



Interview of Pittsburgh Rigging Employees

Pittsburgh, PA

HWY22MH003

(42 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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COLLAPSE OF THE FERN HOLLOW BRIDGE
IN PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA
ON JANUARY 28, 2022

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Accident No.: HWY22MH003

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Interview of: ROBERT HOOKS, Work Foreman
DENNIS McLAUGHLIN, Crane Operator
Pittsburgh Rigging

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Wednesday,
July 20, 2022

APPEARANCES:

DENNIS COLLINS, Senior Highway Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

STEVE PROUTY, Senior Highway Engineer
National Transportation Safety Board

DAN WALSH, P.E.
National Transportation Safety Board

DENNIS O'SHEA, Civil Engineer
Federal Highway Administration

JUSTIN OCEL, Senior Structural Engineer
Federal Highway Administration

JOHN BUCK, Senior Bridge Engineer
Federal Highway Administration

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:00 a.m. EST)

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2
3 MR. COLLINS: This is Dennis Collins, C-o-l-l-i-n-s, with the
4 NTSB, an investigative interview with employees of Pittsburgh
5 Rigging regarding the Fern Hollow collapse. It is Wednesday, July
6 20th, at 9 a.m.

7 And if everyone would just introduce themselves and spell
8 their name for the transcriptionist, please?

9 MR. HOOKS: My name's Robert Hooks, H-o-o-k-s, with
10 Pittsburgh Rigging.

11 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Dennis Mclaughlin. I work for Pittsburgh
12 Rigging, and --

13 MR. COLLINS: How do you spell McLaughlin?

14 MR. McLAUGHLIN: M-c-L-a-u-g-h-l-i-n.

15 MR. O'SHEA: Dennis O'Shea, Federal Highway Administration,
16 O-S-h-e-a.

17 MR. OCEL: Justin Ocel, O-c-e-l, Federal Highway
18 Administration.

19 MR. BUCK: John Buck, B-u-c-k, Federal Highway
20 Administration.

21 MR. PROUTY: Steve Prouty, P as in Paul, r-o-u-t-y, NTSB.

22 MR. WALSH: Dan Walsh, W-a-l-s-h, NTSB.

23 MR. COLLINS: Thanks, everybody. And I'll turn it over to
24 Steve to kick it off. Steve?

25 MR. PROUTY: Do you go by Robert or Bob? Which do you

1 prefer?

2 MR. HOOKS: Either's fine.

3 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT HOOKS AND DENNIS McLAUGHLIN

4 MR. PROUTY: Okay. Can you give us a general description of
5 your duties, I guess, day to day, your responsibilities?

6 MR. HOOKS: Work foreman for our -- one of our inspection
7 crews.

8 MR. PROUTY: And how about you, Dennis?

9 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Snooper operator.

10 MR. COLLINS: What's a -- you said snooper?

11 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Crane operator.

12 MR. COLLINS: Crane. Okay.

13 MR. HOOKS: (Indiscernible) underbridge inspections.

14 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

15 MR. PROUTY: We'll (indiscernible).

16 How many inspections would you say you guys provide access
17 for in a year? Obviously this is going to be a ballpark thing,
18 so --

19 MR. HOOKS: Oh, boy. It varies. Most bridges are short in
20 turn wise, and then we have some bridges that are 2 weeks. We're
21 on Birmingham Bridge right now, and that one takes approximately 2
22 weeks. Work probably 8 months out of a year. Definitely it all
23 depends, but we work year round. An actual number, maybe we do 58
24 a year.

25 MR. PROUTY: Okay.

1 MR. HOOKS: And that's, say, me and my crew.

2 MR. PROUTY: Right.

3 MR. HOOKS: And we have other crews.

4 MR. PROUTY: Right. Do you remember what inspection firm you
5 guys were working for in the most recent in the most recent
6 inspection of the Forbes Avenue Bridge?

7 MR. HOOKS: It was Gannett Fleming.

8 MR. PROUTY: And do you remember when roughly that most
9 recent inspection was? Was it -- not necessarily a specific date,
10 but at least like a month?

11 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I believe it was in December, wasn't it?

12 MR. HOOKS: No, I'm thinking maybe it was around October.

13 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. October.

14 MR. PROUTY: And do you remember, did that take more than 1
15 day or was that a 1-day thing, or --

16 MR. HOOKS: Two days. One day one direction and then another
17 day opposite direction.

18 MR. PROUTY: Do you know if you or your company would have
19 any documentation that would be able to firm up the dates for us
20 on that?

21 MR. HOOKS: Yes. I would say that Beth would have it in the
22 office, some sheet that -- sometimes we turn in a sheet for that
23 job. So she may have that in the record for that bridge.

24 MR. PROUTY: So I guess, like on the Fern Hollow Bridge, how
25 would you approach that? What would you typically do for that

1 inspection?

2 MR. HOOKS: The traffic control for it. Find out which
3 direction they want to go. They would tell us what they need for
4 the inspection, whether it's a UB-60 or -- size. Set up the
5 traffic control form, and it's pretty much them, what they -- what
6 direction they want to go first.

7 MR. PROUTY: Does that mean that they have a representative
8 on the platform --

9 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

10 MR. PROUTY: -- and they're directing you to just drive a
11 shared -- bring the --

12 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

13 MR. PROUTY: -- the walkway here --

14 MR. HOOKS: We'll start on one end and work from that end
15 till we get to the other end. And then usually we can -- on that
16 bridge, we don't have any trouble going down one side in a day. I
17 believe the last four inspections that I've been on, on that
18 bridge, it's -- I don't believe it ever took more than 2 days.

