

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TRAIN #1614

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ACCIDENT AT HOBOKEN TERMINAL

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Accident No.: DCA16MR011

AT HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

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ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

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Interview of: THOMAS DOUGAN

Weehawken, New Jersey

Sunday,

October 2, 2016

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

STEPHEN JENNER, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

NICHOLAS WEBSTER, M.D., Medical Officer
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PATRICK VEDDER, Inspector
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I N T E R V I E W

(2:30 p.m.)

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3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, a rail accident
4 investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. And
5 this is the interview of Mr. Thomas Dougan, brakeman on the New
6 Jersey Transit, and this is relative to the accident that occurred
7 at Hoboken, New Jersey on September 29, 2016, Accident
8 No. DCA16MR011.

9 And, Tom, for -- like I said before, a little disclaimer for
10 the transcriptionist, the purpose of this investigation is to
11 increase safety, not assign fault, blame or liability. However,
12 NTSB cannot offer a guarantee of confidentiality of this going
13 into the docket or immunity from legal or certificate action.

14 A transcript or summary of this interview will go into the
15 public docket. The interviewee can have one representative of the
16 interviewee's choice. That representative may be an attorney but
17 is not required to be an attorney. The representative may not
18 testify for the employee, but we can take breaks and you guys can
19 talk.

20 We'll go around the table and introduce ourselves for the
21 transcriptionist. To my right, I have --

22 DR. JENNER: Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r, with
23 the NTSB.

24 MR. VEDDER: Patrick Vedder, P-a-t-r-i-ck, V-e-d-d-e-r,
25 Inspector, FRA.

1 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, B-r-u-c-e, P-a-r-k-i-n, Operating
2 Practices and Safety Inspector, FRA.

3 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, F-r-e-d, M-a-t-t-i-s-o-n, New
4 Jersey Transit.

5 DR. WEBSTER: Nicholas Webster, N-i-c-h-o-l-a-s,
6 W-e-b-s-t-e-r, NTSB.

7 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, R-a-n-d-y, F-a-n-n-o-n, BLET
8 Safety Task Force.

9 MR. HAMER: Stephen Hamer, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, H-a-m-e-r, SMART
10 Transportation Division.

11 MR. BATES: William Bates, W-i-l-l-i-a-m, B-a-t-e-s, SMART
12 Transportation Division.

13 MR. BUCHER: Tom, if you can spell your name for the
14 transcriptionist?

15 MR. DOUGAN: Thomas Dougan, T-h-o-m-a-s; Dougan, D-o-u-g-a-n.

16 MR. BURKERT: Stephen Burkert, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, B-u-r-k-e-r-t.
17 I'm the general chairman for SMART TD union.

18 MR. BUCHER: Thank you.

19 INTERVIEW OF THOMAS DOUGAN

20 BY MR. BUCHER:

21 Q. Tom, as I mentioned, we really want to get your story, and if
22 you could go back to the beginning of the day when you got up the
23 day of the accident and just tell us in your own words how your
24 day went, right on through, anything that you can remember.

25 A. Got up, poured my coffee, got dressed, let the dogs out, went

1 in to work. I got there about 3 or 4 minutes early, sat down.
2 Was kidding around with a couple of the guys there on the other
3 crews (indiscernible) and stuff like that.

4 And a few minutes later, Tom came in, talked about a few
5 things, and maybe 15 minutes later he said, you want to go out?
6 So we went out to the train. On the way out, we discussed the
7 Yankee game, did you see it? He said no, went to sleep too early.
8 It was a grand-slam homer in the bottom of the ninth with two
9 outs, so we both missed it.

10 And went out to the train, did a brake test, came in, picked
11 up the conductor. Left normal time, made all of our normal stops.
12 Everything was completely normal. Went through the tunnel, went
13 through the switches, went towards Hoboken, and everything seemed
14 to be normal.

15 I went back and forth, that kind of stuff. I had just put my
16 key in, I believe, to make the announcement and noticed we weren't
17 really stopping. Well, I expected it any second. Then it didn't
18 seem like -- honestly, it seemed like we were going faster. I'm
19 not saying it was, but maybe go through the switches.

20 And then I realized I got to dump this thing, I got to dump
21 this. So I turned, went to the door. There were people standing
22 at the door. I believe it dumped just before we hit the block. I
23 think I heard the air go through, and then boom, it hit the -- it
24 hit whatever -- it was a concrete block or one of those metal
25 things at the end. I'm not sure what we have.

1 Then I yelled inside to the passengers in the fourth car to
2 stay inside and help the injured. When I jumped out, looked
3 forward, saw the train was on a weird angle. Went forward and
4 helped some people off the first and second car. And eventually,
5 after the passengers had stopped coming out, climbed in and helped
6 some people in the front car.

7 There was already one of the bosses there. I don't know his
8 name. So we helped a few people out. A lot of bleeding and stuff
9 like that. Then we crawled underneath -- the ceiling had
10 collapsed down to maybe 2½ feet. I asked if he'd seen the
11 engineer; he said no.

12 Some guy there, right there by where you get off the train,
13 lifted his foot. He was stuck there; the ceiling had come down on
14 top of him. He had no room to move. I wiggled his feet. He got
15 up. I tried to lift him up a little bit the best I could. I have
16 no idea what he looks like. I don't know what the guy looks like
17 at all. He climbed over the ceiling that was there and he went
18 out the side window.

