



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

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

GROUP	
EXHIBIT	

Agency / Organization

Title

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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

* Docket No.: DCA-15-FR-004

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Interview of: WILLE VAUGHN

WMATA Headquarters,
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

RICK WALLY, Station Representative Manager
ATU Local 689

DION BAKER, Shop Steward for Train Operations
ATU Local 689

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:30 a.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident
4 Investigator for NTSB. This is the interview of Mr. Wille Vaughn
5 for accident number DCA-15-FR-004 that occurred on WMATA at
6 L'Enfant Plaza on January 13, 2015 [sic]. We are located at the
7 WMATA Headquarters Building. And to my right I have --

8 MR. LITTLETON: Tom Littleton, the Associate
9 Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight from the Federal
10 Transit Administration.

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

13 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State
14 Oversight Committee, Virginia full-time staff.

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

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

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

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

21 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, G-O-R-D-O-N, NTSB Investigator-
22 In-Charge.

23 MR. BAKER: Dion Baker, Shop Steward for Train
24 Operations for Local 689.

25 MR. BUCHER: And you have to speak up if you're in the

1 back.

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

5 MR. RYAN: Joe Ryan, NTSB.

6 MR. WALLY: Rickey Wally, Local 689, Shop Steward.

7 MR. BUCHER: Okay. This is Dave Bucher again; I think
8 we've covered all the introductions.

9 INTERVIEW OF WILLE VAUGHN

10 BY MR. BUCHER:

11 Q. Mr. Vaughn, as I previously mentioned if you could just
12 tell us briefly starting when you went to work on the 13th [sic]
13 how your day went and then as you got to your run of the incident
14 give us some more detail.

15 A. Okay. I worked Run 26; it comes on at 4:27 a.m. I
16 worked the run that day and during my -- it would have been my
17 first block, when my second block came on that's what I worked the
18 rest of Run 203. So it comes on after my run get off.

19 So, basically I got off -- get off around 12:49 and it
20 picks up like 1:27 in Huntington.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So I took, I think, 308 out of Huntington at 1:37. And
23 we was dropping back, we go to, you know, first to Fort Totten and
24 we dropped back at West Hyattsville. So not many trains to West
25 Hyattsville, 301.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And I went (indiscernible) that was the first thing is
3 come back to Fort Totten, go to service back to Huntington. And
4 just regular service, I went in service probably about two minutes
5 down because it's going around Prince George's Plaza and it's a
6 regular service. And I came in at the regular station, came into
7 L'Enfant Plaza normal. No smoke, no smell, no nothing. The
8 people on the platform (indiscernible) just prior to rush hour.
9 And I left and I didn't see, saw nothing and went on to
10 Huntington. I heard stuff behind me and they radioed something so
11 I skipped going back to Huntington.

12 I got to Huntington, took a (indiscernible) went to
13 black outs and I dropped back at 302 and I found out the train was
14 still at L'Enfant Plaza and it had smoke in the station. And then
15 I just went around on supervisor's instructions.

16 Q. Okay. I guess one of the important questions is, your
17 train operated normally, the 301 train operated normally, for you
18 and through the L'Enfant station?

19 A. Yes, yes.

20 Q. Okay. And you noticed no track defects, and I
21 understand that you're watching for other safety issues too, the
22 people getting on and off that train, but you didn't notice any
23 other track defects or anything else?

24 A. No. Like leaving L'Enfant it's like 2828 and you're
25 bearing right so your lights are shining bright on the third rail.

1 And so if there's anything you can see it because you're curving
2 right, you're shining right on it until it straightens out. Then
3 once it straightens out you pick up how it read outs. I saw
4 nothing.

5 MR. BUCHER: Okay. I'll pass off to Mr. Littleton to my
6 right.

7 MR. LITTLETON: No questions.

8 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Nothing at this time, thank you.

9 MR. MADARAS: No questions.

10 BY MR. BALLARD:

11 Q. Mr. Curley, where were you hired at Metro and what was
12 your first position here at Metro?

13 A. Bus operator.

14 Q. What year was that?

15 A. 1990.

16 Q. How long were you -- how long have you been a train
17 operator?

18 A. I was certified like February of 2000.

19 Q. Okay. Thank you, sir.

20 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: For the record, excuse me, you
21 called him Curley.

22 MR. BALLARD: Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Mr. Vaughn.

23 MR. ADAMS: I have no questions.

24 MR. VAUGHN: No questions.

25 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB.

