2 will instruct the technicians on all companies to activate the VRS 3 system, and that's a system that helps us to enhance, kind of 4 locally enhance our communications at a particular point. The only downside to that, it doesn't work great on below ground 5 6 because it kind of sends a signal horizontally to wherever you 7 are. And then if that doesn't work, what you can do is have communications companies to set up -- I mean, to relay messages. 8 9 So you would set up a company here and, you know, a few hundred 10 feet away there until you get the message back and forth. 11 MR. HAWKINS: All right. Let me see. That's all I have 12 for right now. 13 MR. DOWNS: Thank you, Chief.

14 BY MR. DOWNS:

Q. While I'm thinking of it, Lieutenant, Engine 13 is located on what street, physically located, the engine house?

17 A. Yeah. 450, the number 6, S.W.

18 Q. And that's at School Street, I think, the intersection 19 there?

20 A. Corner of 6th and School.

21 Q. School. So you're only what --

22 A. I mean E, E and School.

Q. E and School. You're only, what, three, four, five blocks from the vent shaft, roughly?

A. It's a little bit more than that, but yeah, we're not

1 far. 2 Ο. Not too far? 3 Α. No. 4 Q. Okav. So you got there straightaway? 5 Yes. Α. 6 Q. Okay. 7 Yes. Α. 8 Very good. Let's digress a little bit here, Lieutenant. Q. 9 Your personal work history, how long you been with Metro? Maybe 10 you can give us the high points, the highlights over the years of 11 your progression through the ranks? 12 Okay. Well, I've been in the fire service for a total Α. of 17 years. I started as a volunteer. 13 14 With D.C. Fire or --Q. 15 Α. Prince George's County. P.G.? 16 Ο. 17 Α. Yes. 18 Q. Okay. 19 And then at the age of 21, I was hired here in D.C., and Α. I've been here currently 14 years in the -- just made 14 years in 20 21 December. 22 On the job in D.C. 14 years? Q. 23 Yes. Α. 24 Q. Okay. And you started out as a recruit firefighter? 25 Α. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Usual probation process?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. Tell us the rest.

A. Okay. I started out, I was --

5 Q. I'm not looking to fuss over dates. Just a progression 6 summary is fine.

A. Okay. Started out in 2000 as a firefighter, and around 8 2008, I made sergeant. In 2012, I made lieutenant, and that's my 9 current rank.

10 Q. Very good. And always working out of 13 Engine?

11 No, sir. I've been primarily in the 3rd Battalion most Α. 12 of my career when I was a firefighter. As a sergeant, I was assigned to the Trinidad Station, Truck 13. Briefly I was an aid 13 14 in the Special Operations Division to the chief. And when I 15 initially made lieutenant, I was assigned to Engine 32, which is 16 also in the 3rd Battalion. I've been at 13 since August of 2013. Very good. Thank you. How about notes of the event? 17 Q. 18 Did you happen to compile any notes, a worksheet or anything like

19 that?

A. Specifically, no, no literature other than what we were instructed to send, special reports, and outside of the narrative on our NFIRS.

Q. And that would be -- NFIRS would be the post-event report that you would routinely compile?

25 A. Yes. The national fire reporting incident management

1 Yes. We send those out for every one that we get. system. 2 Very good. And we've already gone over radios pretty Ο. 3 good. Your experience in this event as well as generally, 4 relationship with Transit Police Department, how would you 5 describe that? 6 Α. Good. 7 Ο. Good? 8 Α. I think so. 9 Ο. You had good communications here? We had testimony that were a couple of Transit -- a few Transit officers when Chief Hull 10 11 arrived. Did you dialogue with him at all, or no? 12 With Chief Hull -- no, I didn't see those guys at all. Α. 13 Ο. There was no Transit at your location when you arrived 14 at the top of the vent shaft there? 15 Α. When we came back up to the top or initially when we 16 arrived? 17 Ο. No. When you initially arrived? 18 Α. No. No. 19 But when you came back up? Q. No. 20 Α. Yes. 21 Ο. Did you have any interface with those folks at all? 22 No --Α. 23 Q. No? 24 Α. -- in general. 25 How about generally other Metro calls you've had over Q.

1 the years, the relationship with Transit PD?

A. They're very helpful. I mean, the majority of the runs we go on are medical-related in the Metro system, and they're good at helping us in any way they can.

5 Q. Good liaison relationship and everything?

6 A. Yes.

Q. Okay, great. Thank you. How about in OCC? In this particular event, did you have any dialogue with Rail, WMATA Rail OCC by chance?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. You didn't. How about generally other events, have you 12 had relationships with OCC?

A. Personally, when I was the aide, when I was a sergeant and I would ride with the chief, the second due battalion chief on our incidents is dispatched to OCC --

16 Q. Okay.

A. -- as a liaison with our departments. So I have once or twice done that, but there was no real incident. I mean, by the time we got there, we were put in service. And this is when they were at 5th Street, directly across the street from where we are now.

22 Q. So you wouldn't really have a history there to compare 23 and give us any kind of feedback?

24 A. No, sir. No, sir.

25 Q. Okay, good enough. Let's see. Let's see, we covered

1 that, that, that. Did you set up any kind of incident command at 2 the vent topside when you first arrived, or it hadn't progressed 3 to the level of needing incident command at that point?

A. No. When we initially arrived, we gave a size-up. We 5 are the eyes for our chiefs.

6 Q. So it was basically just a size-up at that point and 7 report back to your chief?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Okay. Let's see here. Your familiarity with Metro 10 cars, you worked in a number of locations around the city, and you 11 worked a lot of different Metro stations, so you've -- the 12 expectation there is you have a good familiarity with Metro cars, 13 rail cars?

