



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

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

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

Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: FANNIE SMITH

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

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Fannie Smith:		
By Mr. Bucher		5
By Mr. Downs		8
By Mr. Adams		21
By Mr. Ballard		23
By Mr. Vaughn		25
By Ms. Flemmings-McCann		26
By Ms. Samarasinghe		29
By Mr. Bucher		31
By Mr. Gordon		32
By Mr. Downs		33
By Mr. Adams		40
By Mr. Ballard		40
By Ms. Samarasinghe		42

I N T E R V I E W

(10:40 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Investigator for  
4 the NTSB. This is the interview of Fannie Smith, ROCC Control  
5 Operator for WMATA. Relative to the L'Enfant Plaza accident that  
6 occurred on January 12, 2015. The accident number is DCA-15-FR-  
7 004.

8 And Fannie, if you could -- let me go around the room,  
9 and then we'll start. To my right:

10 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Sharmila Samarsinghe. I'm with the  
11 Tri-State Oversight Committee from Virginia.

12 MR. LITTLETON: Tom Littleton. I'm the Associate  
13 Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight from the Federal  
14 Transit Administration.

15 MS. FLEMMINGS-MCCANN: Marlene Flemmings-McCann,  
16 Assistant Business Agent for Rail Operations, 689.

17 MR. VAUGHN: Brian Vaughn, Special Agent with the Bureau  
18 of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

19 MR. BALLARD: Hercules Ballard, Managing Director, Rail  
20 Transportation.

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

22 MR. DOWNS: Richard Downs, NTSB, Survival Factors Group  
23 Chairperson.

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

25 MR. BUCHER: Okay. Thank you. We have two observers.

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

3           MR. RHINE: Joey Rhine, NTSB.

4                           INTERVIEW OF FANNIE SMITH

5           BY MR. BUCHER:

6           Q. Great. Fannie, if you could, take us back to  
7 January 12th and give us, in your own words, your description of  
8 what happened at the incident from the control center.

9           A. Okay. When I was on the phone, I believe things  
10 happened like pretty back-to-back. There was a AC track circuit  
11 that went out at Anacostia. And then a circuit went out at Mount  
12 Vernon. And someone called and said there was smoke somewhere  
13 between Mount Vernon and L'Enfant. And so I heard my partner  
14 trying to ascertain exactly where there was fire or smoke. And I  
15 believe she had one train go through. And I believe that was -- I  
16 forget the ID.

17                   But one train went through Mount Vernon and said that, I  
18 believe, it was clear. And I think another train went through  
19 L'Enfant and said it was a good track inspection. I don't -- I  
20 think that train was on track 1. I'm not sure, because I was  
21 answering the phones and trying to listen and hear my partner  
22 through a bunch of people in between us. But I remember that 302  
23 was outside of L'Enfant, track 2, and 510 was approaching L'Enfant  
24 track 2.

25                   And 302, on the -- I'll say he was on the -- approaching

1 the L bridge, was saying that there was heavy smoke. And I  
2 believe the controller was trying to get radio communication with  
3 510 to get them off the platform at L'Enfant so that we could get  
4 the 302 back to L'Enfant track 2. But we didn't have  
5 communication, it seemed, with 510 for a long time. And  
6 eventually, we found out that Transit was on the scene and had  
7 pulled the operator and the supervisor off of the 510.

8           In the meantime, 302 had called and said he had a sick  
9 customer aboard. And I started medical to Pentagon thinking that,  
10 since we can't get in contact with 510, we'll try to get the train  
11 up to Pentagon. So I dispatched -- I asked for medical at  
12 Pentagon.

13           Then, shortly thereafter, the power was de-energized  
14 apparently through the ETS box at L'Enfant, tracks 1 and 2. And  
15 that's where the chaos began. We didn't know who was doing what.  
16 Train 302 had gone BIE, so the controller was now trying to handle  
17 the smoke situation and the fact that the train on the aerial line  
18 bridge couldn't move with the customer who was reported to have  
19 passed out.

20           And so it went until we realized that Transit had indeed  
21 pulled the supervisor off and the operator and evacuated  
22 train 510. And by this time, I feel like the scene was pretty  
23 much out of our control. We had lost control.

24           Q. Dave Bucher again. Were you involved with anything  
25 once -- I guess that we're talking post responders had arrived on

1 scene -- was there continued communication with the Control Center  
2 from anybody on the platform or --?

3 A. I'm sure there was -- I mean, everybody that was on the  
4 floor was on the phone talking to somebody on the phone and  
5 relaying the necessary communication to either myself or the radio  
6 controller. And then, of course, the phone was ringing off and  
7 on. So as far as when we found out, I believe a supervisor  
8 called, the supervisor that was on the train, 510, I believe he  
9 called the Control Center and said that Transit had pulled him and  
10 the operator off and evacuated the station.

11 Q. Okay. Could you explain, briefly, your duties that --  
12 what you were doing at the time? What were you responsible for a  
13 portion of the --

14 A. Well --

15 Q. -- track or were you doing some other duties? I mean --

16 A. Well --

17 Q. -- just what your job entails.

18 A. Okay. Well, I was -- I'm responsible for the traffic on  
19 the railroad, setting the routes and also for answering the phone.

20 Q. Okay. And that included everything around L'Enfant  
21 Plaza station?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Okay. You mentioned that 510 had a passenger that  
24 passed out or got sick, is that --

25 A. No, it was --



1 Q. Did I hear that wrong?

2 A. That was 302 had said that. The train that had just  
3 passed L'Enfant was on the aerial line bridge --

4 Q. 302.

5 A. -- said he had a sick customer -- a customer had passed  
6 out on a particular car. I can't remember the car number.

