

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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MBTA GREEN LINE TROLLEY *

COLLISION & DERAILMENT * Accident No.: RRD21FR013

IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, *

ON JULY 30, 2021 *

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Interview of: CHARMAINE JACOBS, Streetcar Motorperson
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Boston, Massachusetts

APPEARANCES:

ANNE GARCIA, Human Performance Group Chair
National Transportation Safety Board

STEVEN CULP, Safety
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

ALICIA GOMES, Division Chief of Light Rail Operations
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

DAVID CARNEY, Operations
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

KATE LEGROW, Occupational Health Services
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

JAMES EVERS, President
Boston Carmen's Union

PAUL ROMAN, Auditor
Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities

DAVE CARVALHO
Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 DR. GARCIA: This is Anne Garcia. G-A-R-C-I-A. I am the
3 human performance group chairman for the NTSB for this accident
4 investigation. The accident occurred on July 30th, about
5 6:04 p.m. in Boston, Massachusetts, as the train approached
6 Pleasant Street station. The NTSB accident number is RRD21FR013.

7 We have with us Ms. Charmaine Jacobs, who was the trailer
8 motorperson of the train that was struck.

9 Ms. Jacobs, do you mind if we call you Charmaine, or would
10 you prefer Ms. Jacobs?

11 MS. JACOBS: Charmaine is fine.

12 DR. GARCIA: Thank you very much. We'll make sure that we
13 can hear you on the recording. And again, the recording is being
14 done and it'll be sent to the transcriptionist. Okay?

15 MS. JACOBS: Okay.

16 DR. GARCIA: Do you give approval for doing a recording?

17 MS. JACOBS: That's fine, yes.

18 DR. GARCIA: Thank you. We appreciate very much.

19 I'm going to start with just some basic questions about your
20 general routine for the days leading up. And then we'll get into
21 the actual accident when it happened, and what you observed and
22 what you saw people doing. Okay?

23 MS. JACOBS: Yes.

24 DR. GARCIA: All right. But before we do all that, thank you
25 so much for coming in today. I really appreciate it and you being

1 willing to share your experience with us. I know it's difficult.
2 But you have the eyes and ears experience that nobody else did.
3 It's going to be very helpful for us. I know that you suffered
4 some injuries. I hope that you're starting to feel better.

5 INTERVIEW OF CHARMAINE JACOBS

6 BY DR. GARCIA:

- 7 Q. With that, I want to first go with the day of the accident.
8 Was this a normal workday for you?
- 9 A. Yes, it was.
- 10 Q. Thank you. So if you could just kind of take us back to what
11 time you woke up that morning, roughly?
- 12 A. Roughly around 5 o'clock.
- 13 Q. Okay. And about -- do you have breakfast before you leave
14 for work usually?
- 15 A. No.
- 16 Q. So what time roughly did you leave for work, then?
- 17 A. Around 6 o'clock.
- 18 Q. And what time did you arrive?
- 19 A. Around 6:30.
- 20 Q. And what time did your shift start?
- 21 A. 7 a.m.
- 22 Q. Did you have any breaks during the day?
- 23 A. Yes. I get a normal break.
- 24 Q. About what time was that?
- 25 A. My break is at 12:11.

1 Q. About when was it over?

2 A. My next trip was 1:36.

3 Q. Okay. And that would take us through until the time of the
4 accident. What time were you scheduled to be off work?

5 A. 6:15.

6 Q. I want to go back to the previous days of that week, and then
7 we'll get into just some general questions on how long you've been
8 with MBTA and that type of thing. Okay?

9 A. No problem.

10 Q. So this happened on July 30th. What was your work schedule
11 for the entire week? Do you recall?

12 A. My regular work schedule is from 7 a.m. until 6:15 p.m.

13 Q. And what days do you normally work?

14 A. Tuesday through Friday.

15 Q. Okay. On the other days of that particular week, did your
16 schedule change much from what you said you did on the day of the
17 accident?