19 MR. O'SHEA: So did you have a bucket that you and the
20 engineers are in there with or is it a platform or is it --

21 MR. HOOKS: No. It's a bucket or basket. I believe we had a
22 UB-62. So that would have a square type basket.

23 MR. O'SHEA: So the operator and then --

24 MR. HOOKS: There were three of them in that.

25 MR. O'SHEA: So you could fit three people in there?

1 MR. HOOKS: Yeah.

2 MR. O'SHEA: Okay.

3 MR. HOOKS: The operator and engineer -- I believe it was
4 Scott Pearson -- and we had an assistant that was there, and those
5 three went down.

6 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

7 MR. PROUTY: Can you describe for us, I guess, the mechanics
8 of getting them where they need to be?

9 MR. HOOKS: Okay. Once we're deployed over the side, the
10 operator tells me, depending on what the bridge structure is, you
11 know, whether we're going in and out of steel or whether we're
12 just slowly moving through each span.

13 MR. PROUTY: So is this like you're on the platform or the
14 bucket but you're driving the vehicle? Is that how this works?

15 MR. HOOKS: Usually, yeah. I'm not always driving.

16 MR. PROUTY: So you receive communication of moving forward
17 or not?

18 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. Tell him to guide me forward,
19 background.

20 MR. BUCK: Yeah. So he drives you along the bridge and
21 then --

22 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I operate the basket, taking it through
23 steel --

24 MR. HOOKS: It's voice activated so he can tell me --

25 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

1 MR. HOOKS: -- to stop here and then do some --

2 MR. BUCK: So if you're over the side of the bucket, then you
3 would be the one moving that bucket transversely to the bridge
4 (indiscernible) --

5 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Turning it to the bridge, moving it back and
6 forth, you know, extending out, going as far as I can, yeah. And
7 if I got to go forward, I tell him go head move forward, you know,
8 so --

9 MR. PROUTY: And just clarifying, it's the engineer and/or
10 their assistant that's then telling you all that stuff?

11 MR. HOOKS: Yeah.

12 MR. PROUTY: Like move me to this beam --

13 MR. HOOKS: He tells me exactly where he wants to go, whether
14 he wants to go to the floor beam and then slowly move across. He
15 directs (indiscernible) to where he wants to go.

16 MR. PROUTY: So you're coordinating the bottom and -- to make
17 sure that you get the vehicle where it needs to be. And but the
18 engineers are telling you where they -- what they want to look at
19 next?

20 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. They tell me exactly where they want
21 to go to and -- they can point, tell me, whatever, and I go right
22 to that spot. Because they got to be hands on, anyways.

23 MR. PROUTY: So what's the, I guess, the scope of the team's
24 responsibilities during a typical inspection? So you mentioned
25 the traffic direction. What else are you guys responsible for?

1 MR. HOOKS: Really that's it, the traffic control and the
2 truck itself.

3 MR. McLAUGHLIN: And taking inspectors down under.

4 MR. PROUTY: And you mentioned that you thought you were
5 using a UB-62.

6 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

7 MR. PROUTY: Is there anything else you recall about the
8 equipment you used for that most recent one?

9 MR. HOOKS: We would've had a -- maybe we did not have a
10 crash truck. If they call for a crash truck we bring one, but I
11 cannot recall whether we had one on that job. I don't believe so.
12 I believe we only used the arrow board or pickup truck behind and
13 that's --

14 MR. PROUTY: Would that be in the documentation that Beth may
15 have, the form?

16 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

17 MR. PROUTY: If there was a crash vehicle, the attenuator,
18 that would be listed there?

19 MR. HOOKS: Yes. Because I believe now, under Publication
20 213, it's optional in that setup. So they would have to say they
21 want it so that -- they'd pay for it individually because I'm
22 guessing that it probably isn't in the bid price, only the 400s, I
23 believe.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And for -- can I --

25 MR. PROUTY: Absolutely.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So what is a UB-62? Or like who makes
2 it, what is it?

3 MR. HOOKS: That's an Aspen Aerial.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

5 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Sometimes they call them cranes or snoopers.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But is this not the one, the type with
7 the walking platform? This is the one with just the bucket?

8 MR. HOOKS: No, no. They are just with a basket.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

10 MR. HOOKS: You can put platforms on these things. They have
11 the same exact truck that you can use a platform on, but we have
12 no need for a platform.

13 MR. PROUTY: You alluded you sort of remember the last four
14 inspections. Was it always this vehicle or in the past was there
15 other ones?

16 MR. HOOKS: No, it would have been other.

17 MR. PROUTY: There wouldn't have been other ones?

18 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. Like, say --

19 MR. McLAUGHLIN: UB-60.

20 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. Like most of our cranes are UB-60s.

21 MR. O'SHEA: What's the difference between a UB-60 and a
22 UB-62?

23 MR. HOOKS: The 62s are newer and they eliminated -- the
24 design on them, they eliminated the stabilizer bars which run
25 underneath your main number 1 boom. Because when you would try to

1 go out, they were kind of always in the way. The A-62s are much
2 more maneuverable around fences and stuff.

3 MR. O'SHEA: It's A-62 or UB-62?

4 MR. HOOKS: A-62.

5 MR. PROUTY: Okay. So it was an A-62, what you recall, last
6 October?

7 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. I believe so, yeah.