7 Q. Okay. 302?

8 A. I believe it was 302.

9 Q. Okay. We'll just go round the table.

10 MR. GORDON: You going this way first?

11 MR. BUCHER: We can go that way. Go to the left.

12 MR. GORDON: I have nothing right now. Joe Gordon,

13 NTSB.

14 BY MR. DOWNS:

15 Q. Downs, NTSB. What's your title, Ms. Smith, with the  
16 OCC?

17 A. Rail operations control supervisor.

18 Q. Supervisor?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And what's your experience, please?

21 A. Been with WMATA for 6 years.

22 Q. Okay. Six years in the Control Center, or can you give  
23 us a run down as to your experience here at WMATA?

24 A. Well, I came to the company in August of 2008. Went  
25 through training for about 8 to 9 months. And then certified as a

1 controller right after that. And I've been working in the Control  
2 Center since that time.

3 Q. And at some point -- so you were controller and then  
4 promoted to supervisor? Is that --

5 A. No, well, that's the same thing. Controller, supervisor  
6 the same thing.

7 Q. Oh, so you were hired as a controller supervisor?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. I see.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. And do you have periodic training, updated  
12 training that they conduct with you, or how does that work?

13 A. Well, I would say, in a nutshell, no periodic updating  
14 of training. We've had manpower issues that haven't allowed us to  
15 go out in the field and see other aspects of our job. And pretty  
16 much no classroom training unless you have an incident that you  
17 come back and you maybe get an hour of training --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- before going right back to work.

20 Q. I see. And when there's new periodic changes in your  
21 operational practices, are they introduced to you in some manner,  
22 or how does that work?

23 A. Yeah, usually in printed form.

24 Q. Okay. Do you have an operations manual that you follow,  
25 or --

1 A. We do have an emergency operations manual that we --

2 Q. Emergency --

3 A. -- follow.

4 Q. -- operations manual.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. Well, actually, jumping ahead for me. Thank you.

7 On this particular day of the event, the procedure that you

8 followed was according to the manual process?

9 A. Well, I'll say we tried to shoot pretty close to the  
10 procedure, which is to stop trains. Turn trains if we have to get  
11 an inspection. All that.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. But it became very hard to just do it in a methodical  
14 way, because we had so much going on at one time.

15 Q. I see. And just by your description here, it sounds  
16 like the problem in not being able to bring train 302 back into  
17 the station was the fact that the 510 train was still servicing  
18 the platform or stuck on the platform blocking that --

19 A. Well, it was -- I say it was the fact that we had no  
20 communication. We didn't know if the operator was reversing ends,  
21 was going to --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- move the train off the -- we didn't have any -- so we  
24 didn't know what was going on.

25 Q. So the last information you had was that that 510 train

1 had pulled into the platform and was still sitting at the  
2 platform, blocking the platform, in effect. That would have  
3 precluded bringing that train in, because you can't occupy two  
4 trains on a platform; is that correct?

5 A. Well, visually, I saw the train on the platform. I  
6 believe the radio controller had told the train operator to stop  
7 the train prior to getting to the platform. And I believe the  
8 operator said that she had stopped the train prior to getting to  
9 the platform. But AIMS showed that she was on the platform when  
10 we were trying to raise her.

11 Q. Yeah, when we conducted our inspection that particular  
12 night, the train was at the platform, but was at the back end of  
13 the platform. The leading end of the platform, not the normal 8  
14 car position.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. Okay? So it was about a two car length of space still  
17 at the platform available.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. Let me ask you, in your control equipment, when it shows  
20 a train sitting at a platform, is that one control block or does  
21 it show where a train sits within the platform itself or --

22 A. No, it's just --

23 Q. -- how does that work?

24 A. -- a basic indication. We -- it wouldn't tell us how  
25 many feet from anything, you know. It's not --

1 Q. So you can't tell --

2 A. -- to scale.

3 Q. You can't tell that you had, in this particular case,  
4 you couldn't tell you had space potentially to bring the train  
5 back --

6 A. No.

7 Q. -- slowly, without hitting the other train. And had you  
8 been able to know -- determine that, would you have been able to  
9 bring the train back by chance?

10 A. Well, I'll say this. I probably wouldn't have been able  
11 to make that decision --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- because I'm the button controller. That probably  
14 would come from the assistant superintendent.

15 Q. Assistant superintendent.

16 A. Because the trains would be then facing.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. You know what I'm saying.

19 Q. So the Assistant Superintendent would be that decision  
20 person.

21 A. He could make that decision, yeah.

22 Q. I see. And was that person around on the day of the  
23 event?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. Was that person at all consulted with this

1 problem, do you know? Was that person --

2 A. Oh, yeah. He was on the scene.

3 Q. -- in the middle of all this?

4 A. He was on the scene.

5 Q. Is that person on our interview list?

6 MR. BALLARD: Yes. He's here.

7 MR. DOWNS: That person is on our interview list?

8 MR. BALLARD: Yes. Um-hum.

9 BY MR. DOWNS:

10 Q. Okay. Thank you. So you expressed -- it seemed to me  
11 you were expressing a level of frustration in this in terms of  
12 being -- trying to contact the 510 train. They didn't respond.  
13 You learned later that the train -- the Transit PD had removed the  
14 train operator and the supervisor, evacuated the train, which  
15 presumably is their standard practice when you have smoke in a  
16 station; is that correct?