19 I helped a few more people out. One guy came out with -- he
20 must've helped most of the people out. He had, like, a white T-
21 shirt on. He was all bashed up in his face and stuff like that.
22 So again, I asked the guy did he -- you have no idea if the
23 engineer came out? He goes no. So I said I got to go find him,
24 so --

25 I crawled in. I expected to see body parts and dead people,

1 and that was it. I just crawled up, went to the front. There
2 were 2-by-4's sticking through the front. I figured he was
3 impaled. The window was broken. I couldn't see through. I only
4 saw his hand there, just like -- his hand was just showing; it
5 wasn't moving.

6 And broke the 2-by-4 and I wiggled it, kept wiggling it,
7 broke that free. And then there was another one, and I broke that
8 free. There was one had gone through the window, the side of the
9 door of the engineer compartment. That's why I couldn't see. And
10 I finally wiggled that through, I broke that off. Then I can just
11 look inside, and he was fine. I mean, he was unconscious but he
12 didn't -- he wasn't bleeding or nothing. There was nothing
13 sticking in him. I figured -- like I said, I figured there was 2-
14 by-4s going through him, same thing as in the front. But he was
15 just unconscious, that was it.

16 Took a few seats away, made room for the firemen who came in
17 and helped them kick out a window, told them what to do. They
18 don't break; you can actually peel it out. They said they needed
19 some way to carry him out because he's a big boy.

20 Again back to the beginning, when it first happened, I
21 assumed he had a heart attack. That was my first thought, oh, my,
22 God, this guy had a heart attack. Then I stopped. Again, it's my
23 personal opinion. I just thought that he had gained, like, 40
24 pounds in the last -- since the last time I worked with him. I
25 thought he had a heart attack. I just thought he was, he was

1 gone.

2 So I climbed out, went inside to the office, called my house
3 to make sure they knew I was okay. The phone was busy at my
4 house, as usual, and I didn't get through, but -- went inside and
5 waited with the Transit -- I mean, the office over there, you
6 know, across the street.

7 Maybe, I don't know, 2 hours later they checked me for vital
8 signs, I guess, you know, blood pressure and stuff like that, and
9 I went out to the -- went to the car. They car'd us over to the
10 hospital and got examined. They got me a CAT scan, a couple of
11 x-rays of my back and washed out my eyes. And then went back and
12 they eventually, they released us.

13 Q. Okay, thanks. I'm going to ask a couple questions, just like
14 what -- I said I appreciate -- I know you went through a lot. I
15 really appreciate you coming in.

16 You said you were in the fourth car when you came in to the
17 station? In the fourth car?

18 A. In the very front of the fourth car, between third and four
19 is the -- where the PA system is.

20 Q. Okay. Between -- okay, in the fourth car, between -- okay.
21 Three and four, all right.

22 And then immediately following the accident, you moved
23 towards the first car. Did you go through the train or did you
24 hop off and --

25 A. I hopped off.

1 Q. You hopped off?

2 A. I told everybody to stay inside because I was curious about
3 the electric and that kind of stuff, like if they turned it off.

4 Q. Sure.

5 A. I think I tried to jump off. I don't know if I made it
6 because I'm a little sore, but -- actually, the forward people
7 were jumping out, so I figured we were safe, so -- but I went
8 forward because I figured there was -- that was where the most,
9 you know, victims would be.

10 Q. Okay. You helped people off of the first car, then, when you
11 got up there?

12 A. Yeah, first and second, yeah. They were all coming out with
13 their cell phone -- a good percent were coming out with their cell
14 phones in their hands taking pictures. Telling me there were
15 people hurt inside. I said no, just keep them (indiscernible).
16 And then I told them to back up because they were all up towards
17 the front, which I thought was the worst possible to be.

18 Q. And great description of the cab. When you got up there and
19 you -- I'm sure we'll have some more questions about the engineer,
20 but you said he was unconscious when you got up there?

21 A. I thought he was -- I didn't know if he was alive or not. I
22 eventually heard a (makes noise) a breath, like he was, he was
23 awake -- he was alive.

24 Q. All right. Did you feel -- obviously, you participated in
25 the brake test. There was no problems with the train before you

1 left?

2 A. Made all the stops regular, normal, everything was fine.

3 Q. And you felt that the engineer did a running brake test?

4 A. Yep.

5 Q. Do you remember that?

6 A. Yep.

7 Q. Okay. And the train operated normally? It didn't have any
8 unusual operation en route?

9 A. The only thing unusual, we had four cars. Usually, we had
10 five. That was like for the last -- I guess that was like in the
11 last 9 days, I was told. So it was very crowded.

12 MR. BUCHER: Okay. I'm going to pass it off, and Dr. Steve,
13 I'm sure, has a couple questions for you.

14 BY DR. JENNER:

15 Q. Great. Thank you for your description so far. I'm going to
16 go back and just try to fill in some questions I have.

17 Had you worked with the engineer before?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. About how many times or for how many years?

20 A. Off and on, maybe three or four times. He usually works out
21 of Gladstone, or he tries to. It's closer to his house. He just
22 worked up there -- I think it was convenient for him for the
23 summer to work in Spring Valley.

24 Q. Three or four times, total?

25 A. Yeah. For months at a time. I mean, you know, like -- you

1 know, it was a while, back and forth, that kind of stuff. He's a
2 friend of mine.

3 Q. He's a friend. How did he seem to you that morning?

4 A. Fine. He was upset he didn't see the Yankee game, that's
5 all.

6 Q. All right. Nothing out of the ordinary that concerned you?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. During the accident trip, from when you initially
9 departed until the time of the accident, did you have any radio
10 contact with the engineer?