18 A. No.

19 Q. So you have basically the same wake-up time, you don't have
20 breakfast before you go, and arriving at work. Okay.

21 Was there anything unusual in your schedule for this
22 particular day?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Thank you. How long have you been with the MBTA?

25 A. 19 years.

1 Q. Could you give us the highlights of your career, then? What
2 did you start at? What position?

3 A. As a train operator.

4 Q. Wow. And have you always operated on -- this is the Green
5 Line?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. And prior to coming to the MBTA, did you have other
8 work experience?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Where were you before you started?

11 A. Tuft's Health Plan.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Tuft's Health.

13 BY DR. GARCIA:

14 Q. Okay. And for education, what education level have you
15 gotten?

16 A. College graduate.

17 Q. What is your degree in?

18 A. Criminal justice.

19 Q. Is that a B.A., a B.S.?

20 A. Associate's.

21 Q. Associate's. Okay, good. Thank you very much.

22 A. No problem.

23 Q. So if you could then take us back to the day of the accident
24 and describe for us what your first realization was that something
25 had happened, and just talk us through there as to what you did

1 next, what you observed next.

2 A. I didn't realize what happened until it happened. There was
3 just a loud bang and the back of my train just kind of erupted in
4 smoke at that time.

5 Upon the impact of that happening or whatever happened at
6 that time, it threw passengers as well as myself all over the
7 train.

8 The impact -- it flung me out of the seat, and I fell on the
9 front steps of the train. But at that point in time when it
10 happened, I didn't know really what was going on. The train was
11 still moving from whatever occurred. And it seemed to have pushed
12 our train a little bit faster than what we was initially going.

13 So I automatically got up from the front stairs, and I hit
14 the mushroom. It's all I could do because I was unaware if the
15 train was moving by itself or if the driver had control of the
16 train. So I hit the mushroom.

17 After that, I tried to radio the dispatch, but all
18 communication on my train was knocked out. I had no working
19 radio, so I took the air off the door because the door was
20 inoperable at the time. It wouldn't open with the buttons because
21 nothing was working.

22 So I took the air off the door and I got as many passengers
23 out of the train. I ran to the front train where my driver was,
24 and I, at this time, still didn't know what happened. I entered
25 her train and tried to get as many passengers off the train as

1 possible on the platform.

2 And then I went to her car train radio because it was working
3 at the time, and I radioed for dispatch. I don't know if dispatch
4 heard me the first time, so I said what I said and I hung up the
5 receiver and went back to continue to help some of the passengers
6 on both trains.

7 I then came back to the front train because I felt like they
8 wasn't -- it was a fast -- it was just chaos all over the place.
9 So then I went back and I transmitted central another time to tell
10 them what was going on.

11 At that point in time, everything that was taught to me as
12 codes -- I just didn't remember anything. So I just spoke what I
13 know and told them that it's pandemonium here, I don't know what's
14 going on, people are injured, please send police and an ambulance
15 at that time.

16 I then hung up the phone, tried to assist as many passengers
17 as possible. I walked further down the platform, and then I
18 realized what had happened. And I was -- I just -- I was kind of
19 done.

20 Q. Thank you. I really appreciate you telling us that. And I
21 know it's difficult. I'm very sorry that this happened to you.

22 Do you recall who was the first person from MBTA that came to
23 you?

24 A. I think it was Roshan Greene (ph.) that came. From what I
25 can recall, it was Roshan that I saw first. And then, followed by

1 him I think was Jimmy Soo (ph.), behind him.

2 Q. Okay. And did you receive any instructions from them?

3 A. They told me to sit down because I just seemed a little bit
4 hysterical. It was just trying to get the situation as under
5 control as best as they could. So I just sat down a bit.

6 Q. Thank you. And then they took over taking care of the
7 passengers?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Did you have any contact with the motorpersons from
10 the train that struck yours?

11 A. Ma'am, I went off. They went off. Because I already asked
12 them -- to go through this. I lost my best friend in '08 from a
13 head-on collision. And I had to watch that. So I have to relive
14 Friday all over again. And I just lost it. I did. And I tried
15 to make ration what was going on, like how --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you want to pause for a second?