17 A. Well, I would have thought we would have known that that  
18 was going on. It was kind of that situation where the right hand  
19 didn't know what the left hand was doing.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So we're being futile. We're trying to --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- move this train. Had we known that it was being  
24 evacuated, then we could have made a different plan.

25 Q. I see.

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. And do you have access to video cameras showing you  
3 what's going on in L'Enfant?

4 A. I don't particularly, but there are cameras -- I mean  
5 there's -- up on the wall -- the cameras can be --

6 Q. In your control room?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. There's cameras that you could have consulted?

9 A. Someone can go back to the back desk and pull up --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- the camera and give us the feed.

12 Q. Did anybody do that in this particular circumstance?

13 A. Later on, yeah.

14 Q. Later on?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. How later on, roughly?

17 A. I don't know. I was --

18 Q. Best guess?

19 A. -- so involved.

20 Q. Your hands are full at that time.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. I see. Okay.

23 A. Yeah. I remember that the -- Roger Baker, the training  
24 instructor, he came over to me and he said, look up. You see the  
25 smoke in the station. And then he was telling me what fan to go

1 over to on the aerial line bridge and turn the fans on.

2 Q. Okay. Activation of the fans, getting to my next point.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. Is that done automatically, or is that manually, or  
5 both?

6 A. That's me. We get report of smoke or fire, we turn  
7 on -- I turn on the --

8 Q. You turn on the fans.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. When you first heard the report of smoke from the  
11 train --

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. -- what did you do?

14 A. Well, I first tried to figure out where the smoke was --  
15 where it was from, because I heard so much going on on the radio.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. Then when I figured out that it was L'Enfant, I went in,  
18 of course, and turned off --

19 Q. Smoke in L'Enfant or smoke in the tunnel between the  
20 river and L'Enfant?

21 A. Smoke at L'Enfant.

22 Q. That was the report that you got?

23 A. That's the station I'm listening for.

24 Q. Okay. So you didn't realize that smoke was actually way  
25 down the tunnel quite a distance?



1           A.    Actually, I don't know from the platform how far a  
2 tunnel is before it is aerial.

3           Q.    Um-hum.

4           A.    I don't know that.

5           Q.    You don't know that distance?

6           A.    No.

7           Q.    Okay.  But you activated the fan at some point?

8           A.    Oh, yeah.

9           Q.    Okay.  Did you exhaust them or did you cause the fan to  
10 blow air into the station?

11          A.    I put the fans on emergency exhaust.

12          Q.    Exhaust.  So that would take the -- draw the smoke from  
13 the station up out through the vent shaft; is that correct?

14          A.    Yes.

15          Q.    Okay.  And you don't remember when that occurred.  Was  
16 that fairly early on?

17          A.    Fairly -- yes.

18          Q.    Early on?

19          A.    Yes.

20          Q.    Okay.  Did you, later on -- and looking at the monitors,  
21 did you see the smoke starting to dissipate, or --

22          A.    Sometime during that night, yeah, we did see a clear  
23 station on the --

24          Q.    Sometime during --

25          A.    -- monitor.

1 Q. -- the night? Okay.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. All right. In retrospect, everybody's a Monday morning  
4 quarterback --

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. -- what things would you have done different here? Any  
7 of your thoughts or recommendations you can put forth for us?  
8 Kind of -- even bullet points would be helpful at this point.  
9 Things you'd do differently to help prevent the problem. Every  
10 problem is different.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Every challenge is different.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Do a little brainstorming for us, right now. What can  
15 you offer to us?

16 A. Well, I can say that, throughout the incident, I could  
17 not see my partner. I had to get up out of my seat a couple times  
18 to go talk to my partner or stand up and bend over to try to  
19 communicate -- I mean it was people deep. People on the phone.  
20 People running around. People asking questions. There's a  
21 certain amount of calm that for me works better in chaos than a  
22 bunch of chaos trying to undo chaos.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. That -- we've complained about that many a times before  
25 that when things jump off in the Control Center, people want to

1 just naturally come down and be right in the midst of it. And  
2 everybody wants to be giving orders. And I think that it should  
3 be just --

4 Q. So your --

5 A. -- one person.

6 Q. -- thinking here maybe is something along the line --  
7 correct me if I'm wrong -- is we should really evacuate from the  
8 Com Center, Control Center every unnecessary person and keep only  
9 those essential personnel in the area --

10 A. I actually think --

11 Q. -- that need to work.

12 A. -- it should be one person.

13 Q. One person.

14 A. Everybody else can stand back a ways. And they can --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- you know, give the instructions to the one person.

17 That keeps the controllers from being -- you know what I'm saying?

18 Q. Too much stimulus.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. I see.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. That's a good thought.

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. Anything else?

25 A. It just surprised me that -- well, I understand to a

1 certain extent that Transit could just do what they want to do  
2 autonomously.

3 Q. Transit PD?

4 A. Whoever they was that off-loaded that train and didn't  
5 connect with Central Control, so that we wouldn't have wasted all  
6 that time.

7 Q. So they never connected with you?

8 A. We didn't know until we had wasted a lot of time trying  
9 to make contact with 510. There's -- I feel like when the train  
10 was being evacuated of the supervisor and the customers, we should  
11 have known right then and there. So that, you know, precious time  
12 was wasted trying -- with the controller trying to raise 510. And  
13 to find out that nobody's on the train? That's not good business.

14 Q. Okay. That's a good thought, good point. Anything  
15 else?

16 A. One other thing I can say may have contributed is the  
17 fact that we just switched over to all digital radios. And  
18 sometimes you don't know if it's -- if the person is really  
19 hearing you, but because of the radio situation, they're not --  
20 we're not hearing them respond. We -- sometimes that is the  
21 problem. We didn't know if that was -- maybe that was the reason  
22 why we, you know, spent time continually trying to make  
23 communication with 510, so.