8 MR. PROUTY: And then, but you do recall on other prior ones
9 it could have been a UB-60?

10 MR. HOOKS: UB-60, right.

11 MR. PROUTY: Okay.

12 MR. O'SHEA: And a UB-60 is the old Reach All, Aspen Aerials?

13 MR. HOOKS: Right, right.

14 MR. O'SHEA: And the A-62 is Aspen Aerials?

15 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. It's just a newer -- yeah, they changed
16 their name. Same company --

17 MR. O'SHEA: Yeah.

18 MR. HOOKS: -- Reach All, they just -- they changed their
19 name to Aspen.

20 MR. PROUTY: Do you know the approximate weight of the
21 (indiscernible)?

22 MR. HOOKS: Around 64.5.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is this kips or tons?

24 MR. HOOKS: 64,500 pounds.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pounds.

1 MR. HOOKS: Now that may not be exact, but that's close.

2 MR. PROUTY: Well, again, do you have the documentation of
3 what it is you have like from the manufacturer, like a GBW?

4 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

5 MR. PROUTY: And that woman, Beth, might be able to provide
6 that?

7 MR. HOOKS: Yes. Absolutely.

8 MR. PROUTY: Were you advised in advance of the 26-ton load
9 restriction on the bridge or was that something -- if not, when,
10 if ever, did you become aware that there was one on that bridge?

11 MR. HOOKS: When you get there and you see that it is, but I
12 believe there's been that same restriction on it for a little
13 while. It may have even been less before that -- I don't know how
14 many years ago it was, but we were there with the UB-60 doing --
15 getting, I believe it was Facchiano down to do some rehab repairs
16 or something, drain repairs, whatever they were doing. But that's
17 going back quite a few years.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Who tells you which vehicles to
19 use, the UB-60 or the UB-62? Is that a decision made on like --

20 MR. HOOKS: Sometimes they will specifically say that they
21 need the A-62, but normally I think in the contracts usually it
22 just says they need a 60-foot.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Something with 60 feet of reach?

24 MR. HOOKS: Right.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, reach. Yeah.

1 MR. O'SHEA: Was the -- for the A-62s, did that replace the
2 UB-60? So the UB-60s were available at the time when they were
3 doing the last inspection? It's essentially the same crane
4 though, right?

5 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. They're the same.

6 MR. O'SHEA: Except for the outriggers?

7 MR. HOOKS: Right. Well, none of that -- none of the Reach
8 All or Aspen have outriggers. They are all working a, say, 8, 9
9 foot lane.

10 MR. O'SHEA: Okay. So essentially the same ones?

11 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. The A-62s, to me, are an updated
12 version --

13 MR. O'SHEA: Sure.

14 MR. HOOKS: -- of the 60s.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So I guess, in general, not
16 necessarily specific to this bridge, but you could consider this
17 one in there as well, either you're notified in advance or once
18 you get to the bridge and you notice that there's a weight
19 restriction on it, what do you do? How does that change things
20 for you? Does it change anything?

21 MR. HOOKS: Right. Usually we'll ask. A good example, I
22 believe is the same company, Gannett Fleming. We were at -- are
23 they coming at Swinburne? On Frazier Street?

24 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

25 MR. HOOKS: I knew that one the last time I was on it, the

1 weight limit was really low. And so when we were headed to it, I
2 asked them, isn't that the one that it's got a really low -- and I
3 asked are we allowed on it; do you have permission to go onto that
4 bridge? And they looked at it and said no, we couldn't do it that
5 way.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And what happens when you can't do it
7 that way? What other options do you have?

8 MR. HOOKS: They asked me about rigging, which was too
9 difficult because of some of the things they did during rehab they
10 made it un-accessible to me to get there to rig it. So I told
11 them I really didn't think that was a way to go. We ended up --

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: JLT.

13 MR. HOOKS: -- bringing in a lift from two separate
14 directions, through people's backyard to get to it --

15 MR. O'SHEA: So you went underneath?

16 MR. HOOKS: Yes. Yeah.

17 MR. O'SHEA: Instead of being from up top?

18 MR. HOOKS: Right.

19 MR. O'SHEA: Okay.

20 MR. HOOKS: Which on that particular bridge, access is so
21 hard to get there to begin with. But I remembered from years ago
22 that we drove a lift up behind and did it that --

23 MR. O'SHEA: Is this the other bridge or are you talking
24 about Fern Hollow?

25 MR. HOOKS: It's the other bridge, the Frazier short street

1 or Swinburne or whatever it's called there.

2 MR. O'SHEA: So did you ever go underneath Fern Hollow with a
3 lift?

4 MR. HOOKS: No. No. There's a -- there's no access.
5 There's a walking trail down there, but it's -- I believe
6 everything was so high you couldn't do anything from there.

7 MR. O'SHEA: Okay.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many times do you think you've
9 used a lift operation in your experience?

10 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Me?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I started running them almost 9 years, I
13 started running them. A lot of them -- I run a lot of them,
14 mostly with him running.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you do quite frequently?

16 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. Every week, yeah.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is your question about the JLG lift or
18 those Aspen vehicles? The JLG's the --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The JLG.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- articulating boom lifts. I think
21 his question is how often are you running the articulating boom?

22 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Oh, I run them, too. I run both, and
23 everything. And I -- if it's there, I'll run it.

24 MR. HOOKS: A lot of bridges call for it.

25 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. A lot of bridges --

1 MR. HOOKS: Birmingham, where we were just at, we had to have
2 a 150-footer to get to the top.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you do it quite frequently?