17 MS. JACOBS: A moment, please.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you want to step outside?

19 MS. JACOBS: Yeah.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you want me to go with you or you
21 want to --

22 MS. JACOBS: Yes, please.

23 (Off the record)

24 (On the record)

25 DR. GARCIA: Thank you, Charmaine, for coming back in to talk

1 with us. I appreciate it very much.

2 BY DR. GARCIA:

3 Q. One thing that you experienced that we didn't -- so you have
4 the information that would be very helpful to us -- and that's
5 what you might recall of any injuries that happened to passengers
6 on your train. What did you observe?

7 A. There were passengers holding their head. Not really too
8 sure at that time who may have really hurt themselves. I was
9 assisting passengers as much as I could on the platform, and those
10 who weren't hurt were also assisting the rest of the passengers on
11 the platform as well.

12 I just needed to get people off because the train was smoking
13 at the time. There was a cloud of smoke, so I didn't know where
14 it was coming from. I didn't notice that much.

15 Q. Did you hear any passengers stating, or could you figure out
16 in looking, in terms of how they might have received their
17 injuries? Did you notice -- did anyone say that they hit the seat
18 in front of them or they were thrown onto the floor or thrown
19 against a window? Did you hear anything like that?

20 A. That was more afterwards -- with me, of course, not knowing
21 the passengers, just walking past them or me stopping to
22 periodically ask different individuals, are you okay.

23 Some were bleeding, some had cuts, is there anything I could
24 do for them. It was just so many people. There were more people
25 injured, I think, on the front car than there was mine.

1 Q. Good. At this point, I'm going to go ahead and send it
2 around the table so that other people that might have some
3 questions they'd like to ask you, okay?

4 A. No problem.

5 MR. CULP: Stephen Culp, MBTA Safety. First, Charmaine, I
6 really want to thank you for your service here with the MBTA and
7 your professionalism during this event. Especially when you
8 didn't know what was happening, to get up out of the stairwell and
9 hit the mushroom on the control panel. It's unbelievable.

10 I've got no further questions.

11 MS. GOMES: Alicia Gomes, MBTA. I'd like to say basically
12 the same thing, Charmaine, that Steven said. Really great job.
13 And I'm very sorry that you had to go through that. I have two
14 questions for you.

15 BY MS. GOMES:

16 Q. Is the Boston College line a normal route for you?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And at any time, did you notice when you got onto the street
19 level on the westbound and you serviced any other platforms, did
20 you notice the train behind you or anything? Or was that
21 something that --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you want to take a quick break?
23 Okay. All right.

24 DR. GARCIA: Okay, take a break.

25 (Off the record)

1 (On the record)

2 DR. GARCIA: We're recording.

3 MS. GOMES: I can ask the question again. Did you at any
4 time, once you were on the street level and you were servicing any
5 other stops on the westbound from Blandford to BU West, notice
6 anything? Notice the train behind you, or notice anything like
7 that?

8 (Whispering)

9 MS. GOMES: That's all I have.

10 MR. CARNEY: David Carney, MBTA Operations. I want to thank
11 you for everything you've done. I think it was phenomenal. Like
12 Steven said, you had the presence of mind to press the mushroom.

13 I only have one question, and this is not pertaining to the
14 accident. It's more generic.

15 As a trailer person, when you're sitting in your seat, can
16 you describe to me what it is that you are looking at? How much
17 of a view of your surroundings do you have? Or are you just
18 looking at the back end of the train in front of you?

19 MS. JACOBS: I'm looking at the back end of my train sitting
20 in the seat. I also have a view because I have a window on my
21 left-hand side that relatively is big enough to see the sidewalk
22 and people walking, cars beside us. My front door is glass, so
23 you can relatively see cars and pedestrians alongside you while
24 driving the train as well.

25 MR. CARNEY: Do you know specifically, for instance, when

1 your pilot is beginning to enter an intersection?