24 Q. So the problem is you need more frequent radio checks  
25 or --

1           A.    No, it's just that we're in a transition where maybe  
2   everybody doesn't know how to use those radios.  Sometimes the  
3   operators having trouble being on the right channel.  And so we'll  
4   talk to them.  Maybe they can hear us, but we can't hear them  
5   respond.  Or maybe they don't hear us at all.  So sometimes we're  
6   caught with that.

7           Q.    I see.  Okay.  Anything else?

8           A.    No.

9           Q.    Okay.  Great.  Again, in retrospect, had you known that  
10  the 510 train was at the lead end of the platform, meaning there  
11  was a couple of car spaces, could you have overridden your  
12  processes and authorized that train to pull back, if your system  
13  Superintendent wasn't available?

14          A.    Are you saying with the train, 510, being off-loaded and  
15  knowing that it's off-loaded?

16          Q.    And knowing it's off-loaded, knowing there's still a  
17  couple of car lengths available on the platform that you could  
18  have brought at least two cars of that 302 train --

19          A.    I'm not comfortable that I could have made that  
20  decision.

21          Q.    Okay.  Even as a supervisor?

22          A.    Right.

23          Q.    Why is that?

24          A.    Because I would have trains facing each other and no  
25  communication.

1 Q. Okay. But even if a train is moving at a very slow  
2 pace, a walking pace where even if you bumped another train, it's  
3 not going to really injure anybody or break up a train --

4 A. I'm telling you, I personally would not feel comfortable  
5 making that decision.

6 Q. Okay. Very good. That concludes my questions for now.  
7 Thank you.

8 BY MR. ADAMS:

9 Q. Okay. Dorsey Adams, WMATA Safety. There's two people  
10 on a console, correct?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And could you explain to me the function of each person?

13 A. Oh, the -- well, I'm the button person, so I control the  
14 switches, the -- I can put up lunars, put up reds, control the  
15 fans, answer the phones, make notifications, contact the terminals  
16 if I need something, if I need trains.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. The button -- the radio person is the one who does the  
19 communicating with personnel out in the field.

20 Q. Okay. When there was contact made or attempted contact  
21 to make with the train operator of 510, did you do it both by  
22 console and by digital radio?

23 A. I'm not sure what you mean.

24 Q. You said digital radios, and people may not -- I mean he  
25 had left the train at that point. So did you try to contact him

1 on his digital radio? The train operator?

2 A. Okay. In Central Control, we have our regular system,  
3 which is digital. We push a button.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And the transmission goes out to all the digital radios.  
6 So I don't -- I can't switch back and forth to anything.

7 Q. So you hit digital and you go with a unit number.  
8 Train 510 or whatever.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Right, respond. And you ask him to respond, right?

11 A. Right.

12 Q. And he didn't.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Okay. Do we know who hit the ETS button?

15 A. All we know is that Central didn't. We don't know what  
16 personnel down there did that.

17 Q. Okay. Do you know by looking at the board how far power  
18 is down? Say it's down from the platform, how far out --

19 A. Yeah, we can --

20 Q. -- you can look at the board and tell that?

21 A. -- look at the chain markers and see from what end to  
22 what end the power's de-energized. It's an indication.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Of course, you would have to hot stick confirm.

25 Q. And how far was power down?

1 A. I can't remember the numbers.

2 Q. Okay. But was it all the way up to L, the L bridge? Or  
3 beyond?

4 A. No, I think at first it just went past the platform, the  
5 front of the platform and behind the platform, just the -- kind of  
6 in the platform limits.

7 Q. Didn't it include where train 302 -- the area where 302  
8 was in.

9 A. I cannot really recall. I do know that at some point I  
10 had to drop more power. And I don't know if that was more to the  
11 aerial line. I know it was more going toward Waterfront when  
12 customers were evacuating. But I can't recall how far up the  
13 aerial line that ETS went.

14 Q. But you did drop additional --

15 A. I did have to when the customers were being evacuated.

16 Q. You know what point in the process that was done?

17 A. No, I would have to refer to my -- the letter.

18 Q. Okay. That's all the questions I have for now.

19 BY MR. BALLARD:

20 Q. Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro. Ms. Smith, you said  
21 there was a supervisor at L'Enfant Plaza?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Was the supervisor there when the incident began or did  
24 you dispatch the supervisor to that location?

25 A. I'm not sure when the supervisor was on the location. I



1 just found out that supervisor was pulled off the train with the  
2 operator. I didn't -- I never knew that supervisor was -- how he  
3 got there, if he was already there or not.

4 Q. Okay. When you activated the fan --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Tunnel fan and station fan.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. And you said that you put both the tunnel and the  
9 station fan in exhaust.

10 A. I put every fan --

11 Q. In exhaust.

12 A. -- every fan, yes, in emergency exhaust around L'Enfant.

13 Q. And they both remained in that configuration throughout  
14 the incident as far as you --

15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. -- were aware. Okay. On the day of the incident,  
17 during the period, I guess, when the incident started, when you  
18 were communicating with the operators, 510 and 302, was there any  
19 indication to you that there was an issue with the radio that  
20 prevented you from being able to communicate with either operator  
21 or the supervisor?

22 A. Now, I wasn't on the radio, so --

23 Q. But from your position --

24 A. From what I --

25 Q. -- as controller.

1           A.    -- could hear, it seemed like 302 we had communication  
2 with. 510 we had communication with in the beginning when the  
3 controller was telling the operator to stop the train. And the  
4 operator said, Central, I'm stopped. But then after that point,  
5 it seemed like we didn't have communication with the 510 operator.

