

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

CSX FREIGHT TRAIN DERAILMENT *

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA * Accident No.: RRD18MR007

MAY 19, 2018 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: JOHN McCANDLESS, Engineer

KEVIN BRIGGS, Conductor

CSX Transportation

Alexandria, Virginia

Saturday,

May 19, 2018



APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL HILLER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOHN RANSCHAERT, Operating Practices Investigator
Federal Railroad Administration

RON McCORMICK, Track Safety Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

SCOTT KUHNER, General Manager Northeast Region
CSX Transportation

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of John McCandless:	
By Mr. Ranschaert	6
Interview of Kevin Briggs:	
By Mr. Ranschaert	10
Interview of John McCandless:	
By Mr. Hiller	13
Interview of John McCandless and Kevin Briggs:	
By Mr. McCormick	21
By Mr. Ranschaert	22
By Mr. Hiller	26
By Mr. Ranschaert	29

I N T E R V I E W

(3:31 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. My name is John Ranschaert. I'm
4 with the Federal Railroad Administration, FRA, Region 2, operating
5 practices investigator for this accident.

6 We are here today on May 19, 2018, at Alexandria, Virginia,
7 CFP 102.5, in the city of Alexandria, state of Virginia, to
8 conduct an interview with Kevin Briggs, conductor, and John
9 McCandless, engineer, who works for CSX Transportation Company.
10 And this interview is in conjunction with the FRA's investigation
11 of NRC1212643. The time is 3:31 p.m.

12 This investigation with NRC1212643 is in response to a
13 derailment that occurred at CFP 102.4 on the CSXT RF&P subdivision
14 in Alexandria, Virginia, on May 19, 2018, at approximately
15 0703 a.m. As I mentioned earlier, the FRA accident reference
16 number is NRC1212643. And the purpose of this investigation is to
17 increase safety and determine the root cause of the derailment.

18 Before we begin our interview and questions, let's go around
19 the table and introduce ourselves. Please spell out your last
20 name, who you are representing, and your title. I would like to
21 remind everybody to speak clearly, so we can get an accurate
22 recording. I'll start off, and then pass off to my right.

23 Again, my name is John Ranschaert. And the spelling of my
24 last name is R A N S C H A E R T, and I am the operating practices
25 investigator for the Federal Railroad Administration for this

1 accident.

2 MR. HILLER: Hello. My name is Michael Hiller. That's
3 H I L L E R. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board.
4 For reference purposes, the National Transportation Safety Board
5 number for this accident is RRD18MR007.

6 MR. McCORMICK: My name is Ron McCormick, FRA, Federal
7 Railroad Administration Region 2, track safety inspector
8 investigator for this accident. Last -- spelling of my last name
9 is M C C O R M I C K.

10 MR. McCANDLESS: My name is John McCandless, locomotive
11 engineer, CSX Transportation. Last name spelling M C C A N D L E
12 S S. Employee ID 129098.

13 MR. BRIGGS: My name is Kevin Briggs, B R I G G S, freight
14 conductor for CSX Transportation. ID number 253884.

15 MR. KUHNER: My name is Scott Kuhner. I'm the CSX general
16 manager of the Northeast Region. Last name spelling is
17 K U H N E R.

18 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. Thank you.

19 First off, do we have your permission to record our
20 discussion with you today on this interview?

21 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir.

22 MR. McCANDLESS: Yes, sir.

23 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. Can you say your response, with
24 your last name?

25 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir. Briggs.

1 MR. McCANDLESS: Yes, sir. McCandless.

2 MR. RANSCHAERT: Thank you. Do you understand the
3 transcriptions will be part of a public record? As such, we
4 cannot guarantee any confidentiality of this interview.

5 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir. Briggs.

6 MR. McCANDLESS: Yes, sir. McCandless.

7 MR. RANSCHAERT: Thank you. Do you wish to have a
8 representative with you at this interview?

9 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir. Briggs.

