

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE *

COLLAPSES AFTER VESSEL * Accident No.: DCA24MM031

COLLISION IN BALTIMORE, *

MARYLAND ON MARCH 26, 2024 *

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Interview of: JOSEPH JACHELSKI, Director, Construction
Maryland Transportation Authority

via telephone

Wednesday,
April 24, 2024

APPEARANCES:

DAN WALSH, Highway Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

SCOTT PARENT, Highway Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RYAN BOUNDS, Assistant Attorney General
State of Maryland

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:03 p.m.)

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3 MR. WALSH: Today is Wednesday, April 24th, 2024, the time is
4 about 12:03 p.m. Central Daylight Time. This interview is in
5 regard to the Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, Maryland, that
6 occurred on March 26th, 2024. My name is Dan Walsh, D-a-n
7 W-a-l-s-h, highway factors investigator in the NTSB's Office of
8 Highway Safety. And with me is Mr. Parent.

9 MR. PARENT: Hi, Scott Parent, S-c-o-t-t P-a-r-e-n-t.

10 I, too, am a highway factors investigator with the National
11 Transportation Safety Board in the Office of Highway Safety.

12 MR. WALSH: Mr. Bounds.

13 MR. BOUNDS: Good afternoon, my name is Ryan Bounds, R-y-a-n
14 B-o-u-n-d-s. I'm an assistant attorney general with the state of
15 Maryland.

16 MR. WALSH: Mr. Jachelski.

17 MR. JACHELSKI: My name is Joseph Jachelski, J-o-s-e-p-h
18 J-a-c-h-e-l-s-k-i. I am the director of construction for the
19 Maryland Transportation Authority.

INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH JACHELSKI

20
21 BY MR. WALSH:

22 Q. Mr. Jachelski, where are you employed?

23 A. I'm employed in Maryland with the Maryland Transportation
24 Authority.

25 Q. And how long have you been employed with the Maryland

1 Transportation Authority?

2 A. Since 1996, so 28 years.

3 MR. WALSH: Okay. Mr. Parent, will you continue with the
4 questioning?

5 MR. PARENT: Sure.

6 BY MR. PARENT:

7 Q. Good afternoon or good morning, Mr. Jachelski, I'm not sure,
8 I'm out in San Diego, so -- so referring to the project that was
9 occurring at the time of the bridge collapse, do you happen to
10 know the MDTA task number or numbers that were assigned to that
11 project?

12 A. I do not. That would be my area engineer who would know
13 that.

14 Q. Okay, because we are in receipt of quite a few task orders, I
15 just wanted to make sure that we're kind of reviewing the correct
16 ones. Is that something you'd be able to get back to us about?

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Sure.

20 Q. What company or companies were performing the repairs on the
21 bridge at the time of the collapse?

22 A. At the time of the collapse, it was Brawner Builders and they
23 are a Maryland contractor.

24 Q. Okay. And we are in receipt of an MDTA contract number
25 MR3025-000, titled "On Call Structural Repairs and Miscellaneous

1 Modifications."

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. That contract is dated April 29th, 2001 (sic), is that the
4 contract that Brawner Builders was working under at the time of
5 the collapse?

6 A. That is correct.

7 Q. Okay. Are you able to discuss how the task order was
8 initiated that led to Brawner Builders performing the repairs at
9 the time of the collapse? In other words, was there inspection of
10 the bridge that was conducted where a need for repair was
11 identified and then once that need for repair was identified, is
12 that when the steps were taken to get the repairs done?

13 A. Steps were taken as the repairs were potholes in the concrete
14 on the bridge, it was either notified by the operations folks that
15 in turn contacted engineering and they developed the package for
16 that task, which then was moved on to the area engineer for MDTA
17 to go out and perform the repairs with Brawner Builders.

18 Q. Okay, so do you have somebody who kind of inspects this
19 bridge periodically, looking for, you know, defects such as
20 potholes and whatnot, to report to somebody at the engineering
21 department?

22 A. We do not have somebody from the construction division that
23 drives the bridge, or any bridge, to find repairs needed. If they
24 ride the bridge and there are repairs and they spot them just
25 visually, they will -- they will make a call to engineering and

1 explain to them there is -- there is a defect somewhere.

2 Q. So do you know how this task order was generated, was it
3 because someone was driving across the bridge and noticed potholes
4 or is this something that was already in the contract that was
5 going to be done anyway to the bridge deck?

6 A. I do not know that.

7 Q. Okay. And you mentioned potholes, what exactly are the type
8 of repairs that were being done at the time of this collapse?