4 MR. HOOKS: Yeah.

5 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Every day of the week, I'm running one of
6 them.

7 MR. PROUTY: Well, let me just ask Bob one real quick. I
8 mean, you're pulling up to this in the A-62 and it says 26 tons,
9 and does it trigger something in your head knowing that you're at
10 64,000 pounds?

11 MR. HOOKS: Anymore, not so much because it's the same
12 bridges that we've continuously been doing with the same vehicle,
13 and the same vehicle that they keep asking us for.

14 MR. O'SHEA: So the first time you came out there and there
15 was a 26-ton, you may have asked the question about whether you
16 can use it or not?

17 MR. HOOKS: I couldn't tell you whether the last time we did
18 Fern Hollow, whether I questioned the 26 ton or not. But I know
19 that I had been there before --

20 MR. O'SHEA: Right.

21 MR. HOOKS: -- with that same -- and usually just through the
22 years -- I've been doing this for 28 years -- we'll ask sometimes
23 about the weight limits and sometimes they'll have to set and
24 calculate whether yes, we can go onto this bridge or not.

25 MR. OCEL: On the other bridge where you said actually you

1 did ask, how low was it where you were like, hang on --

2 MR. HOOKS: Twenty-one.

3 MR. OCEL: It was 21? Okay. Twenty-one tons for the --

4 MR. HOOKS: It was 21 tons, right. And sometimes it's
5 because it's a specific spot. And sometimes they'll tell us,
6 well, we can go to here, but we can't go beyond this point.

7 MR. OCEL: And the engineer is telling you that?

8 MR. HOOKS: Right.

9 MR. OCEL: Because they know what's controlling the posting
10 and the (indiscernible) --

11 MR. HOOKS: Right. But on that particular bridge, they said
12 no, that no you can't use it because the bridge has so many bad
13 spots that --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would you say that you drove across
15 the bridge at speed as well as crawl speed for the inspection or
16 did you only cross it at crawl speed? Or if you don't remember,
17 that's fine.

18 MR. HOOKS: I would say that I probably went across at full
19 speed, which might be 30 mile an hour there, whatever it is. I
20 don't know. Because I don't think we could go out to the right,
21 so it may have been that I went back up into Oakland to go out
22 that way, which means I would have turned around somewhere and
23 backed out.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gone back up to Braddock, you're
25 saying, instead of down to Dallas?

1 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. I know when we started we were coming
2 from, say, Oakland to Braddock, and then I turned around and went
3 back out the same way.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So just kind of follow up on one of
5 Justin's questions. So there's nothing that stipulates when you
6 see a posted weight sign and you know the weight of your UB-60 is
7 heavier than the posted weight limit, there's nothing that
8 triggers a decision to call the engineer to determine whether
9 that's okay or not?

10 MR. HOOKS: Oh, no. I mean, we always take -- you know, this
11 is it. They knew that's what it was when they asked us to come
12 there with the 60.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But do you check with the engineer to
14 see if that's been evaluated?

15 MR. HOOKS: I can't say that I always do that.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. But do you assume that the
17 engineer has already looked into that?

18 MR. HOOKS: Now that I do. If they're working for the county
19 and they're telling us to bring a UB-60 that weighs 64,000 pounds,
20 that they've already --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

22 MR. HOOKS: -- got clearance from somebody that --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right. So it's your assumption that
24 they --

25 MR. HOOKS: -- it's all right.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's their assumption -- your
2 assumption that they've looked into that?

3 MR. HOOKS: Yes. If I'm traveling somewhere to a bridge, I
4 try to look at my route to make sure I'm not crossing bridges that
5 I'm overweight on. So I assume they do that when they're telling
6 us to bring that there for the inspection.

7 MR. OCEL: Okay. But if you were traveling -- let's --
8 you're trying to get to Fern Hollow, but you had to cross two
9 bridges to get there that aren't part of the contract. I mean,
10 you're aware that if I see the posting maybe I should stop --

11 MR. HOOKS: Right.

12 MR. OCEL: -- turnaround and go the other way? All right.

13 MR. HOOKS: Sometimes I've been put in that spot and there is
14 no turning around.

15 MR. OCEL: Yeah.

16 MR. HOOKS: So all I can do is stop and decide whether I'm
17 going to creep across.

18 MR. O'SHEA: As far as the engineers doing the inspection,
19 they ask you for a piece of equipment that reaches 60 feet, right?

20 MR. HOOKS: Right.

21 MR. O'SHEA: I guess that's what they're asking for. Or do
22 they specifically ask for the A-62?

23 MR. HOOKS: Oh, they will ask -- it'll say right in our -- in
24 the contract (indiscernible), this what they want for the job,
25 whether it's a UB-60 or UB-62 or --

1 MR. O'SHEA: Okay. Is there any piece of equipment that
2 would reach 60 feet that would be less than 26 tons?

3 MR. HOOKS: No. No, because the UB -- like I say, the UB-60
4 would reach 60 feet across, and they reach about 72 feet down.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So are most of them that meets
6 the 60 feet roughly the same weight? Or do you have lighter
7 options that --

8 MR. HOOKS: Well, we have a brand new A-62 that weighs 73,000
9 pounds. The old ones weighed 64.5, now the new ones have gained
10 some weight. We have a state snooper that weighs 79,140 pounds,
11 that we bought off of the state, and it's only a 60-footer. But
12 that's a 1998.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And just out of curiosity here, did
14 they -- do you guys have like the weight of your vehicle?