10 MR. McCANDLESS: No, sir. McCandless.

11 MR. RANSCHAERT: I would like to ask everybody to clearly
12 announce your name and title before questioning. Let's proceed.

13 INTERVIEW OF JOHN McCANDLESS

14 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

15 Q. Mr. McCandless, can you spell your name -- complete and full
16 name for us, please?

17 A. First name John, J O H N; middle initial R; last name
18 McCandless, M C C A N D L E S S.

19 Q. Can you give us your home address and your mailing address,
20 if different?

21 A. Home address and mailing address will match. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

24 Q. And would you please provide your phone number and email
25 where you can be reached?

1 A. Home number: [REDACTED]. Email: [REDACTED].

2 Q. Your employer and your employee number, please?

3 A. Employer CSX Transportation. Employee ID number [REDACTED].

4 Q. And your position or title, and years and months in your
5 current position?

6 A. Locomotive engineer. Hired 2005, March 14th. Engineering
7 certificate received in 2005, July 30th.

8 Q. All right. And your home terminal?

9 A. Home terminal, Richmond, Virginia.

10 Q. Can you state your train ID number and the time of this
11 incident?

12 A. Train ID number was X41518.

13 Q. Time of incident?

14 A. Roughly 7 a.m.

15 Q. Okay. We ask if you'd give us your commute time from home to
16 work?

17 A. Three hours.

18 Q. Three hours. All right. Is this a regular assigned position
19 for this train or a show-up job?

20 A. It's an on-call.

21 Q. It's on-call. So meaning you were called for the position.
22 And how many hours -- or what was your call time --

23 A. Three hour call time.

24 Q. Three hour call time. All right. Can you give us your
25 normal bedtime?

1 A. Normal bedtime, roughly 3 a.m.

2 Q. 3 a.m. Every day?

3 A. Not working this job, but yes, every day.

4 Q. Okay. And how long do you normally sleep?

5 A. Roughly 7 to 8 hours.

6 Q. Okay. Do you have a diagnosed sleep disorder?

7 A. No diagnosed sleep disorder. No, sir.

8 Q. Okay. Are you -- what would you determine is your quality of
9 sleep prior to reporting for duty on this assignment? Excellent,
10 good, fair or poor?

11 A. Fair.

12 Q. Fair. Do you normally take a nap during the day?

13 A. If I'm going to work that night, yes.

14 Q. Okay. So is it a habitual thing or an occasional thing?

15 A. This is not a habitual job.

16 Q. Okay. Did you take a nap within 8 hours of the -- of
17 reporting for this job?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Okay. How long was your nap?

20 A. Four hours.

21 Q. Four hours. All right. What was your alert level prior to
22 the accident? (1) were you very sleepy, or (5) you were very
23 alert?

24 A. I'm going to say 5.

25 Q. Five. Okay. What was your sleep history been for the last 3

1 days?

2 A. Good.

3 Q. Good? So were you -- can you tell me approximate time frames
4 that you were sleeping?

5 A. For the last 3 days, I was sleeping roughly from midnight to
6 9 a.m.

7 Q. Okay. How much time were you on -- off duty for the -- prior
8 to this assignment?

9 A. So Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday -- 8 days.

10 Q. Eight days. All right. And how much sleep did you have
11 prior to being called for this assignment?

12 A. I had roughly 9 hours of sleep that morning, then the 4-hour
13 nap in the afternoon before coming in.

14 Q. Okay. And you were on duty at what time?

15 A. 0050.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Was your co-worker showing any symptoms of
17 being tired?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. Do you take any prescription or over-the-counter medication?

20 A. Zantac.

21 Q. Okay. When was the last time you took that medication?

22 A. A week Friday.

23 Q. A week ago Friday?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. All right. I'm going to go to the

1 next employee.

2 INTERVIEW OF KEVIN BRIGGS

3 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

4 Q. Mr. Briggs, can you state your full name, your home address
5 and mailing address if different?

6 A. Kevin Briggs, K E V I N, B R I G G S. Mailing address [REDACTED]

7 [REDACTED]
8 [REDACTED].
9 Q. Okay. Can you list your phone number and an email where you
10 can be reached?