9 A. They were concrete potholes, spalls, in the deck of the
10 concrete that needed to be, you know, chipped out and repaired
11 with a quick mix concrete and they're performed at nighttime, low
12 volumes of traffic.

13 Q. And that was actually leading right into my next question,
14 what date and time was this project to start and when was it
15 scheduled to end? I know the collapse occurred in the early hours
16 of the 26th, but did this work begin on the 25th and carry into
17 the 26th?

18 A. I don't know exactly the date, start date or the end date.
19 Basically, it's an on-call contract, so as many as they find is as
20 many as they fix.

21 Q. Okay. So you don't know if the work that day or that night
22 of the collapse actually began on the 25th or did it start, you
23 know, on the 26th after midnight?

24 A. The date of the accident, it probably started at the
25 allowable lane closure hours, which may have been 7:00 p.m. until

1 5:00 a.m. I don't know how many days it will take to repair
2 those.

3 Q. Okay. So do you know if this -- was this the first night of
4 the repairs or had the repairs been ongoing prior to the 26th?

5 A. I do not know that.

6 Q. Okay. Was Brawner Builders the general contractor or were
7 they a sub?

8 A. They're a general contractor.

9 Q. And do you know if the workers that were performing the work,
10 were they employees of Brawner or were they independent
11 contractors hired by Brawner?

12 A. They're employees of Brawner Builders.

13 Q. Okay. And then I know Dan had mentioned Mr. Davis, Damon
14 Davis, a little bit earlier and I just want to confirm he is, in
15 fact, an MDTA employee?

16 A. No, that's not correct.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. The MDTA has architectural and engineering consulting
19 contracts that hire inspection staff and he's one of the
20 inspection staff that we have a contract with through the company
21 Eborn, so he's been a long-time inspector for the MDTA working for
22 us, but his employer is a consulting firm and minority business
23 enterprise consulting firm, Eborn.

24 Q. Okay, so Eborn would be a general contractor or would they be
25 a sub of MDTA?

1 A. They would be a sub -- they would be a sub consultant to a
2 prime who's actually the overall main contractor for this. So --
3 go ahead.

4 Q. Oh, I'm sorry.

5 A. No, go ahead.

6 Q. You said a prime, is that the name of the contractor?

7 A. No, it's just we use the term prime as you have a prime and
8 you have sub consultants that work under the prime.

9 Q. Okay. Who is the prime?

10 A. I do not know what task that Eborn is under at this time,
11 just for the simple fact that he could -- we have 11 contracts and
12 his firm could be on -- I'll give you an example, it could be on
13 five or six different consulting contracts.

14 Q. Okay. Do you know how long Mr. Davis had been employed with
15 Eborn?

16 A. I can tell you I recognize his name. I don't exactly know
17 how many years, but he's been here for a while.

18 Q. Okay. Do you happen know what his job title is with Eborn?

19 A. Yeah, he would be a highway inspector.

20 Q. Okay. And then what would his -- if you can answer this,
21 what would his responsibilities be while the work was being
22 performed on the bridge?

23 A. So his responsibilities would be to have the lane closed for
24 the night, set the lane closure up so they can safely work inside
25 the lane closure, and his duties would be to work with the foremen

1 for Brawner Builders to look at these locations that have spalling
2 areas, potholes, measure them out, mark them out to be saw cut and
3 removed. After they're filled with the specified concrete, he
4 would also go out and measure square footage, that's the pay item
5 for the repair. He would keep an inspector's daily log, which
6 would give the report for the night, the equipment for the night,
7 the men for the night, and the work completed for the night.

8 Q. I don't suppose that he submitted a report for that night or
9 did he?

10 A. At the time of all this happening, I would say no, but I'm
11 sure, possibly afterwards, he has submitted an inspector's daily
12 report. I don't know that for sure.

13 Q. Is that something you'd be able to provide to us, if he did,
14 in fact, submit one of those, or even the night --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. If this work had been, you know, ongoing prior to the 26th,
17 would we be able to get access to all of his inspection reports or
18 the time that --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- the work was being performed? Okay.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And I'm assuming that he stays on site throughout the entire
23 process while construction is being done, from the time that
24 closure is set to the time that it's removed?

25 A. That is correct, until the time the bridge is clear.

1 MR. PARENT: Okay. I don't think I have anything else, Dan,
2 that's pretty much all I had. I can't think of anything. If I do
3 think of something, maybe I'll come back to you.

