

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, MARCH 12, 2011 (HWY11MH005)

HUMAN PERFORMANCE GROUP CHAIRMAN FACTUAL

ATTACHMENT #1

NARRATIVES FROM INTERVIEWS WITH ACCIDENT BUS DRIVER

(10 pages)

**Multiple Fatality Motorcoach Collision
with Vertical Pole Supporting an Overhead Bridge Sign
Bronx, NY; 03/12/2011
HWY-11-MH-005**

Interview with Ophadell Williams Jr., Accident Bus Driver, March 15, 2011,

On Tuesday, March 15, 2011 at 2:13 p.m., Mr. Ophadell Williams, Jr. was interviewed at the World Wide Tours office at 33 2nd Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215 by NTSB investigators Dennis Collins, Jana Price, and Gary Van Etten. Also present were Christopher Muldoon of World Wide Tours and Richard Marmelstein of Wilson Elser Moskowitz Edelman and Dicker, LLP. Mr. Williams was the driver of the 1999 Prevost bus involved in the March 12, 2011 crash in Bronx County, NY. Notes taken by Investigator Price form the basis for this narrative. The interview was not recorded.

In advance of the interview, Mr. Christopher Muldoon of World Wide Tours stated that Mr. Williams met with a personal criminal attorney on the morning of 3/15/2011, but did not retain that person.

Mr. Williams stated that his hip and pelvis were fractured, that his lower spine was cracked, and that he had bruises and injuries to his chest.

Mr. Williams began by describing the day prior to the accident. He noted that his regular time reporting for work is 6:15 p.m. He said he arrived at 6:15 p.m. on Friday, March 11 and that his bus was outside the World Wide Tours garage. He said that something had happened with another bus – he believed it was a flat tire—and that they had switched his original bus with another bus. Once he was assigned another bus, he conducted his pre-trip inspection. He indicated that he then drove to his first stop on Bowery and loaded passengers. He was supposed to be there at 7:30 p.m. but got there around 7:40 p.m. because the Manhattan Bridge traffic was heavy. The passengers said, “You’re late,” but didn’t argue. He then drove to the next stop at 100 Island Street. At the Island Street stop, no passengers boarded.

Mr. Williams indicated that he then proceed to the Mohegan Sun casino, arrived around 10:30 p.m. and drove to the bus stand. While the passengers were exiting the bus, he stated that he obtained a meal ticket, ordered some shrimp fried rice, an orange juice, and an apple juice. He noted that when you pick up your food, they tear your receipt to indicate that you received it. He indicated that he then got back in the bus, drove to the Bear Mount parking area, ate, and went to sleep. He stated that about 45 minutes later the bus tour guide assigned to that trip phoned him and told him to return to the bus stand because they had misplaced their money book.¹ He then drove the bus back to the bus stand and he and the tour guide searched the bus to find the money book until he was told that the book had been found by someone else. Mr. Williams stated that he then drove the bus back to the Bear Mount parking lot, parked in the exact same spot as before, went to the “middle-back” of the bus, took off his shoes

¹¹ During another part of the interview, Mr. Williams stated that the tour guide phoned him while he was eating his food at the Bear Mount parking lot, he went to the stand, and then returned and fell asleep around 11:00 p.m.

and socks and went to sleep. He said he had no problems falling back asleep. He was later awakened by a phone call from the tour guide around 3:18-3:20 a.m. when it was time to commence the return trip. He returned to the bus stand and the passengers boarded the bus. Mr. Williams indicated that the bus departed Mohegan sun at 3:45 a.m.

On the return trip, when asked about his speed, Mr. Williams stated that he was “Staying up with the flow of traffic.” During the return trip, he said that he saw a police car at one point on his left and later saw the police pulling someone over on the right. He said he did not recall if the moon was out.

He stated that at the time of the accident, he felt good. He was driving in the middle lane through a construction zone and that there was no car or other vehicle on his right. He said that his headlights were on and that the weather was windy but not so much as to affect the bus. He noted that he had noticed police on side of road with construction, passed one construction zone and then another before he went into the turn.