6           Q.    When you say we did not have communication with the 510  
7 operator, are you saying that you were not able to contact that  
8 operator or that you felt that you lost communications into  
9 L'Enfant area.

10          A.    All I'm just saying is that when we were trying to  
11 raise 510, there was no response --

12          Q.    Okay.

13          A.    -- on the radio.

14          Q.    Thank you, ma'am.

15          A.    Um-hum.

16          Q.    That's all I have.

17                   BY MR. VAUGHN:

18          Q.    Brian Vaughn with ATF. You said earlier that -- made a  
19 comment about there was a report of a medical emergency?

20          A.    Yes.

21          Q.    How early into the event was that reported to you?

22          A.    Oh, I think it was like in the first -- maybe first 10  
23 minutes if not earlier.

24          Q.    Okay. And did that come from 302?

25          A.    Yes.

1 Q. From the operator of that train?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. That's it. Thank you.

4 BY MS. FLEMMINGS-MCCANN:

5 Q. Marlene Flemmings-McCann, Local 689 rep. I guess the  
6 one thing that kind of stood out to me as you said -- I want to  
7 see exactly what it was about, sorry. You said something about  
8 you felt that you had just lost control?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And I want to say this to you. I really sympathize with  
11 that, because I can -- I understand somewhat. When that happened,  
12 and with all the stuff going on and all the communications and  
13 everybody in everybody's ear --

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. -- do you think, when you couldn't reach 510, at that  
16 point, do you think is that when you got a little frustrated  
17 with -- you're trying to reach an operator because you have  
18 another operator on 302 saying I need to get to the platform. And  
19 you're trying to reach 510.

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Is this -- and I want to ask this question, maybe don't  
22 want to -- I don't want to confuse you, but is that normal that  
23 Transit takes over a situation and not notify ROCC? Because being  
24 in a station myself and always listening to the radio, I know  
25 Transit do communicate with their own supervisors, but I know they

1 have to talk to ROCC, because ROCC has full responsibility over  
2 main line. So if they make a call and you don't know, then that's  
3 where the communication stops.

4 A. Well, I can tell you in the past that we've had --  
5 even -- me being involved, I've had Transit to drop the power  
6 during an incident without telling Central. So everybody's going,  
7 who's dropped -- who dropped power? Who dropped power? And we  
8 find out that it's Transit. We've had issues in the past with  
9 Transit just going to the road way and Central not knowing about  
10 it.

11 Hasn't happened that I know of lately, but I just had the  
12 conversation with my Superintendent a couple days ago. I said,  
13 during these kinds of incidents, can Transit -- can they -- are  
14 they in charge? And he said, you know, basically, yes.

15 And so I understand it on one hand that they're there and  
16 we're sitting away from the actual event. And they have to do  
17 what they have to do. I just was concerned that -- how can they  
18 do it without a liaison, because, you know, there's so many people  
19 back here, and I see them with guns and I figure -- assume that  
20 they were Transit. And he says well, sometimes they're just  
21 emergency management and, you know, sometimes they are -- they're  
22 Transit.

23 And I just didn't understand and I didn't get a clear answer  
24 as to how it is that Transit can -- okay, you can do what you have  
25 to do, but how come we don't have to know in Central Control?

1 Q. Yeah. Another thing, I didn't know the position of  
2 the 510 train.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. I assume that it made it to the 8 car marker. Did  
5 Central know it had not made it to the 8 car marker?

6 A. No, because when we look at AIMS, AIMS is just an  
7 indication; it's not exact. It visually looks like the train is  
8 sitting, properly berthed on the platform. What's in the field  
9 could be something other, but we just get a general indication.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you have to look at a monitor,  
11 actually, to see at a station where a train might be physically  
12 located; is that what you're saying?

13 MS. SMITH: I guess we could, but we don't -- as a  
14 controller, we don't generally do that.

15 BY MS. FLEMMINGS-MCCANN:

16 Q. Okay. And I got that. The part I'm confused with is at  
17 what point, being a former operator, at what point would an  
18 operator pull into a platform and not proceed to the 8 car marker  
19 unless ROCC says stop your train?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Did that happen?

22 A. Yeah, the controller said to stop the train before she  
23 got onto the platform. And the operator said, Central, I am  
24 stopped.

25 Q. Okay. And then, after that --

1           A.    But we're still looking at AIMS showing the train is on  
2 the platform.

3           Q.    Okay.  So with that being said, you have a train that  
4 you know you have told them to stop the train, so they're not at  
5 the 8 car marker.  You know that much.  Right?

6           A.    I don't know what has happened, because we lost  
7 communication.  So --

8           Q.    Okay.

9           A.    -- we don't know -- when I say I don't -- we don't know,  
10 we didn't know.  We just didn't know.

11          Q.    Okay.  Okay.  I understand what you're saying.  Okay.  I  
12 don't have anything else to say.

13               MR. BUCHER:  You want to take a break?

14               MS. SMITH:  Yeah.

15               MR. BUCHER:  Okay.  Let's take a break.

16               (Off the record.)

17               (On the record.)

18               MR. BUCHER:  This is Dave Bucher again.  We're back with  
19 interview of Fannie Smith.  And we'll start with a question from  
20 Mr. Littleton.