11 A. Phone number [REDACTED]. Email is [REDACTED].

12 Q. Your employer, employee number, and your position or title?

13 A. CSX Transportation. Employee ID [REDACTED]. And I am a freight
14 conductor.

15 Q. Okay. How many years and months in your current position?

16 A. Six years 2 months.

17 Q. Your date of hire and your home terminal?

18 A. March 5th, 2012. Richmond, Virginia.

19 Q. Your certification date?

20 A. December 31st, 2017.

21 Q. And the train ID for this train that you were on during this
22 accident.

23 A. X415W18.

24 Q. And the time of the incident?

25 A. Around 0700 hours.

1 Q. Okay. And what is your commute time from home to work?

2 A. Forty-five minutes.

3 Q. Forty-five minutes. Is this a regular assigned position or
4 were you -- or a show-up job?

5 A. Regular assigned position.

6 Q. Okay. Were you notified to report for work by a work call
7 or --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. How long was your work call?

10 A. Two hours in the hotel. I was away from home, coming here --
11 coming home.

12 Q. Okay. What is your normal bedtime?

13 A. It fluctuates due to my children and my wife. So if I'm home
14 in the evenings, I go to bed normal time, 10, 11:00 in the
15 evening.

16 Q. How long do you normally sleep?

17 A. Five hours.

18 Q. Do you have a diagnosed sleep disorder?

19 A. No.

20 Q. How was your quality of sleep prior to reporting for duty on
21 this assignment?

22 A. Good.

23 Q. It was good?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Do you normally take naps, yes or no?

1 A. Away from home terminal, I do. Yes.

2 Q. So that would be an occasional thing?

3 A. Occasional. Yes, sir.

4 Q. All right. Did you take a nap within 8 hours on the day of
5 this incident?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. And what was your alert level prior to the accident?

8 A. Four.

9 Q. A 4. Okay. What has your sleep history been for the last 3
10 days?

11 A. I've averaged 5, 6 hours for the last 3 days. Per day.

12 Q. Would you consider that normal?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. What time were you on duty for this assignment?

15 A. 0050.

16 Q. Okay. And did you take a nap prior to?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. All right. And how long was that nap?

19 A. About 4½ hours.

20 Q. Okay. Was your co-worker showing any signs of -- symptoms of
21 being tired?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Do you take any prescription or over-the-counter medication?

24 A. I take allergy medicine, Xyzal, over the counter.

25 Q. And when was the last time you took that medication?

1 A. Last night, around 2300.

2 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. I'm going to pass off to my right for
3 further questions. I may have further questions as we go around
4 the room.

5 MR. BRIGGS: Okay.

6 INTERVIEW OF JOHN McCANDLESS

7 BY MR. HILLER:

8 Q. Thanks. Mike Hiller, NTSB. So can you characterize your
9 trip in your own words from when you began your day? So I'm
10 asking you to walk us through the operation of the train movement
11 all the way up to the point of derailment.

12 A. We were on -- John McCandless, M C C A N D L E S S. We were
13 on duty 0050. We got to our head end, our train became available
14 to us, however you want to look at it, at roughly 2:30 in the
15 morning. Left Brunswick promptly thereafter. Got lit up clear
16 signals most of the trip. Made a good run up Barnesville Hill.
17 It's a 1.1 percent -- 1.01 percent grade, so it tends to drag you
18 down a little bit. We did better than average time climbing the
19 hill.

20 After we crested the hill -- we've got a software program in
21 the locomotive called Trip Optimizer. After we crested the hill,
22 I initiated the Trip Optimizer, let Trip Optimizer run the
23 locomotive while I observed and monitored it to make sure
24 everything was operating properly.