11 A. I don't think so.

12 Q. Is there ever occasion where you would have radio contact?

13 A. Sure.

14 Q. And what occasions would those be, for example?

15 A. Oh, I'd say, you know, go long at this particular station or
16 go short at this particular station. I remember, on these --
17 usually, these are pretty standard, but like, on weekends we might
18 work and say we -- just remind him we have four cars, we're going
19 -- or five cars, whatever we have that day going, say, to Westmont
20 out in Bergen County. But that particular day, I don't think I
21 said anything on the radio.

22 Q. Was there ever a time where you expected to hear from the
23 engineer for any reason?

24 A. No.

25 Q. From your perspective, were operations pretty normal?

1 A. 100 percent normal.

2 Q. You described earlier at some point you noticed we weren't
3 really stopping and you thought any second now, and it appeared to
4 get faster, if I summed that up correctly.

5 A. Yeah, I think we were going through the switches there,
6 getting over to, I think, Track 5. Just a normal back and forth,
7 you know, going back and forth. And we kind of got to the
8 straightaway, and I'm just thinking through my mind, I guess we
9 were just slowing down from going through the switches, a little
10 friction. And then we got to the straightaway and it seemed like
11 we were -- I was waiting for the brake and we weren't getting it,
12 and it just seemed like we were going faster. But like I said, it
13 might've been going through the switches we were slower.

14 And then all of a sudden, I realized we got to dump this
15 thing, and I think he did just before we hit. That's my personal
16 opinion. I think I heard -- felt the air going through.

17 Q. Okay. You were in the fourth car. So when you say we were
18 going through the straightaway, was it when your car was going
19 through the straightaway or when the front of the train was?

20 A. Mine.

21 Q. And you said you thought the train may have been dumped just
22 before impact. Was that through your actions?

23 A. No. No. It was from some guy standing at the door. I
24 know -- I think I got the door open, and that was it. Like I
25 said, I was going to dump it, but my -- I think as soon as I

1 opened up the door, there was a passenger right there, and I think
2 there were people behind him. And then it dumped and they came
3 flying out at me, the passenger.

4 Q. I see. So it was about the time of the straightaway, you
5 threw the switches to Track 5, to the straightaway, and it was
6 just about then -- that was the first time that you were concerned
7 about the speed --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- and about the train not slowing. No other time before
10 then?

11 A. No.

12 Q. And the previous station stops, were those handled normally?

13 A. Every one.

14 Q. Now I understand that the train -- you had one less train --
15 passenger car than what is typical; you had four instead five?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Does that affect -- how does that affect operations, if at
18 all?

19 A. It's hard to collect tickets after a certain point. The
20 stations before, like, Essex Street, we would drop the traps on
21 the other side and just use -- where there's a north side and
22 south sides, we were -- where north side was on the south for
23 Essex Street, we would close them up, exit the train, and not to
24 be able to get inside, just in case.

25 And then at Teterboro and Woodbridge, we would drop the traps

1 and walk back. Or in my case, I would walk forward to be between
2 the third and fourth car and stay there for the rest of the trip
3 because there was no way to walk through the train.

4 Q. Does this slight different operations affect the on-time
5 performance of the train?

6 A. Yeah, it might've been maybe 3 or 4 minutes later. I'm not
7 100 percent sure.

8 Q. Okay. Do you know if you were on time or if you were
9 running --

10 A. I think we were a few minutes late, so -- but I wasn't really
11 concerned with making sure that we were right on time leaving and
12 that kind of stuff. I think we were a little bit late and I knew,
13 you know, we were okay -- no way we're leaving early. That's my
14 big problem, leaving early.

15 Q. Right. And I've asked you this in sort of different ways,
16 but the train handling seemed normal to you in terms of the
17 straightaways and station stops up until when it wasn't?

18 A. Yeah. No, everything seemed to be normal.

19 Q. And the equipment, as far as you know, the train equipment
20 was just operating as designed?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Just a bit about your background. How long have you been a
23 brakeman?

24 A. Coming up to 20 years in March. I started in '97.

25 Q. All with New Jersey Transit?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Have you worked in other disciplines: engineer, conductor,
3 ticket --

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. What's your experience with this type of equipment? I
6 forget the name of the train set. It was --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Comet 5.

8 BY DR. JENNER:

9 Q. Comet 5, is that -- how reliable has that been?

10 A. Are we talking about, like, safety or just performance? Like
11 the doors --

12 Q. Performance.

13 A. The doors suck.

14 Q. And safety?

15 A. Seem to be fine. As far as I know, everything seemed to be
16 fine. I think the passengers like the seats. But like I said,
17 for me, the doors just don't open and close. They're constantly
18 opening and closing, and then they finally close and we can get to
19 go.

20 Q. In your estimate, what's the capacity? If you have a full
21 train with people sitting and people standing, how many can you
22 get in there?

23 A. I usually ask them to pick up their bags so people can sit
24 down. But even at that point, a lot of the three-seaters were
25 full. The aisles were pretty full. And then I asked whoever --

1 if anybody was out in the vestibule to step back inside. I want
2 the vestibule cleared. So they all went inside. The people that
3 (indiscernible), but they went inside.

4 And we went to Seacaucus, so a lot of people get off. But in
5 this case, there was a lot of people -- even in the back --
6 usually in Hoboken everybody wants to be in the front because it's
7 the fastest way to get off. But even in this case, there was
8 probably -- I'm going to guess and say 65, 75 people in the third
9 or fourth car still.