1 BY MR. GORDON:

2 Q. Leaving the L'Enfant Plaza and really through the
3 tunnel, so southbound through the tunnel toward Huntington, I know
4 you said everything operated normal with the train. And I guess
5 the question that I have, when you're operating the train normally
6 and, you know, observing out front nothing caught your attention
7 at all throughout the entire movement through the tunnel?

8 A. No, nothing, because I do it everyday. But like I said,
9 when you're leaving there where the train is bearing right, your
10 lights are bright, on the third rail because the third rail is on
11 your left side --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- and you're bearing right.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And I know that's normal.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And I was surprised when I got there and heard the stuff
18 that happened.

19 Q. Right. Okay. And the only other thing that I would
20 like to ask, the situations like training for an emergency like
21 your train is stopped in a tunnel, how often or when was the last
22 time you received any training on what you would do in the event
23 of an emergency? Your train loses power and, you know, you're
24 there in the tunnel. Is there -- what's the training that you
25 guys receive for that?

1 A. We do have refresher training sometimes. I haven't had
2 -- I can't remember -- I haven't had refresher training on that
3 lately.

4 Q. Okay, okay. You don't remember the last time you had
5 like a scenario that you were involved in or anything like that,
6 training, exercise?

7 A. We had some training over here. We went for training at
8 Branch Avenue station on exercises like that, but that was a few
9 years. I can't remember the date, but we covered scenarios on
10 that.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you.

12 BY MR. BUCHER:

13 Q. Okay, Dave Bucher, I have one more question. Just from
14 my notes, and I wanted to make sure I heard your story, the 301
15 train originated from where and it was going to Huntington for
16 you?

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Okay. Where did you pick it up at, do you --

19 A. West Hyattsville.

20 Q. West Hyattsville, okay.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Dave, I would like to ask a
22 question.

23 MR. BUCHER: Yeah, we'll go around again. Tom?

24 MR. LITTLETON: I do have a question.

25 MR. BUCHER: Name?

1 MR. LITTLETON: Oh, sorry, Tom Littleton.

2 BY MR. LITTLETON:

3 Q. Do you remember if there was any water or puddles
4 dripping of water or anything in the tunnel, in that area?

5 A. On that third rail when you leave L'Enfant Plaza,
6 there's like a little, I guess, a little puddle in the station
7 there. And right about there, there's always been water there. A
8 little spot there and there's always been a little water there, a
9 little spot like on the station there.

10 Q. Okay. Thank you. No other questions.

11 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Oh, I'm sorry. I don't have any
12 questions.

13 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State
14 Oversight Committee. I do have one question.

15 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

16 Q. Mr. Vaughn, at the start of your service that day or at
17 the start of your, that particular run, on 301 starting at West
18 Hyattsville, were there any announcements by ROCC to you in
19 particular or to other operators on the line about anything that
20 was out of the ordinary that you might encounter on the line
21 during your run between West Hyattsville and Huntington?

22 A. No. No, I don't remember.

23 MS. SAMARASINGHE: Thank you.

24 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

25 MR. MADARAS: Jim Madaras, Local 689.

1 BY MR. MADARAS:

2 Q. Tom asked the question I was going to ask, I just want
3 to expound on it. Did you notice where the water was that you
4 said that exists there in the puddle? Was it higher or lower at
5 different times or was it pretty consistent?

6 A. No. It's just like when you are leaving there, by that
7 little, like little opening there, it's just like it's wet there.
8 It's like a little water, it's wet there. It's been that way.

9 Q. So it's just like a damp wetness, it's not like a, you
10 know, couple inches of water or running water --

11 A. No. It's like some water -- no, it's just -- you see
12 it's wet there, like a little leak or something there. I don't
13 know, I guess --

14 Q. All right, thank you.

15 A. But you can't miss it when you -- you can't miss that
16 spot.

17 Q. Okay, thanks.

18 BY MR. BALLARD:

19 Q. Hercules Ballard, Washington Metro. Mr. Vaughn, how
20 long have you been a yellow line train operator? How long have
21 you been operating the yellow line, just approximate?