25 Trip Optimizer ran from that point, which would have been

1 VA30, down to Durwood, a little bit beyond, which would have been
2 VA18.5. At which point I didn't like the transition from power to
3 dynamic. With the length of that train, I was concerned of it
4 braking. So I took back over control, continued to run the train
5 for the next 10 miles, at which point we had a work authority we
6 had to speak to. I communicated with the work authority, got
7 permission through the zone. No restrictions from the work
8 authority. We came on down through. And we had clear signal at
9 Terra Cotta, followed by the approach medium at QN. No. I'm
10 sorry. Clear at QN; approach medium at F tower; approach at
11 Brentwood and a stop at JD. We were held at JD for, I'm going to
12 say, roughly a half an hour. I didn't time it, but roughly a half
13 an hour, maybe just a little bit more.

14 During that whole stretch, because of the work authority and
15 the signals, I was running the locomotive, not the Trip Optimizer.
16 Trains we were waiting for to clear the opposing track, which was
17 single main -- that's why we had to wait. They cleared. We
18 proceeded to turn -- our initial movement was eastbound. At that
19 point our direction changes to westbound. We go around what we
20 call the west leg of the Y at JD, and start our descent down
21 towards Richmond. Again, still at this point I'm running the
22 train manually. The train -- length of the train, I thought it
23 was justified. I ran the train manually down through Anacostia.

24 We had another work -- a potential work authority at M
25 Street, which would have been the CFP 113.8. He was not on duty

1 yet. It was within that close window of proximity where you had
2 to be careful. But he was not on duty yet. His boards weren't
3 up. We did speak to him. We did not get a response. We were
4 able to clear his authority with the head end before his time
5 became active, so we proceeded on through the authority.

6 On the other side, that's where we go down through the tunnel
7 at M Street. On the other side, I continued to run manually until
8 we got most of the train on the Long Bridge, between L'Enfant and
9 RO. At which point I reinitiated the Trip Optimizer. Trip
10 Optimizer ran -- I might be wrong on that statement, but I believe
11 that's the way it went. Trip Optimizer ran down to AF, which at
12 AF is the 104 mile marker, and that is where you begin the ascent
13 up the hill towards Van Dorn and towards -- I forget the -- but
14 towards Van Dorn, Van Dorn being the 102. -- I'm sorry -- 101.5
15 mile marker. All of these signals we were having were clear.
16 There's no reason for any restrictions.

17 There's a few permanent speed restrictions in there. One
18 which was on mind, and why I say my alertness level was at a 5, we
19 have a 40-mile-an-hour restriction at AF, the 104 mile marker
20 right there near the Alexandria passenger station. It's a little
21 dip there. I always watch the rear end, make sure it clears the
22 dip, and then we take power over from Trip Optimizer to manual in
23 order to make the power for the hill. We're staring at a 4-mile
24 climb. I think it's a 4 miles. Give or take a little, about a 4-
25 mile climb. So every bit of tractive effort we've got is

1 important, especially the tonnage, especially in the rain. And
2 also, that way you can also monitor for wheel slip and everything
3 else.

4 So I was paying attention to where the rear end of my train
5 was. I'm starting to ascend a hill. I'm paying attention to any
6 kind of wheel slip, any kind of problems I had that way. So
7 that's why I say my attention level was at a 5 whenever the train
8 went into emergency.

9 We were in TO going through there. As soon as the rear end
10 cleared the dip, I placed it into manual. TO was running in the
11 seventh notch; that's all it'll do, for climbing hills. And I
12 needed that eighth notch to climb the hill, so I placed it in
13 manual. I put the trip -- I put the locomotive in the eighth
14 notch, a nice gradual transition. We were in the eighth notch for
15 roughly a minute and a half before the train went in emergency.

16 Q. Were you able to see out in front of you and any washout
17 conditions or any conditions associated with a track disturbance?