10 Q. Each? Third car and the fourth car, 60 to 75 people?

11 A. Yeah, 65 each.

12 DR. JENNER: Okay. Okay, I think that's the questions I
13 have. Thank you.

14 MR. PARKIN: Hi, Tom. Bruce Parkin, FRA.

15 BY MR. PARKIN:

16 Q. Tom, have you worked in your 20 years in train service as a
17 -- have you worked in the yard and things like that or has it all
18 been passenger?

19 A. Maybe 4 weeks I worked in the yard.

20 Q. And you've described the train when it was coming in. You
21 described that you didn't feel the brakes start to come on where
22 it would normally --

23 A. Right.

24 Q. -- where your engineer would normally start to apply the
25 brakes?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Just roughly, in relationship to the platform on Track 5,
3 whereabouts do you feel he used the setting of the brakes,
4 applying the brakes going in?

5 A. I guess I always think about making the (indiscernible) when
6 we go past the -- that brick building where the yard guy is. I
7 don't know, never really thought of it like that. 300 yards
8 before? I don't know. But he was going faster than I thought,
9 than he was supposed to be right -- as soon as we got into the
10 straightaway, I knew that we were going a little too fast. But I
11 just assumed he was, you know, getting ready.

12 Q. Would you estimate -- give us an estimate of the speed, what
13 you -- the speed is normally 10 miles an hour coming in. What
14 would you estimate the speed at?

15 A. I don't know, honestly. It's tough to describe that. I
16 (indiscernible). I don't know. It just seemed faster than
17 normal, that's all.

18 Q. Okay. But normally, you feel the brakes start to apply
19 roughly, did you say, 300 feet? I'm sorry.

20 A. Yeah. I'm talking about from 10 down to much slower. So,
21 you know, I just never --

22 Q. In car lengths, from the bumping block, what would say you
23 usually feel the brakes start to come on the tread?

24 A. Train and a half length, you know, we're really starting to
25 slow down, you can really feel it.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I just -- you know, I never felt -- after we went through the
3 switches, I just felt that he never hit the brakes. You know, we
4 didn't really slow down.

5 Q. Okay. Now, you said a passenger -- you thought a passenger
6 might've pulled the emergency brake?

7 A. No. No, no, no.

8 Q. Oh, he did not?

9 A. No. I think that was the engineer that did that.

10 Q. Now, when you were coming in, you had the door open coming
11 down the platform, the exterior door?

12 A. When -- I'm --

13 Q. In the vestibule, did you have the traps, the trap down and
14 the door open as you were coming in?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. So when it hit, were you standing in the vestibule or
17 were you in the step section? Whereabouts were you?

18 A. I think I usually make the announcement -- I have the trap
19 down when I make the announcement, but it's a little farther out
20 there. So I make an announcement, then I lift it up, and then I
21 wait for, you know, just to stop and then I open the door.

22 Q. So when the train hit and you exited the train, did you have
23 the doors open on the engineer's side to exit the train?

24 A. Yeah. I only opened the one door, though.

25 Q. The fourth car --

1 A. The front of the fourth car.

2 Q. -- head end.

3 MR. BUCHER: Can we take a break?

4 MR. DOUGAN: When we came in, I had the trap down, reached
5 across, made the announcement. And then I stepped back, I lifted
6 up the trap and I waited for a good -- you know, I normally
7 waiting for the train to stop. But before I could make the
8 announcement, I realized we weren't stopping.

9 So then I turned to the vestibule door where the passengers
10 were, and the door was open. And just before I was thinking we
11 got to dump -- I got to dump it, he dumped it, or I felt it was,
12 and then the passenger came flying out at me.

13 BY MR. PARKIN:

14 Q. So, therefore, after the train hit, you opened the door in
15 order to exit down onto the platform?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. After you assisted the passengers in the third and fourth
18 car, you say you went up to the first and second car to help some
19 people and you worked your way up to the control cab. Can you
20 tell us how -- were you in the body of the car? How did you work
21 your way up to get into the control car?

22 A. About half the car was -- you know, you could walk up. But
23 after the first half of the car, from the bulkhead up, the ceiling
24 was, like, seat height. So, like I said, the first guy was right
25 there. I had to help him get up, his foot. His foot was jammed

1 underneath the seat. And then he was -- I guess he pulled himself
2 up, and I pushed off as much as I could, and I guess he grabbed
3 something and he was able to wiggle himself out onto the ceiling,
4 and then I guess he went out the side.

5 At that point, I just crawled up and cleared a path. There
6 was debris everywhere. There was concrete, you know, fiberglass,
7 steel pipes. I mean, it was all different kinds of stuff in
8 there, a lot of dust. And worked my way up to the engineer, where
9 he was.

10 Q. So you remained inside the first car and crawled under and
11 made your way up to the control car?

12 A. The control part of the front car, the very front of the
13 train.

14 Q. Into the operating compartment where the engineer was?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. When you got there, did you have to open the door? Was the
17 door already open? How did you get inside?

18 A. It was jammed shut with wood and it was broken glass there.
19 So I couldn't see him at all. I could just see through the crack
20 of the door -- it was wedged one way that it wouldn't budge, and I
21 could just see his hand there, you know, that was it. That's all
22 I could see.

23 Q. Were you able to open the door and get inside?

24 A. No. I had to break the wood that was there. There was like
25 by 2-by-4's and a piece of plywood and stuff like that. So I just

1 wiggled it out. And there was broken glass. I couldn't -- like I
2 said, I couldn't see him, so I just -- I yelled out for a saw, but
3 everybody was busy outside so they didn't hear me. And I wiggled
4 it out, leaned on it and did different things, and finally it
5 broke free or snapped and that kind of stuff. So I threw it away
6 and was able to get in to him. But like I said, it was complete
7 relief that he wasn't impaled. I thought he was -- you know, it
8 was going to be a horror show.