22 A. Off and on since 2002.

23 Q. Thank you, sir. That's all I have.

24 MR. ADAMS: No questions.

25 MR. VAUGHN: No questions.

1 BY MR. GORDON:

2 Q. Joe Gordon, NTSB. A follow-up to Mr. Ballard's
3 question. You've been operating on the yellow line, let's just
4 say, in the past 30 days, have you noticed any -- how many runs
5 would you say, and I know you're not going to know this right off
6 hand but just approximately, how many times would you say you made
7 that run and we'll just focus on that area from L'Enfant south
8 toward Huntington? How many times have you made that run in the
9 past 30 days? We're not going to hold you to this. This is just
10 a --

11 A. I do five trips a day.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So it's five times a day but that day I covered a block,
14 same thing. But, yes, five times a day that I run that.

15 Q. Run that line, okay. Okay. Did you -- we've had some
16 questions about the water and just so we understand, the water
17 that you're talking about if you're coming through the tunnel
18 prior to exiting the tunnel on your left-hand side there's a
19 shaft, a recessed area where there's some equipment back there off
20 to your left-hand side as you're operating the train. And this
21 water would have been right in that location. Okay. Did you
22 notice any, would you say, the amount of water, the pulling of
23 water, would you say that it was any different that day than any
24 other trip?

25 A. Same, it was the same way.

1 Q. Okay. I have nothing further.

2 MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN: Marlene Flemings-McCann.

3 BY MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN:

4 Q In your daily operations of operating through the WMATA
5 system, little small puddles of water is not unusual?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. So you probably see it different places?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you.

10 MR. BUCHER: Thank you. Any more --

11 MR. BALLARD: I have one question, Dave. Hercules
12 Ballard, Washington Metro.

13 BY MR. BALLARD:

14 Q. Mr. Vaughn, when was the last time you were recertified?

15 A. I'm scheduled for it now.

16 Q. The time before?

17 A. I think they told me it was like, I think they -- I
18 think '09. I think they said '09. But I've been scheduled for it
19 and I'm waiting on to be recertified.

20 Q. Okay, thank you, sir.

21 MR. BUCHER: Any other questions? Dave Bucher. Ah, one
22 more?

23 BY MS. FLEMINGS-McCANN:

24 Q. Yeah, one more. Marlene Flemings-McCann.

25 I think you said, I just want to make sure I'm correct,

1 that you had some training maybe two years ago on this type of
2 situation, emergency situations or whatever?

3 A. It's probably was a little longer than two years ago.

4 Q. Okay. But for operators you all do get recertified
5 every two years; is that correct?

6 A. Yeah, we're supposed to.

7 Q. So that's probably you're coming up on it now?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Okay, thank you.

10 MR. BUCHER: Any other questions from the group?

11 MR. GORDON: Joe Gordon, NTSB. One more question.

12 BY MR. GORDON:

13 Q. On the water we touched on the fact that you see that
14 throughout your runs, different locations on the system. Anything
15 different about this location as far as, I mean, would you say
16 that there is a bigger area, you know, more water there or is this
17 pretty common to some of the water locations, some of the --

18 A. It's pretty common. It's not a big area.

19 Q. Nothing that really stood out as exceptional?

20 A. No, no.

21 Q. Okay. No further questions from me.

22 MS. SAMARASINGHE: David, I have one more question.

23 Sharmila Samarasinghe, Tri-State Oversight Committee. And this is
24 a hypothetical based on your training.

25 BY MS. SAMARASINGHE:

1 Q. Based on your training on emergency response in the
2 event that your train is part of the emergency incident, what is
3 the procedure that you're required to follow if an instance the
4 train is evacuated? Are you required to evacuate yourself also
5 off of the train? And if so, what kind of communication do you do
6 prior to evacuating yourself from the incident train to the
7 controllers?

8 A. Well, basically follow their instructions on the
9 (indiscernible) and going through (indiscernible) people
10 basically. Just basically follow their instructions essential.
11 And they (indiscernible).

12 Q. One more follow-up question. So there is going to be
13 affirmative communication, a positive communication, between you
14 and the controller that the controller understands clearly that
15 you are leaving the train; is that correct?

16 A. If they feel as --

17 Q. If the instruction to you is, Mr. Vaughn, you need to
18 evacuate yourself from the train along with the passengers, before
19 you do that you do a copy back to say, Train 301, we are
20 evacuating the train, train operator is evacuating the train; is
21 that correct?

22 A. Yes, per their instructions.

23 MR. BUCHER: Any other questions? Okay. Well, this
24 concludes the interview of Mr. Vaughn.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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 Wille Vaughn

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-FR-004

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: January 15, 2015

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

Michelle Smiroldo
Transcriber