He stated that a tractor trailer passed the bus on his left – he could not estimate how fast-- and as it finished overtaking the bus, it came close to the bus. When asked to describe the truck, Mr. Williams stated that the truck was dark grey with the letters “RMS” or “MSR” on it. Mr. Williams also drew a picture of the bottom of the truck, which was consistent with an Interstate Commerce Commission ICC standard underride guard. In response to a question of whether the truck actually made contact with his bus, he stated, “yes, a little bit of the corner of the truck tapped the bumper.” He then described the steps on the left side of the underride guard and said that the right rear corner of the trailer touched the front left corner of the bus.

Mr. Williams said he believed that the truck eventually did complete the overtaking maneuver, but that he did not remember anything after that except trying to control the bus.

Mr. Williams stated that his seatbelt was fastened at the time of the crash, and that he felt the bus sliding and that he felt like he slid underneath the bus. He thought he was still in his seat at the end of the crash but under the bus. He didn’t remember how his seatbelt came off.

He stated that after the crash, he “wiggled” himself out, went to the back and started pulling people out of the bus. He stated that he called 911 from a passenger’s phone. He indicated that he looked at sign to say where he was at, and that after the 911 call, he went back to pulling people out. He stated that he felt like he couldn’t breathe, that his chest was compressed, and that his leg was giving out on him.

Mr. Williams stated that the ambulances arrived and that a man shoved something in his mouth and told him “you’ve got to breathe in this thing”.² He said the man shouted “take a deep breath” but he said he couldn’t. He said the numbers read 0000. He stated that the man made him breathe in the thing again, and the numbers still said 0000. The man who was testing him then nodded at another man in white shirt. Mr. Williams believed that the first man was indicating to the other man that he (Mr. Williams) was not drunk.

² Based on Mr. Williams’ description, the investigators believe he was referring to a Portable Breath Tester (PBT).

Mr. Williams stated that the ambulance took him to the hospital and the police visited him. He stated that he told the police what happened several times. He also said that NTSB investigators visited him in the hospital but that he did not talk to them at that time.

Mr. Williams stated that there were no mechanical issues with the bus on trip to Mohegan Sun or on the return trip. He noted that World Wide Tours is "really hard up about pre-inspection," and said that he even checks the test break every time. He stated that he was not using cruise control, never uses it, and doesn't think that the bus has cruise control

Mr. Williams stated that he has been married almost 9 years, Grandchild born 2 weeks ago premature, doing ok.

Nobody has passed away or had moved in his family recently. His only family member who is sick is his brother's son, who was diagnosed with cancer 2-3 months ago.

He stated that he has good vision, doesn't have glasses and had no vision problems on the night of the accident. He stated that his hearing is ok but that a long time ago a doctor said his "low and high tones weren't good." The doctor told him not to listen to music too loud. Before the accident, he had good vision, no glasses, no vision problems that night.

His most recent medical examination was his pre-employment screening with World Wide Tours.

He said that he does not drink alcohol and never has; he said he does not smoke or use drugs. When asked about prescription medicines, he said the only medicine was some ibuprofen for his knee. He said that during the wintertime, he fell and there was swelling. He went to the emergency room at Kingsborough about 3 weeks ago and the doctor told him to take Tylenol with codeine and ibuprofen.

When asked about other hospitals near his neighborhood, he listed Kings County, Downstate, Interfaith, Woodhall, Whitecoff, Kingsbrook, Brookdale.

Mr. Williams stated that his family doctor is Dr. Clifford Young in Brooklyn near Rockaway Parkway. He stated that he is in good health overall and noted that he has asthma but hasn't had problems for a long time. He had an albuterol inhaler with him in his pocket at the time of the interview. He stated that his pharmacy is Shore drugs on Ralph Avenue.

On his days off, he goes to bed around 8:00-9:00 p.m. and gets up between 11:00 a.m.-noon.