18 A. We had good visibility and there were no visual indications
19 of any track disturbance.

20 Q. Did you feel anything when you went through the track --

21 A. Right around the --

22 Q. About 300 feet before the bridge.

23 A. Right around the 103, the CFP 103 mile mark, we had a little
24 shift in the cab when we went through. It was worth monitoring
25 and reporting to the dispatcher, and we were going to do so once

1 the train had cleared that location. We never made it. It wasn't
2 significant enough to be worth stopping.

3 Q. After you went into emergency brake --

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. -- what did you do?

6 A. Well, immediately first thing you do is start bailing off the
7 locomotive independent brake so you don't build up any head-end
8 pressure. Transition from the eighth notch back down to idle, and
9 gradually let the train bring itself down to a controlled stop.
10 At which point, while we're stopping, Mr. Briggs, my conductor,
11 called over the radio announcing that we were in emergency so that
12 we can make everybody around us aware of the situation. Right
13 away, after he's done, I'm dialing up the dispatcher on 20, toning
14 him up, letting the dispatcher know that we're in emergency.
15 Mr. Briggs is preparing to get ready to go on the ground and start
16 inspecting the train.

17 We notified the dispatcher of our location. We notify him
18 we're on -- we are currently in emergency and the conductor is
19 starting to inspect the train. At the point when my conductor had
20 realized it wasn't an air hose separation, that we had something
21 more significant going on, and we realized that we had cars down
22 over the hill near the NS bank, I immediately notified my
23 conductor that I was going to go over to the dispatcher channel
24 once again, notify the dispatcher so that he could notify NS and
25 bring them to alert of the situation as well.

1 Then I returned back over to the road channel, so as not to
2 be without -- have my conductor without me for any extended period
3 of time. And we continued our inspection of the train.

4 Q. All of this communication was done via radio --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- on the train?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. And you had no issues with communication --

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. -- with the radio at all?

11 A. It's a good location.

12 Q. How many cars were in your train?

13 A. 167.

14 Q. What were the hazmats you were hauling?

15 A. We qualified as a key train. At this point in time, I could
16 not tell you what the specific commodities were. I don't have the
17 paperwork with me.

18 Q. Thank you for letting me know that you qualified as a key
19 train.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. I appreciate that. Is this your first trip through this
22 territory?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Didn't sound like it.

25 A. No, sir. I relocated to Richmond, Virginia in 2009 during

1 the recession. I hired out in Newcastle, Pennsylvania in 2005.
2 The recession hit. I was one of 80 conductors furloughed, and I
3 had to go to Richmond for work. It was the only spot I could work
4 in the terminal -- in the division.

5 I had been with Richmond '09 to '12. '12 is when I got my
6 locomotive license on that territory. I worked that territory as
7 a locomotive engineer from '12 to April of 2015, when I had
8 entered into the management program at CSX and became a road
9 foreman for CSX. In 2017, due to a management reduction, I went
10 back to running locomotives. Due to where I -- I had to requalify
11 in Richmond, because that was my last place of service, in order
12 to get my health insurance reestablished. But due to my home
13 residency, I typically work out of Brunswick, Maryland. This trip
14 was a requalifying trip maintaining my status, so that if I needed
15 to come back to Richmond in the future it's available for me to
16 work.

17 Q. So when was the last time you were through this area?

18 A. It's been a --

19 Q. As an engineer.

20 A. Less than a year.

21 Q. Less than a year. So in a year, how many trips have you made
22 through this area?

23 A. This is my one -- this is the first trip I've made --

24 Q. Your first trip in --

25 A. -- since the end of July last year.

1 Q. How would you characterize the condition of the track from
2 the beginning of your trip up until the point of derailment?

3 A. Metropolitan was in good shape, as usual. The Capital
4 Subdivision was in good shape as usual. Both of those are used
5 for passenger lines. They're well-maintained.

6 Coming down the extension -- excuse me. I apologize. Going
7 down the extension, track-wise we were in good shape. Like I say,
8 we had construction for the tunnel. Brand-new tunnel. Beautiful
9 tunnel, compared with what we used to deal with. All of that was
10 nice and smooth, real comfortable ride the whole way down through.
11 And again, you're back on the RF&P. Heavy passenger line, well-
12 maintained. It's far better than some of the other territories
13 I've worked on in my career.