9 Q. At that point did you have any conversation with the
10 engineer?

11 A. He was out. I just said to him, you know -- I said you fat
12 fuck. I thought he had a heart attack. Not a bark on -- excuse
13 me -- not a mark on him, like this. But I thought -- I didn't
14 know if he was alive or not. I thought maybe he had a heart
15 attack.

16 Q. When you were in the control -- the operating compartment of
17 the control car, did you touch anything?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Devices, levers, anything?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Did anything in the control or the operating compartment in
22 the cab seem out of the ordinary at all?

23 A. I didn't look at that at all.

24 MR. PARKIN: Okay. I have no other questions right now.

25 Thank you, Tom.

1 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, New Jersey Transit.

2 BY MR. MATTISON:

3 Q. I know this is tough, Tom, but on behalf of the entire group,
4 you know, we thank you for being here today. I know it's been
5 tough on you and probably will be for a long time, but we
6 appreciate it. How you doing? You hanging in there?

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. Do you need to take a break or anything? Are you all right?

9 A. No, I'm fine.

10 Q. You've been in Transit for just about 20 years now. Have you
11 always been a Hoboken Division trainman?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Usually, on a regular job or on the extra board, something --

14 A. Regular job usually.

15 Q. Do you like working out of Hoboken or you just work --

16 A. I work out of Spring Valley.

17 Q. No, no, in and out of Hoboken. You try and avoid north, mid-
18 town transit to New York?

19 A. Yeah. Well, it's close to my house, so --

20 Q. So you're very familiar with Hoboken, the terminal itself?

21 A. Yeah. Maybe not any more.

22 Q. I want you to sit back a little bit and think about the
23 characteristics of the platform, Hoboken terminal's platform.

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. And it's a low-level platform, but there's different levels

1 of it. It actually -- you know, how when you go west a little bit
2 it drops down and becomes lower a little bit? Are you very
3 familiar with what I'm talking about?

4 A. Yeah, I think so.

5 Q. When you noticed the train was into the terminal or on the
6 straightaway, what part of the platform were you at when you
7 realized that the train was going faster than it was? Was it on
8 the lower part of the platform or was it closer to the bumping
9 block where the platform was a little higher? Do you recall? If
10 you don't, it's cool. That's okay.

11 A. I don't remember that.

12 Q. Okay. So when you were coming in, were you looking out the
13 window or were you looking back at the passengers after you made
14 your announcement?

15 A. I think I was just thinking about putting my key in and
16 getting ready to make the announcement, and then I realized we
17 weren't, we weren't slowing down.

18 Q. Could you hear the engine from that part of the train at all?

19 A. I didn't actually notice it.

20 Q. You didn't notice it? So you couldn't tell if the prime
21 mover or the engine was getting louder or revving up, or anything
22 like that?

23 A. I don't know.

24 Q. Was there anything funny about -- was there like a lurch or
25 whatever? Did you feel the slack run in or out as you were coming

1 in?

2 A. No, there wasn't -- like I said, we went through the
3 switches. It was back and forth, bouncing around, you know.
4 Usually, when it clears out, I put my key in and get ready to make
5 an announcement. That's --

6 Q. Did you feel like you went through the cross-overs and the
7 switch a little faster than normal or was that fairly regular?

8 A. I thought that was pretty normal.

9 Q. Appeared to be regular. Okay.

10 MR. MATTISON: That's all I have for now. Thank you.

11 BY DR. WEBSTER:

12 Q. Hey, Tom, this is Dr. Nick Webster. I'm a physician at the
13 NTSB. I just want to know how you're doing right now.

14 A. I'm okay. You know, I'm thinking about it a lot. That's all
15 my problems.

16 Q. Any aches and pains?

17 A. Yeah, my neck's bothering me. I got some headaches from it.
18 My bicep is bothering me, but I had surgery on that, so --

19 Q. Did the doctors find anything that --

20 A. Not that I know of, no.

21 Q. Okay. You also mentioned your eyes?

22 A. I scratched the -- there was a lot of -- crawling through,
23 there was a lot of crap on the floor, so I breathed it in. I was
24 coughing that up. And then I have, you know, a couple of
25 scratches on my eye, that's all. They cleaned it out. I went to

1 the eye doctor the next day and they cleaned it a little more.

2 Q. I'm kind of concerned about the engineer, of course, as you
3 are. When you looked at him -- when you finally got the doors
4 open and you got over to him, you commented on his character and
5 you -- how did he appear colorwise to you?

6 A. Asleep. Just normal.

7 Q. Any coloration to his lips?

8 A. I'll be honest with you. I really was concentrating on it
9 was not some wood through him. That's really all I remember,
10 really honestly, looking at his face. I mean, I didn't notice any
11 cuts on him. That was it.

12 Q. Could you tell if he was breathing?

13 A. I didn't in the beginning, and then finally -- I kept looking
14 at him, and I didn't want to move him, but I just listened to him.
15 And finally, I think I heard a slight breath. And then I saw Joe
16 Alexander outside. I yelled to him we've got to get him out of
17 here. And I don't think anybody thought of him before that. And
18 everybody was busy outside (indiscernible), so --

19 Q. After you called Mr. Alexander, how long were you there with
20 him?

21 A. He yelled to somebody else. They yelled to somebody else,
22 and some firemen were starting to come in. So I would say I was
23 there another 10, 15 minutes.