21               MR. LITTLETON:  Hi, Tom Littleton from Federal Transit  
22 Administration.  No questions.

23               BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

24           Q.    Ms. Smith, hi.  I'm Sharmila Samarasinghe with the  
25 Tri-State Oversight Committee.  One question.  In your standard

1 practice, when you have an emergency situation, where you have  
2 several trains or one train in a station platform or inside a  
3 tunnel waiting for further instruction to move, either to evacuate  
4 passengers or to take the next step, and if you -- and then you do  
5 know that Transit Police is involved in the incident response, do  
6 you all -- do you have the expectation that the MTPD OEM desk back  
7 in the control room will communicate with you all and kind of keep  
8 you up to speed on what actions they are taking in relation to  
9 what actions you are deciding to take?

10 A. I absolutely expect that.

11 Q. Okay. All right. And can you characterize your  
12 experience that day in terms of that interaction, on the 12th of  
13 January?

14 A. Well, when 302 said they had the sick customer on that  
15 train, I knew from past experience, you don't play with that. You  
16 got to get them some medical help. And so my concern was, we got  
17 to get this 302 moving. There's a train on the platform we're not  
18 able to communicate with. We don't know if he understands that we  
19 want him to reverse ends or if he understands or she understands  
20 we want them to move off the platform, move forward. We don't  
21 know that they're hearing anything.

22 I just know that this customer needs medical attention. And  
23 so I'm waiting for the decision to be made that, if we don't get  
24 this 510 out of the way, that we can at least get this 302 moving  
25 somewhere to get this medical attention. And just to find out

1 that we wasted all that time talking to an empty train -- it was  
2 just frustrating. I was like, unbelievable.

3 Q. And just a follow up question. Were there people --  
4 were there WMATA OEM or MTPD personnel at the MTPD OEM desk?

5 A. All I know -- there was a bunch of people. Who and what  
6 they are, I don't --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- really know. But there was enough people to go  
9 around for every --

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. -- issue we were dealing with --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. -- in that Control Center.

14 Q. And usually the information flow will come to you and  
15 you would --

16 A. No, their information would go to the assistant  
17 superintendent or above.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And we would just take instructions from, on a perfect  
20 day, from that one assistant superintendent.

21 Q. Got it. Okay. Thank you.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 BY MR. BUCHER:

24 Q. Okay. This is Dave Bucher again. And I just -- one  
25 question for clarification and that's for me. You said about the



1 ETS button. That's the power down button?

2 A. That's the emergency --

3 Q. Power cut or --

4 A. Yeah. You can take the power down on the platform if  
5 you see something going on, someone's on the road way, you have  
6 the ability to take power down right there on the spot.

7 Q. Okay. And there is one of these buttons at the station?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you. I just -- clarify that.

10 BY MR. GORDON:

11 Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. At any time during the incident, were  
12 there trains behind the 510 that would have prevented it from  
13 making a reverse movement?

14 A. No. The controller -- the radio controller was able to  
15 stop the previous train at, I believe it was Archives.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. We had communication with that train. He wasn't going  
18 anywhere. And eventually, I took the lunar behind 510, hoping  
19 that we could get it to cross over back to track 1 and head  
20 towards Gallery. But again, you know, no communication.

21 Q. No --

22 A. Not knowing that it was nobody on the train.

23 Q. Okay. So basically 510 says, we're -- when the  
24 controller reached out to 510 and said, we need you to stop. And  
25 the operator on 510 comes back and says we are stopped. At that

1 point, the communication then goes back to 302. At that point,  
2 when 510 says we are stopped, there was no direction given to back  
3 it up. Basically, the next time any communication was attempted  
4 with 510, that's when you realized there's nobody on 510.

5 A. And I'm not sure what you just asked, but once 510 was  
6 told to stop prior to the interlocking, I believe 3-0 -- I think  
7 the controller went to 302.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Went to 302. And 302 said I've been sitting out here so  
10 long now, I'm BIE.

11 Q. Okay. So 510, the communication that they were stopped.  
12 And then there was no further communication with them, because the  
13 next time there's an attempt, there's no response.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Okay. Thank you. No further questions.

16 BY MR. DOWNS:

17 Q. Downs, NTSB again. Ms. Smith, on your control console,  
18 I've not seen the consoles lately, so refresh my memory how  
19 they're set up. Do you have smoke detector alerters on your  
20 console that would tell you if there's a smoke issue in a tunnel  
21 somewhere?

22 A. No, not -- no.

23 Q. No. So if you have a problem -- something burning in a  
24 tunnel, short of a train operator reporting the problem, there's  
25 no way for you to determine that?

1 A. Well, all we have -- we have a chemical alarm.

2 Q. Chemical alarm, okay.

3 A. Chemical, not smoke. Someone would have to report smoke  
4 to us.

5 Q. Okay. And I'm told by others in the investigation that  
6 these fans work two ways manually, that you can activate these  
7 exhaust fans as well as they have certain automatic features that  
8 will engage when there's smoke or whatever.

9 A. If they're set to automatic, yes.

10 Q. If they're set to automatic. But they operate either  
11 way, meaning if you don't -- you're not aware of a smoke condition  
12 and they're sensors nearby that do, they're going to get engaged  
13 anyways, right?

14 A. I'm -- I'm not totally --

15 Q. You're not sure on that?

16 A. Right, because --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- sometimes the fans are not working at all.

19 Q. Really?

20 A. Right.

21 Q. Tell us about that.

22 A. Well, we'll have people call on the phone to test the  
23 fans to make sure if they're working.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. Because sometimes there'll be an alarm and they're not

1 responding to Central Control's commands.