15 MR. HOOKS: It's right on --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or somewhere like on your dash,
17 somewhere where you can clearly see it and know what it is?

18 MR. HOOKS: Most of them --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You have to look at the door stickers?

20 MR. HOOKS: Some of them are right on the door what they
21 weigh. Others would be on the registration.

22 MR. PROUTY: All right. So based on your experience on other
23 inspections, do you recall anything unusual or out of the
24 ordinary, during this most recent one that you noticed?

25 MR. COLLINS: Talking about the Fern Hollow again.

1 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. While they were doing the inspection, we
2 heard a noise on the Oakland side of the bridge. And after 2 days
3 of hearing this, on the second day we finally figured out where it
4 was. It sounded like it was a noise at the abutment on the
5 Oakmont side.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Which side would that be? Like --

7 MR. HOOKS: Heading to Oakland from Braddock.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's the east side or --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm not sure, to be honest.

11 MR. OCEL: The Braddock side of the bridge or the Dallas side
12 of the bridge?

13 MR. HOOKS: The Dallas side.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The Dallas side.

15 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. I keep saying it's Oakland, but it's just
16 because I'm coming down from Oakland.

17 MR. PROUTY: Okay. So the east side abutment is where you
18 think the noise was coming from?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: West. West abutment. West -- would
20 it help to have a map maybe, Steve?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The little gazebo side?

22 MR. HOOKS: I would say that is. Yeah, I would say that is
23 the west. Yeah, the gazebo side.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The gazebo (indiscernible).

25 MR. COLLINS: We'll throw a map up so we can make sure we're

1 on the --

2 MR. HOOKS: And it seemed like it was on the opposite side of
3 the gazebo. You know, you were heading from Braddock to Dallas,
4 it seemed like it was in that corner somewhere.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So if the gazebo's on the south side
6 of Forbes, it would have been on the north side at the -- near the
7 abutment?

8 MR. HOOKS: Yeah.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But you never did figure out exactly
11 what it was?

12 MR. HOOKS: No. The only thing that I finally figured that
13 when I was hearing a noise was when a bus would impact the
14 Braddock side of the bridge.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Like the joint at the end of the
16 bridge?

17 MR. HOOKS: Yes. When it would come into the first span on
18 the bridge, that's when I would hear the noise. And it wasn't a
19 normal expansion noise that I was used to hearing. It was --
20 something was a little off about it, so --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you would say you're familiar with,
22 say, a loose expansion dam or --

23 MR. HOOKS: Yeah.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- cover or something? And you would
25 say this sound was not similar to other joint issues that you've

1 heard and --

2 MR. HOOKS: No. It wasn't -- it sounded different. There
3 was something different about it. So, you know, we made the
4 engineer aware of it.

5 MR. O'SHEA: And you were on top of the deck?

6 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

7 MR. O'SHEA: And you were back in the bucket?

8 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah.

9 MR. O'SHEA: Did you hear the same sound?

10 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah. It was coming from the abutment
11 and everything where -- I mean, it was a clanging noise, you know.
12 But we went and looked and, you know, we didn't see nothing really
13 because there wasn't no buses going over it at the time, you know.
14 But, yeah, I heard it.

15 MR. HOOKS: They spent some time in that location.

16 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah.

17 MR. HOOKS: I wouldn't say you saw anything specific that was
18 making the noise.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the bus would've been -- so were on
20 the south or north side of the bridge when this -- or both maybe?

21 MR. HOOKS: Well, both, because we would hear it even when we
22 were on the other side when we were heading to Braddock.

23 MR. O'SHEA: So Braddock's on the right?

24 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

25 MR. COLLINS: For the transcript, we put a picture of the

1 Fern Hollow Bridge up and left and right will be relative to that.

2 MR. PROUTY: Yeah, so the east is to the right, north is up,
3 west to the left. Braddock is to the right, and then would you
4 say the park or -- more of the park, I guess, to the left.

5 So it was the left end, as we're looking at it now?

6 MR. HOOKS: It would actually have been the right. No, no.
7 Sorry. The left end of the bridge, and it would've been the north
8 side of the --

9 MR. PROUTY: So at the northwest corner?

10 MR. HOOKS: Yeah, somewhere on that side. Because when buses
11 and vehicles would actually come down the hill, you didn't hear
12 the noise, only when then they --

13 MR. PROUTY: So down the hill would be traveling to the right
14 or to the left?

15 MR. HOOKS: Traveling to the right.

16 MR. PROUTY: So when buses and vehicles going to the right,
17 so west to east, you wouldn't hear the noise --

18 MR. HOOKS: Yeah.

19 MR. PROUTY: -- but you would hear it if they were doing
20 right to left, or towards the west?

21 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

22 MR. O'SHEA: Did you notice it when your vehicle was at a
23 certain location on the bridge?

24 MR. HOOKS: No, I can't say that I -- it was any certain
25 location.

1 MR. O'SHEA: Okay. So you were like on the west side of the
2 bridge?

3 MR. HOOKS: We were --

4 MR. O'SHEA: You're closer to the sound, so you probably
5 heard it there.

6 MR. HOOKS: We were -- well, it was easier to hear there
7 because you were closer to it.

8 MR. OCEL: But you said when you did both girder lines. So
9 on each side of the bridge as you crawled, you kept hearing it?