24 Q. What happened eventually?

25 A. The firemen were coming in. They had to get out a window.

1 They crawled in a window. They busted out another window. They
2 don't break at all, far as I know, so they finally were able to
3 peel lit off, throw it out. I took a couple of the back chairs
4 and threw it away so they could, you know, put a stretcher down.

5 Q. I'm sorry?

6 A. The back of the chairs, they slide out. They go forward and
7 they go back, depending on which direction we're going. So if you
8 pick them straight up, you can just get rid of them. So they
9 could put the stretcher on the seat, and it could be multiple
10 seats there for the stretcher to go on.

11 So threw those away, and helped them with -- or told them
12 you've got to peel that window off, it's not going to break.
13 Because he was afraid he was going to shatter it, and I said
14 that's not going to happen.

15 Q. Were you there with him the entire time they got him out?

16 A. No. They kicked me out after the window was opened.

17 Q. And he was still unconscious?

18 A. Yeah. I never saw --

19 Q. I really appreciate you talking to us, and sorry about your
20 injuries.

21 A. Thanks.

22 DR. WEBSTER: And I have no more questions right now.

23 MR. FANNON: Randy Fannon, BLET.

24 BY MR. FANNON:

25 Q. Tom, there's a lot of people that asked a lot of questions I

1 already had my list, so I'll be brief. When you came to the
2 cross-overs, you kind of said you kind of jostled around a little.
3 Was that the normal jostling that you had or --

4 A. I felt it was completely normal at that point.

5 Q. So you took no exception to the way you came through the
6 cross-overs?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Just it felt like you were speeding up when the entire train
9 got on the straightaway?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. You don't have an estimation on how much the speed increased?

12 A. No, I have no idea. It may have been more of an impression
13 than actually we were speeding. It just seemed like -- I thought
14 we were -- we should be braking and we were not. Speedwise, I
15 really don't know. It was just -- I expected something to be
16 happening and it wasn't happening.

17 Q. Did the engineer come to -- after you got up into the
18 operating compartment, did the engineer come to any at all?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Did you yell or scream anything at --

21 A. I said to him, are you awake in there, are you awake? And
22 that kind of stuff, and he didn't (indiscernible). No movement at
23 all.

24 MR. FANNON: That's all I have because they've already asked
25 all the questions I had. Thank you.

1 MR. HAMER: Steve Hamer, SMART TD.

2 BY MR. HAMER:

3 Q. Tom, thanks for coming on short notice. You've been a
4 conductor for 20 years, or a brakeman/conductor for 20 years, so I
5 would somewhat consider you a subject matter expert on the brake
6 test, correct?

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. Okay. As long as we've had the Comet 5's, if I said there's
9 a tell-tale -- I'm specifically talking a brake test on the cab
10 car end, when you're back there at the cab car end.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. If I said there's a tell-tale noise when the brakes come on,
13 do you know what I'm talking about?

14 A. I'll be honest with you, I usually do the brake test from the
15 outside with a cab car, and the engine I will be usually -- it
16 depends on which kind of engine it is. If I have to crawl on top,
17 I do it on the outside. But generally, I do it inside. So I
18 would say no.

19 Q. But I'm specifically talking about the cab car. And so if I
20 said you can actually hear the brakes come on when they clamp
21 on --

22 A. Yeah. Okay, I know what you're talking about.

23 Q. -- have you heard that before?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. So what I'm getting at, did you hear any of that at

1 all? I know you might've been in the vestibule when you're coming
2 into Hoboken, but did you hear any clamping down of the brakes
3 initially at all?

4 A. No.

5 Q How long have you worked with Tom Gallagher, off and on?

6 A. Off and on? Maybe 5 months, total. I would say in the last
7 month I worked with him -- he took off for vacation --

8 Q. No, really, I mean over your career at Transit.

9 A. I'd say 5 months, 6 months.

10 Q. Okay. From a passenger's perspective, would you consider him
11 a smooth engineer or a rough engineer?

12 A. Smooth.

13 Q. Okay. So what I'm getting at is -- you know the wheel slide
14 system, how that operates?

15 A. Not exactly, but --

16 Q. Okay. When the wheel slips, the brakes release, just like
17 antilock brakes on a car.

18 A. Okay, I know what you're talking about.

19 Q. If I said the wheel slide kicked in, would you know what I'm
20 talking about, on a train?

21 A. I think so. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. Have you ever -- on this particular day, that train
23 set, when you were coming in to stations, would the train lurch as
24 you're slowing into the stations?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Do you recall?

2 A. I know what you mean. No.

3 Q. No? Not at all? Okay.

4 All right, I'm just going to go over to the overcrowding
5 issue. So we understand it's been quite some time where your
6 train especially has been riding, leaving with a shortage of car
7 space. Do you believe that hinders access to the rest of your
8 crew in emergency situations or situations that require immediacy?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. I mean, was this particular trip that heavily crowded where
11 you couldn't get through if you had to?

12 A. We couldn't get through. Thursdays is busier than Fridays.
13 I guess people have started to take off for the long weekends.
14 Still nice weather. Thursdays, by far, are our busiest day. I'm
15 only on 1614 on Thursday and Friday, and then the rest of the --
16 Saturday and Sunday I work express trains, then I go up to -- you
17 know, Waldwick on the Bergen County. So the 1614's only for me on
18 Thursday and Friday.

19 Thursday's way busier than Friday. It's like, I'd say, 15,
20 20 percent difference. You know, you're missing a car, even
21 Fridays are busy. It's, you know, much, much tougher to get
22 through. It's just people standing everywhere.