14 Q. Are you aware of a train that had gone through that section
15 of track prior to you?

16 A. This night? No.

17 Q. This night, no. Okay.

18 A. Well, let me rephrase that. We did pass a northbounder. But
19 I do not know for sure what track he was on when he went through
20 there.

21 Q. Okay. When you provided your telephone number, did you
22 provide your cell phone number or did you provide --

23 A. I provided my home number.

24 Q. Could you please at this point provide your cell phone
25 number?

1 A. I certainly can. It's not reliable where I live.

2 Q. That's okay.

3 A. But I will give it to you. My cell phone number is [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED].
5 Q. And your carrier?

6 A. It is from StraightTalk.

7 Q. StraightTalk. Is that the only cell phone you --

8 A. That is the only cell phone I possess.

9 Q. Were you using your cell phone at the time of the accident?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. Were you texting at the time of the accident?

12 A. No, sir.

13 Q. Were you distracted in any way by any electronic device prior
14 to the accident?

15 A. No, sir. My phone was stowed, as required.

16 MR. HILLER: Okay. I have no additional questions at this
17 time. I will now pass it off to my right.

18 INTERVIEW OF JOHN McCANDLESS AND KEVIN BRIGGS

19 MR. McCORMICK: Ron McCormick, FRA track safety inspector.

20 How much earlier in your trip did you go by that northbound?

21 Was it hours before, or just --

22 MR. McCANDLESS: We passed the northbounder at RO. We're
23 talking --

24 MR. BRIGGS: Ten minutes.

25 MR. McCANDLESS: Yeah, 10, 15 minutes.

1 MR. McCORMICK: So 10 minutes prior to --

2 MR. McCANDLESS: Yeah.

3 MR. McCORMICK: -- going in emergency?

4 MR. McCANDLESS: RO is the 109 mile marker. We went in
5 emergency at 102.4.

6 MR. McCORMICK: But you don't -- you wouldn't know what track
7 they were on, but that's when you went by them. Okay.

8 NTSB covered the questions I had for track and what you saw.
9 I understand that the -- that's good. It saved some time. But
10 the -- you know, we have the camera, which it was raining out, so
11 -- I have no further questions, unless you have anything to add,
12 Mr. Briggs, about track conditions or what you felt?

13 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir.

14 MR. McCORMICK: Anything different than what it sounded like
15 -- okay.

16 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir.

17 MR. McCORMICK: That concludes my questions.

18 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. This is John Ranschaert with the
19 FRA. Just want to touch on something. Want to confirm that there
20 was only two of you on this crew, engineer and conductor, no
21 students or passengers riding the train?

22 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir. It was just two of us. Conductor
23 Briggs and Engineer McCandless.

24 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. Neither of you were injured?

25 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir.

1 MR. RANSCHAERT: No injuries?

2 MR. McCANDLESS: No, sir.

3 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. Number of locomotives?

4 MR. BRIGGS: Three.

5 MR. RANSCHAERT: And the locomotive numbers were?

6 MR. McCANDLESS: CSXT 5146, CSXT 3142, CSXT 7730.

7 MR. BRIGGS: 5470 was our lead one.

8 MR. McCANDLESS: Sorry.

9 MR. RANSCHAERT: 5470 is the lead one? So --

10 MR. BRIGGS: Yes. The other two were correct.

11 MR. RANSCHAERT: And confirming how many cars you had in your
12 train?

13 MR. BRIGGS: 167.

14 MR. RANSCHAERT: And the breakup of that train?

15 MR. BRIGGS: The breakup of the train?

16 MR. McCANDLESS: Ninety --

17 MR. RANSCHAERT: Loads and empties.

18 MR. BRIGGS: Ninety-one loads and seventy --

19 MR. McCANDLESS: Six.

20 MR. BRIGGS: -- six empties.

21 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. Do you recall the tonnage or the
22 length of the train?