10 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. It would be -- like I said, it took to the
11 second day to realize when I was hearing it. And I believe that's
12 when we mentioned it to Scott. So that when we got toward that
13 area, he --

14 MR. O'SHEA: Was that sound only coming from the most recent
15 inspection or was it --

16 MR. HOOKS: Yeah, I --

17 MR. O'SHEA: -- on a couple of inspections before that one?
18 So --

19 MR. HOOKS: I'm not sure when my last inspection there was,
20 but I don't believe I heard that before, you know, only this
21 inspection.

22 MR. McLAUGHLIN: That was my first time being on that bridge,
23 so that's the first time I heard it.

24 MR. O'SHEA: So you were only there once?

25 MR. McLAUGHLIN: One time, yeah. That's the first time I did

1 that bridge.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, adjectively, was it a clinking,
3 a high pitch, a low pitch, sound like drum?

4 MR. HOOKS: More like a --

5 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Clanging.

6 MR. HOOKS: Clanging. To me.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. I know it's hard to describe.
8 But, yeah, (indiscernible) --

9 MR. HOOKS: It definitely wasn't a loose joint where there's
10 a bolt loose on the top of it or something. I can't even tell you
11 what type of joint it was. I really don't remember.

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: And like when they really -- it really -- I
13 mean when they really hit it, it clanged real loud, you know,
14 so -- I mean, I could hear it under the bridge. I could be
15 halfway over there and they'd be hitting it and I could hear it.
16 So --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So clang was more like a metal on
18 metal sound?

19 MR. HOOKS: To my memory, when the vehicles were actually
20 going over that spot, there was no noise. It was only when they
21 were impacting the bridge from the other direction.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And did you see anything physically or
23 you just heard the noise, you didn't --

24 MR. HOOKS: I just heard the noise.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- you weren't able to ascertain, oh,

1 this thing is hitting this thing or anything like that?

2 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Alls I did is I heard the noise. I didn't
3 see nothing. You know, I mean, we went up by the bearings and
4 everything else, did all that and -- but we didn't see nothing. I
5 didn't see nothing, you know. I just take them there. But there
6 was a, like a big clanging noise, you know.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And bridges move.

8 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was this one more bouncy than normal?
10 Vibrate more when you're on the bucket?

11 MR. HOOKS: No more than ordinary.

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah, ordinary.

13 MR. HOOKS: Some bounce around more than others, but I didn't
14 see that one was anything unusual.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When you were near the bearings, was
16 the noise from that direction or would you say it was towards the
17 center of the bridge where you were hearing it?

18 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I'm saying it was somewhere by the abutment.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

20 MR. McLAUGHLIN: It wasn't nowhere down by the bearing.

21 MR. HOOKS: What I think what he's asking --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So when you were up at the abutment
23 bearings, you felt you were in the general vicinity of where that
24 noise (indiscernible)?

25 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. Yeah, right around in -- yeah, where the

1 abutment bearings are.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

3 MR. HOOKS: Yeah, that's about where it was about at.

4 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yeah. I could -- because when we dropped
5 down, I could hear it and you could actually almost say it was
6 coming from by the bearing -- not the bearing, but the abutment
7 somewhere up there.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Anything else unusual that you guys
9 noticed?

10 MR. HOOKS: No, nothing from me.

11 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Nothing really. It just -- you know, it's
12 pretty rusty and -- you know. I mean, I see bridges, but I mean
13 it was rusty, you know.

14 MR. PROUTY: Based on you guys' experience operating heavy
15 equipment, being on bridges, that type stuff, did you observe any
16 other potentially overweight vehicles crossing while you guys were
17 doing the inspection?

18 MR. HOOKS: Yeah, you would -- even when you're setting on it
19 and, say, you would get one truck (indiscernible), but really
20 bounce you a lot more than say another. But telling how far they
21 were loaded, you couldn't really tell.

22 MR. PROUTY: But you saw tri-axles going when --

23 MR. HOOKS: Oh, yeah.

24 MR. PROUTY: -- you're crawling or sitting?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Potentially loaded tri-axles or --

1 MR. HOOKS: Right. That's what I'm saying.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, it's hard to tell when you're
3 sitting there.

4 MR. HOOKS: Right. Exactly.

5 MR. PROUTY: Did they have the auxiliary down?

6 MR. HOOKS: Sometimes their tarps (ph.) are down, sometimes
7 their tarps are up.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

9 MR. HOOKS: And to notice whether -- I would say I have seen
10 both, whether their tag was down and up. But I'm sure they're tag
11 down is more of an indication that they were loaded, but I can't
12 say I really paid attention to that.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you see any semi tractor-trailer
14 type vehicles?

15 MR. HOOKS: Yes. But I can't say I seen any, say, loaded
16 with steel or this or that. But I -- there are tractor-trailers
17 that go across it, but to say that they're overweight, I wouldn't
18 really know --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

20 MR. HOOKS: -- that. Some of them have aluminum beds. Some
21 of them have steel beds.

22 MR. O'SHEA: Do you ever see if there's any enforcement for
23 the load posting out there? Any police or anything or any truck
24 size, weight?

25 MR. HOOKS: No, not that I ever noticed.

1 MR. PROUTY: What information are you guys typically provided
2 prior to going out for an inspection? What are you told as far as
3 what to expect other than an address basically?

4 MR. HOOKS: We're just told what bridge it is, what traffic
5 pattern they want, and what vehicle they want for an inspection,
6 which we pretty much now only have UB-60s, 62s.