On a work days, he said his wake time depends on which run he does. If he has the 6:15 p.m. run, he'll get up around 4:30-5:00 p.m., commute by train (he approximated his commute time takes 30 minutes), and walk from the train to World Wide Tours. For the alternate run, he needs to be at work between 9:00- 9:30 p.m. He leaves the house around 8:30 p.m. Whichever run he does, he generally gets home around 9 a.m.

After getting off work, he stated that he generally goes to bed and generally sleeps well. He said that the daylight does not bother him as he draws the shades. He said he doesn't use an alarm clock at home.

When asked about napping, he said that in general, he will nap during the day if he is tired for as long he needs. If he wakes at night, uses bathroom and goes right back to sleep.

With respect to sleeping during his layover period at the Casino, he said that he will grab a chair in the bus, and lay across the seats. He said that he tries to select a space in the parking lot away from the overhead lights. He said that he doesn't have any problems sleeping on the bus.

He stated that he got his first driver's license in 1994, which was a regular driver's license. He initially had a D license then got the B endorsement in 1995. He said he hasn't lost his license privileges. He did have a child support suspension, but then resolved it.

He stated that he took driver training when he was with Coach USA at their school. He noted that World Wide also gave him a road test to see if he knew the layout of the bus. He said that he had driven motor coaches for 4 years prior to starting his job at World Wide, but had not driven any Prevost busses until he started his job there. He said that he had driven bus #259 prior to the accident trip. When asked, he noted that there was a difference in the dashboard configuration between the older and newer models of the Prevost busses.

On Tuesday March 8, he said he got up, showered around 7:00-7:30p.m., and got ready, He said he packed his knapsack, which contained a logbook, green reflective jacket, and movies in case he needs to entertain kids on a charter bus. He stated that he caught the 8:30 train.

He said he does not always eat before he comes to work, but on the Tuesday the 8th, he ate chicken wings, and arrived at work by 9:00 pm. His bus was assigned, did his pre-trip inspection, drove to Flushing to do his regular pickup and then drove on to Mohegan sun. The tour guide accompanying the bus on Tuesday night was different than the one on the accident trip. He stated that he takes snack cakes with him to eat on the bus every time he drives. When he arrives at the bus stand at Mohegan sun and the passengers exit the bus, he typically gets a meal ticket and then gets something to eat. However, on Tuesday night, he just had juice. He noted that the Bear Mount parking area was full on Tuesday night and thought it was because they had a Rod Stewart concert. He noted that he parked in the Bear Mount lot every time he was at the casino. After he arrived on Tuesday night, he backed in between other vehicles in the lot, drank his juice, and came back. On Wednesday early morning after sleeping about 3 hours, he returned to the casino, picked up passengers and made the return trip. He noted that he typically just wakes up and does not need an alarm clock. He said that the buses have a big clock overhead. He said he looks at time whenever he wakes and knows if he can go back to sleep or not.

On Wednesday morning, he said he returned between 9:00-10:00 a.m. and that traffic was heavy. His trip home Wednesday from World Wide Tours took 30 minutes. He said he went home and went to bed as soon as he got home. He said he woke up Wednesday around 3:00 p.m., ate some Raisin Bran and left his house for work around 8:40 p.m. Took train to work and got to work around 9:00 p.m. Once at work, he did his pre-trip inspection on bus, and then drove to flushing, then continued his run to Mohegan Sun. Arrived around 1:00 a.m., dropped the passengers off, got some juice, and went to the Bear Mount parking lot. He arrived at Bear Mount to rest around 1:20-1:25. He remembered waking up around 3:15

a.m., and drove back down to the bus stand. They departed at 3:45 a.m. He returned the bus around 9:00-9:30 a.m. and returned to his house Thursday around 10:00 a.m. then went to bed.