23 Q. Okay. I just have one last question, at least this go-round.
24 A previous questioner, you were asked at what point did you think
25 the train -- or the engineer put the brakes on coming into

1 Hoboken. I believe you said a train and a half. Did you mean a
2 car and a half?

3 A. The brakes?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. No. I think he puts them on a little bit, then it gets
6 harder. And then he goes a little further, till you slow down and
7 then you stop.

8 Q. What I'm getting at is where -- he asked -- I believe, if I'm
9 correct, he asked you at what point going into the terminal did he
10 put the brakes on, and I think you said train and a half.

11 A. I'm saying --

12 Q. Was it a car-and-a-half's length? That's all I'm asking.
13 I'm not trying to confuse you. I'm just trying --

14 A. Oh, no. I would've said there was maybe a train length when
15 we come in and start to feel the brakes. And then we come up and
16 slide up into -- you know, the last car and a half is going really
17 slow, and then we stop.

18 MR. HAMER: Okay. All right, thank you.

19 MR. BATES: William Bates. No question, but thank you for
20 your service.

21 MR. DOUGAN: Thank you.

22 BY MR. BUCHER:

23 Q. I just have one question, a follow-up question. The buzzer
24 system was working, and you were communicating with the engineer
25 through the buzzer for departure of the stations, and he left as

1 soon as you buzzed him and everything was --

2 A. Everything was (indiscernible)

3 Q. Okay. That's all I have.

4 BY DR. JENNER:

5 Q. And just one more question. You had -- after the accident,
6 you had communicated with the passengers on the fourth car to stay
7 in the car?

8 A. Right.

9 Q. Were they staying in the car?

10 A. I don't know. I left.

11 DR. JENNER: Okay. Thank you.

12 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, FRA. Just a few follow-up
13 questions.

14 BY MR. PARKIN:

15 Q. Tom, did you hear the engineer -- let me start over.

16 Do you carry a portable radio with you?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. So did you hear anything from the engineer at all coming in
19 on Track 5? Was anything said over the radio prior to --

20 A. Not that I recall, no.

21 Q. Okay. Let me just ask you, also with regard to your training
22 on New Jersey Transit, have you gone through, like, emergency
23 prep-type training during your block training? And when you go
24 for rules training and things like that, do you receive any
25 emergency preparation-type training for this type of event or

1 fires, emergencies on board trains and so for?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Do you feel that the training has been adequate to prepare
4 you for an emergency of any kind?

5 A. I should've said something to the third car, but I didn't. I
6 yelled into the last car because the guy came flying on me. I
7 helped him get back in his seat. I yelled in to stay inside, do
8 not leave the train because, you know, they always tell you about
9 the electric wires could be down and that kind of stuff.

10 I think I tried to jump clear of the train, just in case. I
11 looked forward. A number of people were jumping on and off, and
12 there was wires everywhere. So I guess I felt we were safe, so I
13 walked up.

14 Q. It sounds like you're training did kick in --

15 A. Yeah, I think so.

16 Q. -- in handling this situation. Very good, thank you.

17 Thinking things over of what happened now, do you feel that
18 there could be any training, any recommendations, anything that
19 you can think of that could've helped, could've changed --
20 equipment differently, emergency tools, training for the crews,
21 anything come to mind that you would say, boy, I wish they did
22 this or I wish I had had that?

23 A. Honestly, the biggest thing with me is where the passengers
24 have absolutely no respect for us. They do whatever they want to
25 do anyway. They think it's a big joke when I tell them to stay

1 out of the vestibule. I said for your own safety -- I make
2 announcements constantly, stay inside, do not come out, and they
3 never listen.

4 Seriously, you make the announcement, you turn around,
5 there's a person's face right here. You're ready to knock them
6 down the stairs. They just don't care what we tell them. I've
7 had people put their bags behind me, like you do in third grade
8 where they put a bag behind and you fall, that kind of stuff.
9 They're just -- you know, it's not everybody. It's like, you
10 know, it's the 3 percent that are just -- you know, they just
11 don't care. And those are the people I think that make it worse
12 for -- for emergency situations, I think those are the people that
13 are problems. Other than that, I really don't know what else to
14 recommend.

15 Q. Yeah. When this accident did occur, were there people in the
16 vestibule, standing there?

17 A. Yeah. I told them to stay out. As far as I know, they were
18 there, but the guy -- he was right there at the door. But that's
19 normal. They're getting ready to get off. I think he was
20 actually pretty good. I mean, you know, he didn't come out. And
21 I think I hit the door, opened it up, and I was -- like I said, I
22 thought I had to dump it and I was thinking, thank God he dumped
23 it. And then boom, we hit something, so -- but I think the brakes
24 went on just before we hit.

25 MR. PARKIN: Okay. Thank you for your detailed description.

1 And to me, it sounds like you did a very good job. Thank you very
2 much.

3 MR. MATTISON: Fred Mattison, New Jersey Transit.

4 BY MR. MATTISON:

5 Q. I only have a couple things, Tom. After the incident, after
6 they -- the firemen asked you to get out of the cab so they can
7 take care of the engineer, you said you went across the street to
8 the offices?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. The Transit offices? Did you talk to any supervisors that
11 were there?

12 A. Nobody was really there. They just told me to go inside.
13 Murphy came in and said just stay in here, relax, you know, there
14 will be people coming in. I believe I had a New Jersey Transit
15 baby-sitter. You know, he wouldn't leave my side.