7 MR. PROUTY: Do you have to design the traffic plan or is it
8 that Publication 213 tells you what to do?

9 MR. HOOKS: Just go -- Publication 213.

10 MR. PROUTY: Okay. So the company who's contracting you,
11 they just say provide traffic control and then it's in your
12 ballpark to follow whatever PennDOT or city requirements are?

13 MR. HOOKS: Some of them --

14 MR. PROUTY: Or somebody tells --

15 MR. HOOKS: -- will specifically tell you this is what we
16 want and some just say Publication 213, just whatever it calls
17 for.

18 MR. PROUTY: Okay.

19 MR. COLLINS: And by some you mean whoever the contractor is,
20 Gannett Fleming or --

21 MR. HOOKS: Right.

22 MR. COLLINS: -- or somebody -- another company?

23 MR. HOOKS: Whichever engineering firm is doing the
24 inspection.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So for this inspection, would your

1 traffic pattern have been a full lane closure in one direction at
2 a time; do you recall?

3 MR. HOOKS: Yes. We usually do the whole thing because
4 they'll want to do the deck on that side. So we would usually do
5 the full lane.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And then you're a little more
7 efficient, you're not having to move the cones and --

8 MR. HOOKS: Right. Right. Exactly.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- drive them on the bridge and --

10 MR. HOOKS: So on that particular bridge, sometimes I try to
11 get away from the end with the gazebo coming down the hill,
12 because they travel pretty fast down through there and I like us a
13 little further away from that.

14 MR. PROUTY: What do you have to do with the city to tell
15 them that lanes are being shut down?

16 MR. HOOKS: We do nothing. The engineering firm -- as far as
17 the city, I am not sure.

18 MR. PROUTY: Well, you must have to alert somebody, right,
19 that there's going to be a lane closure?

20 MR. HOOKS: The engineering firm alerts when we are on
21 PennDOT highways. They call -- they have to call and tell them
22 where we are.

23 MR. O'SHEA: So they do the coordination, you guys don't?

24 MR. HOOKS: Right.

25 MR. O'SHEA: Okay. Did you notice anything or did you get

1 any different direction when you were working with Gannett Fleming
2 versus the other consultants who used to do the inspections?

3 MR. HOOKS: No, no different.

4 MR. O'SHEA: Pretty much the same between Wilbur Smith or
5 whatever --

6 MR. HOOKS: Yeah --

7 MR. O'SHEA: -- (indiscernible), they're pretty much the
8 same?

9 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. That particular bridge, I'm sure I've done
10 it with them, SAI, Wilbur Smith, even back to Michael Baker here.
11 You know, just everyone was one pretty much consistently the same.

12 MR. O'SHEA: Okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just -- I think you said earlier that
14 all your vehicles that you use are less than the 26-ton, or less
15 than --

16 MR. HOOKS: Yes. All of our vehicles would be --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- would be less than --

18 MR. HOOKS: -- over that weight.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, over. You mean over.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, over. Would be over the 26?

22 MR. HOOKS: Yes. We wouldn't have anything that weighed less
23 than, say, 64,000 pounds.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And then I think you also said
25 that the lift, doing the lift underneath would not be -- you could

1 not do that because of the terrain.

2 MR. HOOKS: Right. Right.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So my question is, what rigging
4 operation would you suggest based on your professional judgment
5 that could be used in order to conform to the posted weight limit
6 of 26 tons?

7 MR. HOOKS: On that particular bridge they would have to use
8 a UB-30 weight wise, is probably maybe --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you have a UB-30 in your fleet?

10 MR. HOOKS: No. They make them, but we don't have anything
11 that small.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would a UB-30 have been able to reach
13 underneath and all the way to the center underneath of the bridge,
14 or would it have been -- would it have just been further --

15 MR. HOOKS: I would say it would've been real iffy if they
16 could reach that because I believe that the 30 foot is based off
17 of the knuckle on number 1, which is out -- straight out from the
18 bridge. Now your number 2 will come in and it'll go past vertical
19 maybe 5 percent or something. So when you say 60 feet, it's from
20 that point. It's not actually from, say, the side of the bridge.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

22 MR. HOOKS: You can't always get the vehicle to the left,
23 stay in one lane and let traffic go by, to get that little bit of
24 extra. So you're actually never quite all the way in for that 60
25 foot.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. Because you have to clear the
2 edge of the bridge with the knuckle, right? Is that what you're
3 saying?

4 MR. HOOKS: Right. Yeah. Say boom number 1 is 18 feet long.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So boom 1 is from the truck straight
6 out?

7 MR. HOOKS: Exactly.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Then you have a knuckle, then
9 you drop down from there, and that piece can articulate like this?

10 MR. HOOKS: Right. Yes. Number 2 can go down. It can --

11 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Turn.

12 MR. HOOKS: -- turn. And then you can actually what we call
13 open, which is to put it underneath the bridge.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And then is there a number 3 that
15 pushes the bucket in a straight line?

16 MR. HOOKS: Yes. It's an extension. You'll have boom 3
17 is -- you know, maybe it's 20 foot. It actually would be the
18 longest boom, and then it has an extension on that.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In your experience, has Gannett
20 Fleming ever stipulated a UB-30 in your contract due to the
21 restricted post weight limit?

22 MR. HOOKS: Only on the -- well, I can't say only on that
23 bridge. We were to go to the Frazier Street, which is Swinburne
24 Bridge. Now that called for a 60, and I believe we -- maybe we
25 did that, and it could've been that it was after Fern Hollow had

1 collapsed. You know, I don't recall. But they had to get a 30
2 for that because I told them that's the only thing I thought might
3 even be close. And they did that on their own. They went and
4 found somebody that had a 30.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So Gannett Fleming stipulated that in
6 the contract?