23 MR. BRIGGS: Tonnage was shy of 15,000. Length was about 97
24 feet.

25 MR. McCANDLESS: 9-9-10.

1 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. Your direction of travel and the
2 speed of your train?

3 MR. BRIGGS: Southbound, and we were doing 30 when the train
4 went into emergency.

5 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. And your timetable speed for your
6 train?

7 MR. BRIGGS: 5-0.

8 MR. RANSCHAERT: Fifty? 5-0 miles per hour? All right.

9 And to your knowledge, there's no fatalities; is that
10 correct?

11 MR. BRIGGS: That's correct.

12 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. The weather conditions, wind
13 direction, do you --

14 MR. BRIGGS: Overcast, with mist. Don't know about the wind
15 direction.

16 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. No excessive wind or -- to your
17 knowledge?

18 MR. BRIGGS: No. Not at all.

19 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. The sun was up?

20 MR. BRIGGS: Yes.

21 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. But it was overcast?

22 MR. BRIGGS: Yes.

23 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. Were you doing any functions with the
24 locomotive where you were ringing the bell or sounding the horn?

25 Anything --

1 MR. McCANDLESS: Not at the time of the derailment, no.

2 MR. RANSCHAERT: Are you aware of any witnesses that might
3 have observed the accident?

4 MR. McCANDLESS: No, I'm not aware.

5 MR. RANSCHAERT: The nearest town, to your knowledge, is?

6 MR. BRIGGS: Alexandria.

7 MR. RANSCHAERT: Alexandria. Okay. What -- where are your
8 train documents?

9 MR. BRIGGS: The fire department has the waybills, the
10 commodities, and my trainmaster has the tonnage data.

11 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. To your knowledge, has a company
12 official removed any event recorder data or any inboard-facing
13 cameras or outboard-facing cameras?

14 MR. McCANDLESS: The trainmaster has -- John McCandless. The
15 trainmaster has downloaded the event recorder, and he has
16 downloaded the video and the hard drive for the video has been
17 removed to be submitted to Jacksonville.

18 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. The topography, you said it was
19 uphill in a southbound direction; is that correct?

20 MR. McCANDLESS: Affirmative.

21 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. And to your knowledge there's
22 not any leaks from equipment?

23 MR. McCANDLESS: No, sir. Not to my knowledge.

24 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. This is John Ranschaert. This
25 is all the questions I have for this moment. I'm going to refer

1 to my right.

2 MR. KUHNER: Yes. Scott Kuhner, general manager Northeast
3 Region, K U H N E R. I have no further questions at this time.

4 MR. HILLER: This is Mike Hiller, NTSB. Just -- I'll circle
5 back and ask about your communication with the local emergency
6 responders. About how long after you reported that you had an
7 accident did they show up?

8 MR. BRIGGS: The fire department was there no more than 5
9 minutes after the dispatch was notified of our emergency.
10 Conductor Briggs, by the way.

11 MR. HILLER: Thank you, Conductor Briggs. Who from the fire
12 department met you?

13 MR. BRIGGS: I'm not sure what his name was. Just one of the
14 EMTs.

15 MR. HILLER: And --

16 MR. McCANDLESS: Engineer McCandless. I had an assistant
17 lieutenant from Division 210, 2-1-0, come up to the locomotive and
18 communicate with me, and I acted as a liaison on my radio for CSX
19 while he communicated with the fire department through his radio
20 system.

21 MR. HILLER: And how would you characterize that
22 communication and just sort of the general approach to his
23 understanding of the accident?

24 MR. McCANDLESS: He was very professional, very courteous and
25 very easy to communicate with.

1 MR. HILLER: Did he seem knowledgeable?

2 MR. McCANDLESS: Of railroad, no. Of his job, yes.

3 MR. HILLER: What types of questions did he ask you?

4 MR. McCANDLESS: Basically he asked about our hazmats, if we
5 had known of any leakage, if we had any hazmats on the ground; how
6 many cars we had in our consist, if we had known of any leaks off
7 the locomotives, and I provided the proper information for him.