2 Q. Okay. Huh. Interesting. Okay. But if you somehow  
3 learned of a problem, there's smoke in a tunnel --

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- do you have the capability to switch on certain  
6 fans --

7 A. Oh, yeah.

8 Q. -- to exhaust? And certain fans to feed air? In other  
9 words, so there's a flow of air away from a station or a flow of  
10 air away from a given point?

11 A. Yeah, each fan has a control where I can turn it off,  
12 turn it on, set it to automatic, set it to automatic exhaust,  
13 automatic supply.

14 Q. Supply, okay.

15 A. So I can control it if it's, you know, not an emergency  
16 state, it's working. I can control whatever I want.

17 Q. I see. But in this particular case, you switched  
18 everything exhaust?

19 A. Everything was locked.

20 Q. Because you didn't know where --

21 A. Emergency exhaust.

22 Q. Correct me if I'm wrong, you didn't know where the smoke  
23 was coming from, you just knew there was smoke in that tunnel.

24 A. In the area, yes.

25 Q. And that would be your standard instructions, your

1 guidance from your operational manuals to follow that --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- that practice. Again, brainstorming to help kind of  
4 resolve your thoughts here, had you known that the smoke was in  
5 front of the 302 train, quite a distance, would you have,  
6 hypothetically, switched on the fan at the vent shaft in front of  
7 the 3-0 train, 302 train, switched that onto exhaust to draw the  
8 air in that direction and up, and then switched the fans in  
9 L'Enfant Plaza to supply? That way you'd have a flow of air away  
10 from the station and away from the train. Is that -- again,  
11 hypothetical --

12 A. Sometimes we do that, but generally when it's smoke and  
13 we know it's smoke, I just pull everything out.

14 Q. Just everything exhaust.

15 A. Pull everything out, yes.

16 Q. And that's your experience has shown that's the best  
17 way.

18 A. Well, I'm not going to say it's the best way, it's just  
19 what I do.

20 Q. That's your practice.

21 A. Sometimes we'll get -- someone will tell us out there,  
22 maybe because they're there, they'll say, can you just put one end  
23 supply and one end auto. But generally, when people call for the  
24 fans to be turned on, it's automatic exhaust.

25 Q. Well, that brings a good question. Would it be helpful

1 to you, then, to have smoke detector indicators on your board and  
2 where you can identify halfway through this tunnel, you got smoke?  
3 And that the best way to eliminate the smoke, draw it away from a  
4 station or a train, is to sequence the fans in a certain way.  
5 Would that be helpful?

6 A. Well, I don't know, because we already have smoke  
7 detectors. They're the train operators and the personnel on the  
8 road way.

9 Q. Right. But the train operator may not necessarily know  
10 the source of the smoke. We know how far ahead it is. Whereas a  
11 smoke detector would precisely show and narrow down that area.  
12 Would that be help -- I'm just asking --

13 A. It couldn't --

14 Q. -- would it be helpful to you?

15 A. It couldn't hurt. I mean --

16 Q. It couldn't hurt.

17 A. It couldn't hurt. Uh-uh.

18 Q. Good. Perfect answer. Okay. Excellent. Thank you.  
19 How about prior emergency events that you've experienced in the  
20 last -- since 2008. Any big events that you were involved with?

21 A. Yeah, I was involved with the 2009 June accident.

22 Q. The Fort Totten.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. Tell us about that. What was your involvement  
25 there?

1           A.    Fresh out of training.  And I was the button controller  
2 on the Red Line --

3           Q.    Okay.

4           A.    -- with a senior controller.  And again, we didn't -- we  
5 lost communication, didn't even see the train on the screen any  
6 more.  For a long period, we just didn't know --

7           Q.    Right.

8           A.    -- what was going on.

9           Q.    This is where we had a malfunction of the signal system,  
10 so the train is riding along on automatic, okay?

11          A.    Um-hum.

12          Q.    Not realizing there was a train in front of it?

13          A.    Right.

14          Q.    And you didn't show a train in front of it.

15          A.    Right.

16          Q.    And it was a very frustrating environment obviously --

17          A.    Absolutely.

18          Q.    -- for you.  Okay.  Great.  How about other experiences?  
19 I know this is sensitive for you, but it's helpful sometimes that  
20 we discuss it a little bit.

21          A.    Nothing on that level.

22          Q.    Nothing on -- little minor stuff you can think of?  
23 Routine medical emergencies like daily basis almost -- sometimes?

24          A.    Usually, you know, medical -- I haven't had anybody die  
25 on me, except for these two times.  But everything is, you know,

1 pretty much gone by the book, you know. We've handled it and it's  
2 worked out.

3 Q. Okay. Great. Where is the Transit Police Department  
4 Operations? That's not near your Control Center at all?

5 A. It's in CTF.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Where -- what room, I couldn't tell you the number.

8 Q. But you're nowhere near connected with those folks,  
9 short of talking to them --

10 A. Me personally?

11 Q. Short of talking to them on the --

12 A. On the phone.

13 Q. -- phone or on the radio?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. I see. And they have no representative that sits at a  
16 desk in your operations facility to liaison with them?

17 A. I know they have emergency management. I'm not sure  
18 if -- how connected emergency management is with Transit Police.

19 Q. I see. Would it be helpful maybe to have a Transit  
20 Officer in your facility to be able to liaison a little bit?

21 A. Well, I think they're -- they're in the prox -- I mean,  
22 because they do show up.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. You know, they do show up. So they've got to be pretty  
25 close if they're in CTF. You know what I'm saying?



1 Q. I see. Okay. I'm just thinking we've had other  
2 investigations where we've found having another emergency service,  
3 or having the emergency service's representative right there --

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- rather than on a radio or a telephone, it's helpful  
6 to communicate faster, that's all.