14 A. Decent. I rode them more as a child traveling back and 15 forth to school.

Q. Okay. Emergency access doors on Metro cars. What's your understanding of how they operate? Can you tell us about that?

19 A. Emergency access doors?

20 Q. Yeah. Access from the outside to be able to get into a 21 rail car, tell us how that works.

A. Yeah. Okay. So there is a key that we're supposed to use, I believe, to open or unlock those doors, that then you physically have to manually slide them open.

25 Q. That's a barrel key?

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1	Α.	A barrel key, I believe, yes, sir.
2	Q.	Okay. And which particular doors are the access doors
3	on a al	ll the doors or specific doors or
4	Α.	No, no, no. I believe there's only two doors.
5	Q.	Two doors.
6	Α.	I believe it's for I can't remember the numbers of
7	the door.	
8	Q.	Doesn't matter. Is it looking at the side of the rail
9	car, which	n doors would be the left side, right side or center
10	side?	
11	Α.	I believe it's the middle door.
12	Q.	Middle door. So it's one door in each side, two doors
13	total, on	the rail car?
14	Α.	To the best of my knowledge, yes.
15	Q.	And it's a barrel key?
16	Α.	A barrel key.
17	Q.	Okay. Were you aware that there is actually a door
18	release ha	andle at that location?
19	Α.	From the inside or from the inside?
20	Q.	From the outside. From the outside.
21	Α.	On what type of cars?
22	Q.	On all of the cars.
23	Α.	No, sir.
24	Q.	No, sir. Okay, very good. That concludes that
25	question.	

1 MR. DOWNS: I'm going to turn it over to our next round 2 of questioning.

3	MR. ROURKE: I don't have anything further.
4	MS. BURTCH: I don't have any further questions.
5	MR. DOWNS: Chief, anything further?
6	MR. HAWKINS: No. I don't have anything further.
7	BY MR. DOWNS:

8 Lieutenant, I always like to give -- we're Q. Okay. 9 wrapping up our questions, sir. I always like to give our 10 witnesses the opportunity to express what we call retrospective 11 thoughts, meaning now that we have a little hindsight and 12 retrospect, knowing what you know now, not that you did anything 13 wrong, for the purpose of maybe sharing with the firefighting 14 community or WMATA, is there anything you'd do differently this 15 next go-around if you had a similar scenario unfold that might 16 help in the event? Anything you can think of off the top of your 17 head, kind of in the prospect of hotwash thoughts, anything like 18 that?

A. From my vantage point, no. I think from where we were, we weren't directly in, you know, a rescue effort. We were in staging, standing by and there if needed. So we did what we were, I think, supposed to do. I wouldn't change anything that we did. Q. That's what I'm looking for, just your particular area of expertise and knowledge. Nothing?

25 A. No, sir.

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1 Q. Okay. Very good. Anything else you'd like to add for 2 the discussion?

3 A. I think the Metro maps need to be updated.

Q. Ah, I'm glad you brought that up. I totally missed over that. Thank you for reminding me. You have a set of Metro maps you carry in your Metro bag?

- 7 A. Yes, sir.
- 8 Q. Is that correct?
- 9 A. Yes, sir.

Q. And the idea here is that you can bring out the maps at a moment's notice, start flipping through the maps, and find the particular station you're working, right?

13 A. It's a system. but yes.

14 Q. Okay. Tell us about the Metro maps.

15 A. Tell you about them?

Q. It's a good opportunity to kind of share with WMATA if there's challenges, things that you could see for improvement, anything like that.

A. I mean, the maps aren't the easiest thing to read, but they aren't the hardest thing to read, in my opinion, either. I think if you drill with them a little bit on a regular basis --

22 Q. Okay.

A. -- when it's time to use them you won't be so far behind the eight ball. I just do think that they need to be updated every once in a while.

- 1 Q. Updated? Okay.

2	A. Yeah, because our particular maps, unfortunately, what		
3	we realized, our battalion chief had a full Metro system; ours was		
4	limited. We didn't have anything outside of D.C. So the		
5	particular line, that Yellow Line, I believe, that this was on,		
6	the Green and Yellow Line, it went into Virginia from L'Enfant		
7	Plaza, but we couldn't see past where we were.		
8	Q. In your book, you didn't have a Virginia map?		
9	A. No. No, sir. It stopped. We only had D.C. stations,		
10	so we had to utilize the battalion chief's maps.		
11	Q. Oh, that's a good point in that you say you had to		
12	utilize battalion chief's maps, and he had a full set of maps for		
13	Virginia?		
14	A. He had a full yes, his was a full set.		
15	Q. Okay. So what happens if like, for example, you get a		
16	mutual aid call for Arlington?		
17	A. Okay.		
18	Q. And you're the first happen to be the first roll up		
19	on call there, and Arlington says, do you have the Metro maps?		
20	A. Yeah.		
21	Q. What do you say?		
22	A. Well, that's a good question. And what I would do,		
23	because we don't currently have a full set we're in the process		
24	of ascertaining one is I would ask for another company to see		
25	if they had a full set or request a commanding officer to		

1	Q.	So ideally, you'd like to have a full set of maps for
2	the entir	e Metro system, both Virginia, Maryland
3	Α.	Yes.
4	Q.	P.G., so that in case you needed it, you had it. You
5	might nev	er need it but
6	Α.	Right.
7	Q.	just there just in case.
8	Α.	Yes.
9	Q.	Good point. Thanks for reminding me on that point.
10		Anything else you'd like to offer?
11	Α.	No, sir.
12	Q.	Okay, very good. Thanks very much. That concludes our
13	interview	
14	Α.	Thank you.
15		(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 Jonathan Johnson

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: February 2, 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.

Karen Ehatt Transcriber