16 Q. Who was that? A policeman or --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. You don't know his name?

19 A. Mannie Fernandez.

20 Q. Mannie Fernandez?

21 A. The reason I know that because same name as the guy who was
22 the -- played for the Dolphins in '72. That's why.

23 Q. Fair enough.

24 A. About a 4-foot -- you know, 4 feet difference in heights,
25 though, between the two guys, though.

1 Q. No one asked you to make, like, a written statement or
2 anything like that, did they?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. And no one from the police interviewed you?

5 A. No.

6 Q. How about when you went to the hospital? Did anyone from
7 Transit or the police talk to you there?

8 A. No, they -- somebody came in and took a blood sample, a urine
9 sample. That's all I remember.

10 Q. Everyone that you had to deal with from Transit or otherwise,
11 they were good to you after the accident, right?

12 A. I think so.

13 Q. How did you get home from the hospital?

14 A. From the hospital, they took us back to Hoboken, and I was
15 there for a while. And then a police officer drove me home. My
16 car was still in Spring Valley when I went home. I didn't think I
17 could drive, so I just went home. The next day we went and got
18 the car.

19 Q. Did they give you any medication while you were at the
20 hospital or anything like that?

21 A. He told some kind of pain pills and stuff. But I was taking
22 the Motrin, so that was, you know, obviously (indiscernible).

23 MR. MATTISON: That's all I have. Thank you.

24 DR. WEBSTER: This is Dr. Nick Webster. I have no further
25 questions.

1 MR. FANNON: I have just a couple. Randy Fannon.

2 BY MR. FANNON:

3 Q. After the firemen kicked you out of the control cab, did they
4 go through the front window to extricate the engineer?

5 A. No. It was right up against the wall. I didn't know what
6 they needed at the time. It was right up against the wall of the
7 building. I went out the side, and I'm sure they went out the
8 side, also.

9 Q. The side of the operating compartment, the window to the
10 side?

11 A. No. They went into the passenger area, and it was -- the two
12 elongated windows they have there, they took them out. And I
13 don't know which one they used because I was inside the other
14 thing, but both of those were removed so they could -- they can
15 get him out. I'm assuming that's what happened at that point.

16 Q. Okay. The last questions I have, did you notice when you got
17 to the operating compartment if the control stand was covered in
18 debris, wood, glass, whatever?

19 A. No. The door was closed, and I didn't notice any debris in
20 there at all. Like I said, I assumed from what I gathered when I
21 got there, you know, the wood that was going through, that it was
22 the same for him. Nothing.

23 MR. FANNON: Thank you.

24 MR. BUCHER: Dave Bucher. Just one more.

25 BY MR. BUCHER:

1 Q. Your work schedule, you worked he day before or a couple days
2 before?

3 A. I'm off Tuesday, Wednesdays. I worked Tuesday night. Got
4 done around 12:47, I think, or something like that in the morning,
5 and I didn't work -- the rest of the day was Wednesday, so I was
6 off all the rest of that day and went in to work Thursday at 6:31.

7 Q. Okay. And you felt rested when you went to work?

8 A. Oh, yeah. No problem.

9 MR. BUCHER: Great. That's all I have. Thank you.

10 BY DR. JENNER:

11 Q. I just want to explore your schedule a little more. Tuesday
12 nights -- I'm sorry, your work hours on Tuesday, what were those
13 again?

14 A. I'm off Tuesday.

15 Q. Oh, off. Okay.

16 A. I worked Tuesday because they asked me -- they called me and
17 asked me if I wanted to work. So I worked GN-39, I think it was,
18 till 12:47, I believe, or something like that.

19 Q. 12:47 just --

20 A. A.M., a.m.

21 Q. Oh, oh, I see. So now we're into --

22 A. So early Wednesday.

23 Q. Is when you first got off or --

24 A. When I got off, yeah.

25 Q. So Wednesday when you came -- after Tuesday night, what time

1 did you arrive home on very early Wednesday morning?

2 A. It was probably -- maybe about 1:00. Pretty fast. Not that
3 far away.

4 Q. And what time did you go to bed on Wednesday?

5 A. I think 1:30.

6 Q. And sleep till when?

7 A. Maybe 8. Usually I take my grandson to school, but I didn't
8 walk to him school that day. I stayed home. My wife took him, I
9 think it was.

10 Q. And what are your activities Wednesday, your off day?

11 A. I just -- I think I went to Costco with my wife, stuff like
12 that.

13 Q. Okay. And Wednesday night, about what time would you go to
14 bed?

15 A. Maybe 10, maybe 9:30. It depends, you know.

16 Q. And you woke up what time Thursday?

17 A. Probably 5:15. I set my alarm clock for 5:30, but I think I
18 woke up on my own, like, 5:15.

19 Q. Okay. How'd you feel when you woke up?

20 A. Fine.

21 Q. Adequately rested?

22 A. I think so.

23 Q. Before the incident, do you have any medical conditions as
24 simple as an allergy or any chronic?

25 A. I've had shoulder surgeries over the last couple years.

1 Nothing major, nothing like that.

2 Q. Nothing that affects your performance?

3 A. No, nothing like that.

4 Q. Okay, good. Okay, thank you.

5 A. Yep.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No further questions.

7 MR. BURKERT: I'd like before you close, but I'd like to talk
8 to --

9 MR. BUCHER: Can we take a break?

10 MR. BURKERT: A couple minutes.

11 MR. BUCHER: Okay, that's cool.

12 (Off the record.)

13 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TRAIN #1614
 ACCIDENT AT HOBOKEN TERMINAL
 AT HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY
 ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016
 Interview of Thomas Dougan

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16MR011

PLACE: Weehawken, NJ

DATE: October 2, 2016

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.

Lou Deosaran
Transcriber