7 A. Sure. Why not?

8 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you. That concludes my questions.

9 BY MR. ADAMS:

10 Q. Dorsey Adams, WMATA Safety. You don't have a smoke  
11 sensor on your console. But there's smoke alarms in other parts  
12 of OCC that somebody else receives? Any other desk receives it,  
13 any of those alarms that you know of?

14 A. No, not that I know of.

15 Q. Okay. Other than the adjustments you made to the fan,  
16 do you know whether any other configurations were made during the  
17 whole event by you or by somebody else?

18 A. I don't think so.

19 Q. So other than you putting them on emergency exhaust,  
20 they were never reconfigured for any purpose that you know of?

21 A. Right.

22 Q. That concludes my question.

23 BY MR. BALLARD:

24 Q. Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro. Ms. Smith, after  
25 you became aware that the operator of 302 wanted to reverse ends

1 and move back towards L'Enfant Plaza, why was the decision not  
2 made to move towards Pentagon? Since -- when you realized that  
3 you could not go back to the platform at L'Enfant Plaza?

4 A. Well, that was my thinking was that, once you got on the  
5 aerial, you have air. You no longer in smoke. But that's not my  
6 call. So like I said, there was many people in between me and my  
7 partner. And they were making -- they were making the calls.  
8 They were on the phones. They were giving out instructions. So  
9 it was just, you know, my place to try to follow along and do what  
10 I'm supposed to do with the instructions.

11 Q. So you were showing no trains between that train and  
12 Pentagon, right?

13 A. Between 302 and Pentagon.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. No.

16 Q. Track was clear.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. As far as you knew.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. But Ms. Smith, because the operator (indiscernible) left  
21 L'Enfant Plaza, and we'll talk to the radio controller, and the  
22 operator said that he was going into an area where smoke was --

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. -- he introduced it right -- was it your understanding  
25 or was it the radio controller's understanding that the problem

1 was ahead of the train rather than behind the train?

2 A. Well, it was my understanding that, if there was smoke  
3 on the platform at L'Enfant, where 302 was, there was smoke in  
4 front of him and smoke in front of him -- I mean, behind him. But  
5 if he got onto the aerial line bridge, he was, you know, in the  
6 aerial where he would have had air.

7 Q. No problem. All right. When the train operator told  
8 you that the brakes in emergency --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- train BIE, was that after you realized that the power  
11 had been taken off the platform at L'Enfant Plaza or after you  
12 took down power because of the emergency evacuation? Do you  
13 remember?

14 A. When he called brakes in emergency, I remember seeing --  
15 still trying to get 510 to move and the operator saying I been  
16 sitting here so long. I'm going to say I don't think power was  
17 de-energized at that time, because had it been de-energized, we  
18 wouldn't have still been dealing with 510 -- trying to get it to  
19 move.

20 Q. Okay. No other questions.

21 MR. VAUGHN: I have no questions.

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

23 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

24 Q. Ms. Smith, one question to follow up on Mr. Downs.  
25 Shamira Samarasinghe, Tri-State Oversight Committee. You were

1 explaining how the interaction happens between MTPD OEM versus you  
2 guys in the Control Center in the control room. Just so we  
3 understand it correctly, there is a MTPD OEM desk right inside  
4 where your desks are, right?

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. And as you explained a few questions ago, the flow of  
7 information from people who are manning the MTPD OEM desk is  
8 through the assistant superintendent to you.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. And if as I understand it, during rush hour, there is  
11 somebody always at the MTPD OEM desk inside the Control Center.

12 A. Okay.

13 MR. DOWNS: MPD, Municipal Police Department.

14 MS. SAMARASINGHE: No, the Transit Police --

15 MR. DOWNS: Transit Police Department.

16 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

17 Q. Yes. Yes. So on that day, do you recall whether there  
18 was somebody manning the MTPD OEM desk?

19 A. No, I just recall that there were a lot of people and  
20 who and what they were, I didn't --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- really know.

23 MS. SAMARASINGHE: So to your question, MTPD's not far  
24 away. They're inside --

25 MR. DOWNS: They have a representative --

1 MS. SAMARASINGHE: -- the Control Center.

2 MR. DOWNS: -- in your facility?

3 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Yes. Especially during rush hour.

4 MR. DOWNS: Okay.

5 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Rush times.

6 MR. DOWNS: She didn't realize it, because it was so  
7 crowded and confusing; is that correct?

8 MS. SMITH: That and I also couldn't understand if he  
9 was there, why he wasn't telling us what was going on.

10 MR. DOWNS: I see.

11 MS. SAMARASINGHE: And that is, as I understand --

12 MR. DOWNS: That's your question.

13 MS. SAMARASINGHE: -- the expectation that management  
14 has, right --

15 MS. SMITH: Um-hum.

16 MS. SAMARASINGHE: -- that the information will flow to  
17 you all if there is on scene MTPD presence. Thank you, Ms. Smith.

18 MS. SMITH: Um-hum.

19 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. No more.

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

21 MR. DOWNS: I'm good.

22 MR. ADAMS: I'm good.

23 MR. BALLARD: No questions. Hercules Ballard.

24 MR. VAUGHN: No questions.

25 MS. FLEMMINGS-MCCANN: No questions.

1 MR. LITTLETON: No questions.

2 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Thank you.

3 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

4 MR. BUCHER: Thank you. That concludes the interview of  
5 Ms. Smith.

6 (Whereupon the interview was concluded.)

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

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 Fannie Smith

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.

---

Laura Shanley  
Transcriber