On Thursday afternoon, he said he woke up around 4:00 p.m. He ate raisin bran, left home, and arrived at work at 6:20. He got his bus and went to Manhattan, (80th and Bowery) which was his regular route. He said he didn't have any problems with pickups on Thursday evening and arrived at Mohegan sun around 10:20 p.m. He had some juice and drove up to the Bear Mount lot. He arrived around 10:35 p.m. and rested.

On Friday morning Mr. Williams said he was late going back to the bus stand. He said he got up too early, around midnight, and went back to sleep but then overslept. The security guard came to wake him up. The trip was scheduled to depart at 3:15 a.m. but they departed at 3:30 a.m. He had no problems coming back or making drops.³ They arrived in Manhattan around 7:40-8:00 a.m. and got back to the garage at 8:30 a.m. After work on Friday morning, he went to the grocery store (bodega across street) after work, then went home and went to sleep around 11:00 a.m. He said he slept well because nobody else was at home. On Friday afternoon, he woke up at 4:30 p.m. He got to work at 6:14 p.m.

With respect to the Mohegan Sun "Players Club Card", Mr. Williams said that he got the card at the time of the Chinese New Year. He said that when he came to pick the passengers up, the passenger swiped their cards, and he swiped his card on a machine before going back to New York.

When asked how he sleeps in general, he stated, good. I go right to bed and drop. He said his doctor never told him he has sleep disorder. He said his wife said he only snores when he is tired, when he did strenuous work around house. Upon waking, I feel good, jolted. Said he felt okay when the lady woke him up that early morning.

With respect to information he obtains and shares with World Wide Tours, he said that he gets an envelope when he arrives at work which tells him where's he's going. The envelope is for holding money, receipts, and so on. He turns it in every day, first thing when he gets back. He said he completed his logbook but never put his logbook pages in the envelope and that was his understanding of how it worked.

When asked if he had any additional logbook pages in his possession, he said he did not. When informed that his January logs are missing, he stated that his January information is "on the back of the tabs." He elaborated by stating, when he gets to work, he takes the envelope they give him, does the pre-trip, puts mileage and time on the envelope flap and time, put time that he leaves arrive, leave, arrive and continues to track his times on the flap as he drives. At Mohegan Sun, he said he does his logbook while eating. On way back, he writes on the envelope, then rips the tab off and does the rest at home.

³ Mr. Williams also stated that on Friday morning he called World Wide Tours, told him that the fuel was low, and was instructed to get more fuel.

He was informed that his log stops on Tuesday the 8th at 9pm and there were no other log pages. He stated that “the times are on the tabs, maybe in my knapsack, maybe at home.”

With respect to his meals, he noted that for three days at the casino, he only had juice. When asked why he was not eating more, he said he was tired of the casino food. He used to eat sushi every day, but when it changed, he went to the fried rice. The meal ticket is for a maximum amount. He said the restaurant staff urged him to take black tea, and he did, but he didn't drink it.

In his household, it is just him, his wife, and his seven year old daughter.

With respect to his cell phone, he said that all the tour guides have the bus driver cell numbers. It is a personal phone, not a work-issued one. He said he has a Bluetooth wrap-around, which he wears around his neck. When he gets a call, it vibrates on his neck. Ear piece is magnetic, can come off and go in ear to talk. He said it has voice-dialing and that he also has a second headset that looks like the kind a telephone operator uses. His carrier is Sprint. He said he only takes work-related calls at work and that the company sometimes calls him with schedule changes.

When asked, Mr. Williams stated he has never been in the driver lounge at the casino.

With respect to passenger boarding, Mr. Williams stated that passengers are typically loaded to the back to maximize room. They are loaded by the guides. He thought there were more people on right side on bus at the time of the accident. He said that everyone sleeps on bus. He said he is the only person awake on bus. He said you might hear some noise on the way to I-95. Once you get past the sign where the speed limit changes to 45 (merging traffic), everybody is asleep. He said he is never sleepy when he drives.

When asked about his knee, he said he had no knee pain in the week before the crash, but his knee was swollen and he was limping. He said that driving did not make it worse and said the last time he took medicine for it was a few days after the injury happened.