8 MR. HILLER: All right. And you explained earlier that you
9 handed over some of your waybills and train documents to --

10 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir.

11 MR. HILLER: -- the fire department? Very good.

12 MR. McCANDLESS: They were provided to the assistant -- the
13 acting lieutenant. I don't have my notes with me to give you his
14 name. I apologize.

15 MR. HILLER: That's okay. No worries.

16 Conductor Briggs?

17 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir.

18 MR. HILLER: When you provided your phone number earlier, was
19 that your home phone or cell phone number?

20 MR. BRIGGS: Cell phone.

21 MR. HILLER: And what is the carrier that you use?

22 MR. BRIGGS: Verizon.

23 MR. HILLER: Verizon. Were you using your cell phone or
24 texting while you were on duty during this trip?

25 MR. BRIGGS: When we were stopped at JD, I used my phone.

1 Other than that, it's stowed.

2 MR. HILLER: And it wasn't -- was it being used at the time
3 in the derailment?

4 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir. It was stowed.

5 MR. HILLER: Okay. What were you doing at the time of the
6 derailment?

7 MR. BRIGGS: I had just got finished calling the Cameron Run
8 signal as a clear signal.

9 MR. HILLER: Were you looking out --

10 MR. BRIGGS: Yes.

11 MR. HILLER: -- the front window or the side window?

12 MR. BRIGGS: The front window.

13 MR. HILLER: Okay. Did you see any indication of a track
14 disturbance or an anomaly of any kind?

15 MR. BRIGGS: I felt the soft spots at around the CFP 103.0,
16 but they just felt like any other soft spot on the railroad. They
17 didn't feel like it was anything like it is.

18 MR. HILLER: So you mentioned this was your normal job?

19 MR. BRIGGS: Yes, sir.

20 MR. HILLER: So how many trips would you say you've made over
21 this territory in the last month?

22 MR. BRIGGS: In the last month, a dozen roundtrips. So --

23 MR. HILLER: How would you characterize the track condition
24 in this area?

25 MR. BRIGGS: RF&P is pristine railroad.

1 MR. HILLER: Had you felt any other soft spots prior to --

2 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir.

3 MR. HILLER: -- this one here?

4 MR. BRIGGS: No, sir.

5 MR. HILLER: Okay.

6 (Background conversation.)

7 MR. HILLER: I have no further questions at this time. I'm
8 done. I don't have any additional questions.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, (indiscernible). I have no --

10 MR. McCORMICK: I have no more further -- no more questions.

11 MR. RANSCHAERT: This is John Ranschaert. We would like to
12 give you the opportunity to add anything that we didn't ask that
13 you have thought of that we haven't asked you, if you would like
14 to provide comment on that.

15 MR. BRIGGS: Kevin Briggs. I have no further comments.

16 MR. McCANDLESS: John McCandless. No further comments.

17 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. If we have follow-up questions,
18 would you mind if we contacted you at a later time?

19 MR. BRIGGS: Kevin Briggs. Not at all.

20 MR. McCANDLESS: John McCandless. No, no problem.

21 MR. RANSCHAERT: On behalf of the Federal Railroad
22 Administration and the NTSB, I'd like to thank you for your time
23 and your cooperation in this interview.

24 And at this time, it is now 4:08 p.m. on Saturday, May 19th,
25 and this concludes our interview with Conductor McCandless -- or

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Engineer McCandless and Conductor Briggs.

(Whereupon, at 4:08 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: CSX FREIGHT TRAIN DERAILMENT
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
MAY 19, 2018
Interview of John R. McCandless and
Kevin Briggs

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD18MR007

PLACE: Alexandria, Virginia

DATE: May 19, 2018

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.



Jane Gilliam
Transcriber