7 MR. HOOKS: Yeah. In their contract -- well, I guess what
8 the problem is it's -- a contract isn't usually just for one
9 bridge. It's for however many bridges happen to be in that
10 contract, I think. And then they tell you what they want from
11 there. But we were never told to, say -- to provide a 30-foot.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you have follow-up?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're done?

15 This is going to be a much different question. You recall
16 that the bridge was rehabilitated at one point. Was your company
17 providing the access for those doing the repairs or
18 rehabilitations? It was around --

19 MR. HOOKS: Are you talking Fern Hollow or --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, Fern Hollow. It was around,
21 what, 2009? Did you provide the access for that or did they work
22 from the ground outside your company?

23 MR. O'SHEA: Were they putting the cables up on the
24 (indiscernible)?

25 MR. HOOKS: I don't remember exactly what all they were

1 doing. But we were --

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. Yeah, you did at one point.
3 You said you remembered that the load posting was lower for a
4 little period of time.

5 MR. HOOKS: Well, not that one. I'm talking about Frazier.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, okay.

7 MR. HOOKS: If Fern Hollow was ever lower, I don't recall
8 ever seeing --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I see what you're saying. Okay.

10 MR. HOOKS: It could be that when I first went onto Fern
11 Hollow it didn't even have a weight limit.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I got it. Okay.

13 MR. HOOKS: So I'm not sure when the 26 even came into play.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

15 MR. O'SHEA: I have a question. Just, this is more general.
16 Does your company have any instructions or training on crossing
17 posted bridges if you have a certain weight limit on your vehicle?

18 MR. HOOKS: No, other than the driver saying that no, we
19 can't.

20 MR. O'SHEA: Right. But your company doesn't tell you, you
21 shouldn't be -- or does the company tell you, you shouldn't be
22 crossing posted bridges?

23 MR. HOOKS: I'm sure it's in our paperwork somewhere to
24 conform to -- because we, bridge wise, we run into it quite a lot,
25 you know, that they're posted and, you know, they want us to do

1 the inspection on it.

2 MR. O'SHEA: Is it usually to the engineering firm's
3 discretion on whether you would cross that bridge? They would
4 give you direction to whether you should cross it or not?

5 MR. HOOKS: I would say that unless we outright refuse, which
6 I have -- I made the engineering firm actually call my office on a
7 bridge in Florida that they wanted me to -- engineering firm
8 wanted me to go onto that I said, well, who's going to be
9 responsible if I'm going on? That decision was made by the
10 engineering firm and our office, which they had us go on.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This is the state of Florida?

12 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So you work in other states
14 from Pennsylvania?

15 MR. HOOKS: Oh, yes. Yes.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Any -- maybe that's (indiscernible)
17 question. Any major distinctions between PennDOT practices and
18 what you experience in other states; is that a fair question?

19 MR. HOOKS: They all seem to be the same somewhat. Some have
20 a little bit different traffic plans.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Like MBT (ph.) differences primarily?

22 MR. HOOKS: Yes. And there are states that you will
23 definitely see somebody stop at your jobsite from the state to say
24 that, yes, everything looks good in your traffic control or this
25 or that.

1 MR. COLLINS: For Fern Hollow specifically or other bridges
2 within the city of Pittsburgh, have you had inspectors come by and
3 look at your traffic control plan or anything? Or if they do, how
4 frequently?

5 MR. HOOKS: I would honestly say the only one that -- we had
6 somebody stop and ask if our flaggers were certified when we were
7 doing some work downtown. Other than that, no.

8 MR. O'SHEA: Are you also an operator of the bucket --

9 MR. HOOKS: Yes, I can.

10 MR. O'SHEA: -- or you're just a driver? You do that, too?

11 MR. HOOKS: I can operate it, too, yes. It's actually where
12 I started. I started operating, then I started driving truck and
13 operating, now I pretty much drive a truck or just run the job.

14 MR. O'SHEA: Okay. So you -- as the driver, you run the job
15 from the equipment standpoint and then you just have an operator
16 to go along with it?

17 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And you guys work across the state of
19 Pennsylvania for other districts as well?

20 MR. HOOKS: Yes.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

22 MR. COLLINS: And the crew consists of just the two of you?

23 MR. HOOKS: No, it varies. It depends on the job.

24 Minimum -- very seldom is it just the two of us. That means
25 someone else is doing traffic control or a bridge is closed and

1 we're just showing up to provide equipment and get them there.
2 But normally we're three, four, five people.

3 MR. COLLINS: Okay.

4 MR. O'SHEA: How many crews do you have?

5 MR. HOOKS: Pretty much three that work all the time.

6 MR. COLLINS: Dennis, do you have anything else?
7 Steve?

8 MR. PROUTY: I had a couple, but I can't remember what they
9 are.

10 MR. COLLINS: I'll email Beth and bug her if necessary
11 instead of you guys.

12 MR. HOOKS: Okay.

13 MR. COLLINS: Okay. I'm going to end the recording now.

14 (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: COLLAPSE OF THE FERN HOLLOW BRIDGE
 IN PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA
 ON JANUARY 28, 2022
 Interview of Robert Hooks and
 Dennis McLaughlin

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY22MH003

PLACE: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

DATE: July 20, 2022

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.




Kay Maurer
Transcriber