4 MR. WALSH: Thank you, Scott. I have some --

5 MR. PARENT: Yeah.

6 MR. WALSH: -- follow-up questions.

7 BY MR. WALSH:

8 Q. Did the Francis Scott Key Bridge have a bridge warning system
9 that minimizes the loss of life that may occur in the event of a
10 catastrophic collapse of a bridge due to a vessel collision?

11 A. I do not know that.

12 Q. Do you know if other bridges owned and operated by the
13 Maryland Transportation Authority have bridge warning systems?

14 A. I do not know that.

15 Q. Do you know if the Maryland Transportation Authority has
16 contemplated using bridge warning systems in the past on bridges
17 they own and operate?

18 A. I do not know that.

19 Q. Okay. Did the Francis Scott Key Bridge have a pier
20 monitoring system that provides warnings if the pier protection
21 has been impacted by a vessel?

22 A. I don't believe so.

23 Q. Okay. And do other bridges owned and operated by the
24 Maryland Transportation Authority have pier monitoring systems?

25 A. I do not believe so.

1 Q. Okay. Has the Maryland Transportation Authority contemplated
2 using pier monitoring systems in the past on bridges they own and
3 operate?

4 A. I do not know.

5 Q. Okay. Can you discuss any Maryland Transportation Authority
6 training that was given to Brawner Builders before concrete
7 repairs began on the bridge deck?

8 A. Training would come through Brawner Builders contracting, I
9 do not know if -- when they give their training to their
10 employees. There is a safety, health and safety specific manual
11 for the project that they have to submit to us. All contractors
12 do before the start of work. Being an open-ended contract, they
13 work at any eight facilities that the MDTA has. So they do work
14 under, you know, a safety plan. They do have a safety officer in
15 their company --

16 (Audio malfunction.)

17 MR. JACHELSKI: -- safety inspectors, too.

18 BY MR. WALSH:

19 Q. Do you know if any of the training entails the potential for
20 bridge strikes?

21 A. I do not know that.

22 Q. Okay. Does the Maryland Transportation Authority have any
23 training for contractors regarding the potential for bridge
24 strikes before work commences on a bridge?

25 A. I do not know that. No, I would say no.

1 MR. WALSH: Mr. Parent, are there any additional questions?

2 MR. PARENT: No, I think if we're able to eventually get the
3 specific task order numbers that were assigned for this project
4 that was occurring at the time of the collapse, as well as the
5 inspector daily logs for Mr. Davis the day of the collapse, as
6 well as if there was work being performed prior to, if we can get
7 those inspector daily logs, that would be great.

8 MR. JACHELSKI: Okay.

9 MR. PARENT: Yeah, I think that's all I have. Yeah, if we
10 can get those documents, that would be awesome.

11 MR. JACHELSKI: We can do that.

12 MR. PARENT: Okay.

13 MR. WALSH: The time is now 12:18 p.m. Central Daylight Time,
14 we are going to go ahead and conclude the interview. Thank you
15 very much, Mr. Jachelski, for your participation.

16 MR. JACHELSKI: Thank you.

17 (Whereupon, at 12:18 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE COLLAPSES AFTER
 CARGO VESSEL COLLISION IN BALTIMORE,
 MARYLAND ON MARCH 26, 2024
 Interview of Joseph Jachelski

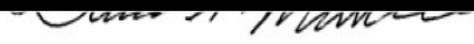
ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24MM031

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: April 24, 2024

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.





David A. Martini
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Highway Safety

Washington, DC 20594



Interview Clarification Form

Sheet 1 of 1

NTSB Interview of: JOSEPH JACHELSKI, Director, Construction Maryland Transportation Authority

Date of Interview: April 24, 2024

NTSB Case Number: DCA24MM031

INSTRUCTIONS: After reading the transcript or summary of your interview, please note any clarifications or additions on this sheet. If additional space is needed, make as many additional copies of the second page as necessary. When completed, please sign the bottom of each sheet. DO NOT make any marks or notations on the actual transcript.

If there are no changes, please check this box and sign the bottom of this sheet.

Page: 12

Line: 17

Now reads: MR. JACHELSKI: -- safety inspectors, too.

Should read: MR. JACHELSKI: MDTA have safety inspectors, too.

Reason for Change: Audio malfunction.

Page: _____

Line: _____

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Reason for Change: _____

I declare that I have read my foregoing interview transcript or summary and, together with any clarifications and/or additions made above, the facts stated herein are true.

Name: Joseph Jachelski

Signature: Joseph Jachelski Date: 2024.05.22 06:52:26 -0400

Date: 5/22/2024