2 MS. JACOBS: I've been doing this for so long -- the same
3 route -- for the last 19 years. I relatively know where each
4 intersection and traffic lights are along the Boston College
5 route. And I will just speak upon Boston College mostly because
6 I'm mostly on that line.

7 MR. CARNEY: Great. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

8 MS. JACOBS: You're welcome.

9 MS. LEGROW: Kate LeGrow, MBTA. I want to thank you. Not
10 only did you push the mushroom, but when you recognized your radio
11 was out that you were able to contact dispatch through the front
12 radio.

13 And when your instincts told you you weren't sure whether
14 they heard you, you went back and did it again, at the same time
15 taking care of passengers. So I want to thank you for that.

16 MS. JACOBS: Thank you, ma'am.

17 MS. LEGROW: Your presence of mind was incredible. I don't
18 have any questions for you.

19 MR. EVERS: Jim Evers. Definitely I want to echo what
20 everyone has said and thank you for -- obviously, with your years
21 of experience being there, I think your quick actions probably
22 helped alleviate a lot worse situation. So we just want to say
23 thank you for that, and we appreciate you.

24 MS. JACOBS: Thank you.

25 MR. EVERS: No questions.

1 MR. ROMAN: Paul Roman, Massachusetts DPU. I just want to
2 thank you for your actions you took that day as well as your 19
3 years of service to the MBTA. I have no questions.

4 MS. JACOBS: Thank you.

5 MR. CARVALHO: Dave Carvalho, DPU. I just want to echo what
6 everybody else has said and thank you for your years of service
7 and what you did that day. And I have no questions.

8 DR. GARCIA: Okay. Thank you. It's Anne Garcia. I have a
9 couple of additional questions for you, and then we'll be done.

10 MS. JACOBS: No problem.

11 DR. GARCIA: We have this map here in overhead. If you could
12 just take a look at it, and perhaps you could help to orient her
13 as to --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, okay.

15 MS. JACOBS: This map is upside down.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I was like, where's the Agganis? It's
17 there. Okay, and that's the tire shop.

18 DR. GARCIA: Okay.

19 BY DR. GARCIA:

20 Q. So the train was traveling coming through here.

21 A. So it must have been --

22 Q. Okay. So can you see -- point out basically where your car
23 was once the accident happened?

24 A. This is the Agganis. Yup, Kenmore here.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I think the zoomed in one might be

1 a little better. So now this is the Agganis.

2 MS. JACOBS: The Agganis, okay. So St. Paul Street --
3 leaving St. Paul Street on the westbound. Yes, intersection,
4 intersection, traffic light, Pleasant Street construction site. I
5 was traveling westbound, heading back towards Boston College.

6 BY DR. GARCIA:

7 Q. Okay. So can you point out kind of where you believe that
8 the door next to where you were sitting opened out onto?

9 A. That's Agganis. No, because the Agganis is on the right
10 side. Your pen is wrong, we're over here, on this side of the
11 again -- from westbound, the Agganis would be -- on westbound it
12 would be on my right-hand side, her pen was kind of -- I didn't
13 know where she was going.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the (indiscernible) is like, here?

15 MS. JACOBS: Yeah. So we're traveling westbound here. And
16 this over here is leaving St. Paul's Street. Yeah, on
17 westbound -- can you repeat your question?

18 BY DR. GARCIA:

19 Q. So your train is traveling this way?

20 A. Yes, back to Boston College on westbound.

21 Q. Okay. So when the train stopped and you went to exit the
22 train, where roughly on this photo was your door -- so you stepped
23 out where?

24 A. Where -- at Pleasant Street. This is a construction site
25 here. We were (indiscernible) were completely on the platform at

1 the time, so both trains were able to open the doors, if it could
2 -- both trains were completely on the platform at Pleasant Street
3 at the time of the incident.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So I was there that night. And
5 Charmaine, would you say that it's fair to say that you were
6 further to -- your resting point, when they train stopped moving
7 and you were opening the doors and passengers were getting off --
8 you were further out of view towards the left?