When asked about details concerning his traffic event on Wednesday, March 9, 2011, he said that he was on way to Flushing, came on BQE. He said there are three lanes: Two lanes go straight, one goes to right. He said a car to right side-swiped the bus and kept going to off to the right. It was dark outside, but he thought it was a dark colored car. He couldn't tell if it was a 4- or 2-door. He said he got off at the next exit and called dispatcher John Wong. He said there was no visible damage to bus, so he continued on his route.

When asked about his job history, he said that Worked at Coach USA of Paramus, New Jersey for 3 years. At Coach USA, he did line runs such as the Willowbrook bus to Patterson and long distance charters, as far as to Cornell University and Florida. He said he commuted to New Jersey using transit. He said that while working at Coach USA, he did driver logs and turned them in. He said he went part-time with Coach USA when his mother was diagnosed with Cancer and ultimately stopped working. He said he was not fired. He said his wife supported the family when he was not working between his jobs at Coach USA and World Wide Tours.

He said that prior to working at Coach USA, he worked at funeral home, cleaning it, doing maintenance, and janitorial work. He drove limos and hearses.

When asked about being hired at World Wide Tours, he said that he had to do a pre-trip inspection while being watched. It was a brand new bus. A guy told him to do the pre-inspection and said, "what is the first thing you do?" He went inside and turned all lights on and all outside lights and flashers. He touched everything, checked that everything was working, compartments, air vents, and door. In the bus, he shook the chairs. The evaluator said "what do you not see?" and Mr. Williams said "reflectors", Mr. Williams then boarded the bus, put his seatbelt on, put the brake down, put the bus in drive, stomped the brake, said the brake is working, tested the air brake and said the air brake is working, He drove out of the yard with the evaluator. He went on the highway, got off, made a circle, parallel parked, pulled out, came back to the garage, and the evaluator gave him a paper, He gave the paper to Chris Muldoon.

When he was hired, he came back to World Wide Tours, filled in his paperwork, Chris was not there so he met with Chris' wife, he watched safety videos about fatigue, got 2 shirts and a windbreaker; later he got a heavy jacket from Mark. He got a copy of a blue book, lots of papers, safety rules, describing uniform. His first day, he went to Boston on a training run to see the route. His first few weeks, did Boston runs, then later, Mohegan sun.

Mr. Williams stated that in general, he would rather drive days than nights since there is more action, more light, you are "not dead."

When asked about his non-work activities, he said he stays in house when not working because his neighborhood is not good.

When asked about the jake brake, Mr. Williams said that he "didn't mess with jake break." He left it on if was on, and off if was off. He said he didn't know if it was on during accident trip.⁴

With respect to traffic, he said that when he does the Flushing run, traffic is light. The Manhattan run is heavy because he needs to go over the BQE and Williamsburg bridges. The Flushing run over the Whitestone bridge, second exit Linden place, (go 3 blocks and to right) On way back, drop at Linden place, then main street and 39th avenue. 3rd stop Franklin and main. Then leave, go next block, right, then left, a water plant treatment plant is there. At college point, bear right and jump on highway. Long Island Expressway. (more directions...) then fuel if needed, Smith street.

With respect to his normal route, Mr. Williams described the following: On the Williamsburg Bridge, 4 lanes, in the middle lane (other bus drivers get on bridge, go to middle lane and put on hazards so they can take whole bridge). After bridge, get on to BQE, go over Koskiasko bridge, stay on bridge, go left, see clearance sign no vehicle under 12'5", we go that way because the bus can go there. Merge to 3 lane to

⁴ At this point, a World Wide Tours employee in the room noted that the jake break switch is a rocker switch next to driver on dash and would be difficult to activate accidentally.