9 MS. JACOBS: Yes, a lot further up. A complete train was on
10 the platform at the time.

11 DR. GARCIA: Would this be a better map?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, I think go with the 5000.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, I think both of these cut off
14 the Pleasant Street construction site. That's better.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The Agganis is the big white oval.

16 MS. JACOBS: This is St. Paul Street, per say, the
17 platform -- (indiscernible). So Pleasant Street is here, and this
18 is under construction site. We was probably roughly already
19 traveling somewhat in the middle still, as we were going through
20 the platform.

21 And at the time the impact happened, it pushed our train a
22 little bit further. And I know for a fact not much further ahead.
23 This is another major intersection leading into Babcock Street;
24 there's another platform.

25 BY DR. GARCIA:

1 Q. So roughly the point where your door -- you were able to step
2 off the train?

3 A. Yes, both cars were. Both of them were on the platform.

4 Q. Okay. Good. Do you have any -- in your experience -- and
5 you have the most experience of all the train operators, the
6 motorpersons, who were there on scene that day. In your
7 experience, can you think of anything that could be done to help
8 prevent this type of accident in the future?

9 A. That's a good question, but it's also somewhat of a hard one,
10 too. These trains, they're not designed to save us. They're
11 designed -- the reality of it all is to save the passengers. We
12 don't have seatbelts like the buses do. There's so many things.
13 It's just not all coming to me. I mean, our job is human error,
14 too. It could be mechanical. Just overall.

15 And I feel like as operators, I feel like we try to do the
16 best that we can do given under circumstances each and every day
17 with things that we deal with. And part of being safe is --
18 operators may not be talking on the phone, paying a little bit
19 more attention, it could be lack of sleep, personal things going
20 on.

21 I feel like also there's a lot of work that needs to be done
22 overall throughout the system. Whether it be signals, rails --
23 it's not just the trains itself. It could be a little bit of this
24 and a little bit of that.

25 Q. Okay. Thank you.

1 A. You're welcome.

2 Q. If anything does occur to you in the future, you can reach
3 out to me or through your rep. We welcome your thoughts.

4 A. Not a problem, ma'am.

5 DR. GARCIA: Okay. Did anybody else have any follow-up
6 questions?

7 Did you have anything else you'd like to add?

8 MS. JACOBS: No. Thank you, everyone. It's just been the
9 longest weekend of my life and I just know that this is a long
10 process of being (indiscernible) just -- thank you, everyone.
11 That's it.

12 DR. GARCIA: Well, thank you for coming in. We hope you're
13 doing better soon.

14 MS. JACOBS: Thanks, ma'am.

15 DR. GARCIA: Thank you.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Dr. Garcia, I know I'm not supposed to
17 speak, but may I get a comment for the record?

18 DR. GARCIA: Yes.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So Charmaine, I know you and I have
20 spoken a couple of times this weekend. I echo what everyone else
21 in the room has said so far about your professionalism and your
22 commitment to service. And I think what I noticed when I got
23 there -- because I got there only a few minutes after the
24 incident -- was how well-managed it seemed, and how people who
25 needed treatment were guided to treatment, what needed to be

1 reported was reported. And I think a lot of that was because even
2 before the first responder got there, you took control.

3 And I know from my years running this line that that next
4 intersection at Babcock Street is a frequent spot for college kids
5 crossing the traffic looking at their phones, for cars taking
6 illegal turns, for any number of things. And your quick thinking
7 and your quick actions prevented an even worse tragedy if that
8 train had been pushed through that intersection.

9 There are a lot of people who are in better places today
10 because of you, and I'm grateful for that.

11 MS. JACOBS: Thank you so much.

12 DR. GARCIA: Thank you. With that, we're going to go ahead
13 and stop recording.

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: MBTA GREEN LINE TROLLEY
COLLISION & DERAILMENT
IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
ON JULY 30, 2021
Interview of Charmaine Jacobs

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD21FR013

PLACE: Boston, Massachusetts

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.



Tahura Turabi
Transcriber