S turn to tri-borough bridge, go right into the Bronx, then another section where they are building bridge, then, a sharp turn, if you don't do it right, you'll end up in "column". There is a split between the lanes with a barrier in between after the curve. If you are not careful, you'll hit car. They are building a bridge there, so you go slow there. Then you'll get to Bridgeport, then Stanford, then it's straight 95, then go up where they are doing construction. Road goes (shows hands moving side to side). If you are not watching what you are doing, you are going to crash into a car or a column. Then it straightens out, then you go through another "maze" (construction) where they are constructing a highway bridge. Stay on 95 and go down. Then, when you get by where they are building a whole different highway, then you see signs for New Haven and Providence. Go toward providence, go around bend, they are building another highway. There are always deer hanging out there. Pray to god they don't jump out. Then see Uncasville exit, go to second exit, go around bend, pass precinct, go to Mohegan sun, Bear mount, to stand, get ticket, get off bus, get meal.

Interview with Ophadell Williams Jr., Accident Bus Driver, March 30, 2011

Bronx, NY; 03/12/2011, HWY-11-MH-005

On Wednesday, March 30, 2011 at 10:00 a.m., Mr. Ophadell Williams, Jr. was interviewed by phone by NTSB Investigator Jana Price. Mr. Williams was the driver of the 1999 Prevost bus involved in the March 12, 2011 crash in Bronx County, NY. Notes taken by Investigator Price form the basis for this narrative. At the time of the interview, Mr. Williams consented to answer some follow-up questions from an interview that was conducted by NTSB staff on March 15, 2011. Mr. Williams said that he had spoken with his lawyer, Mr. Howard Lee, and that Mr. Lee had consented to him answering additional questions from NTSB. The interview was not recorded.

When asked about differences between his assigned driving schedules for March 9, 10 and 11, 2011 and his reports of activity provided in the March 15, 2011 interview, Mr. Williams stated that the World Wide Tours schedule envelope likely reflected the true schedule he worked that day. The investigator read the schedule to Mr. Williams (going on duty at 9:30 p.m. on March 10, 2011, driving to Flushing, driving to Mohegan Sun, and then picking up passengers for the return trip at 6:15 a.m. on March 11, 2011) and Mr. Williams said that he thought that was the schedule he worked that day. When asked what he did during the layover at Mohegan Sun, he stated that he got food, went to the bear mount lot, slept and then woke up.

When asked if his schedule ever changed at the last minute, he said that it did happen, but not often. He cited one day that he thought had happened within a week of the accident when he was asked to come in and drive at 1:00 p.m. and was also asked to work again that night.

When asked if he had ever found the "envelope tops"¹ for the days preceding the accident, he said that he did have them in his possession, and agreed that he would provide them to Mr. Christopher Muldoon of World Wide Tours later in the day.²

When asked if he had multiple cell phones at the time of the accident, he said that he had 3, but only one of them was working in the days surrounding the crash. He stated the number for that phone, which was a number consistent with the number he provided to NTSB investigators during the March 15, 2011 interview. Mr. Williams also reported that his phone was made by Sprint, not Nextel.

Mr. Williams claimed that he never texted while driving, but that he does send text messages in general. He stated that his last ingoing/outgoing phone calls prior to the accident happened on Friday, March 11 between 11pm and midnight. He said that the very last call he received prior to the accident was from "the lady"³ who called him about the missing money. He stated that at the time of the accident, he was wearing the neckpiece for his wireless phone headset, but did not have the earpiece in. The neckpiece is designed to vibrate when he has an incoming call. When asked his shirt collar size (i.e., neck size), he replied 17.5 inches, but then looked at a dress shirt he had at his home and said that the label read 18 5/7". He stated that he is 5' 8" tall and 240 lbs, but that he thinks he has lost weight since the accident.

When asked if NTSB investigators could follow up with him again in the future, Mr. Williams said yes.

¹ In the March 15, 2011 interview, Mr. Williams stated that his habit was to record his driver log information on envelope tops and then later transfer that information to his driver log books.

² Jana Price followed up with World Wide Tours party member Christopher Muldoon, who stated he would obtain the envelope tops and provide them to NTSB staff.

³ The investigator believes that Mr. Williams was referring to the Sunflower tour guide.