

## **Testimony of Patrick B. Tuite**

Dear Stephen F. Lynch,

The following is my account of the events that occurred on the afternoon and evening of June 22, 2009. I was a passenger on the Redline train that struck another train waiting just above the Fort Totten Station.

I drove from Kensington, MD to the Metro garage in Wheaton, MD and parked on the third floor. I walked to the station and checked my Smartrip card to see if I could add to its total. In the station, I heard that there were delays on the Redline as the trains had to single track between Friendship and the next station along the Shady Grove side of the line.

I waited at the platform at the Wheaton station for a Shady Grove train to arrive. I normally enter the first and most forward car of a train, but a good air conditioner at the platform kept me from moving further forward. A six-car train arrived and I entered the second car and sat on the right side, facing forward, and one seat behind the forward-most doors of the car.

I read the paper until we approached the Silver Spring station. After Silver Spring, I put down the paper. Sometime after the Silver Spring or Takoma Station, the conductor announced that we would be delayed. There was a train at the next station, and we slowed to a stop. I took the time to close my eyes and relax. I was on my way to my night class in the Drama Department at The Catholic University of America, and I was tired.

The train stopped briefly, started again, and reached what felt like a normal speed. Then the train abruptly shuddered and slowed down. I heard a screeching sound, and a woman seated somewhere behind me screamed that we had derailed. There was a loud bang and the train jolted to a stop. I was thrown from my seat along with my belongings. The car felt as if it had tilted. Dust and smoke filled the air, combining with the sunlight to make a strange orange color. There was no movement or noise.

A man who had sat in the forward most left seat jumped up and shouted, "Let's go! Let's get out of here!" The people in my car did not scream. Some cried, but we made our way to the center doors, and a woman used the emergency handle to try and open the door. It only opened a few inches, and I grabbed one side and forced it open. David Holland, the man from the forward seat, and I helped people to exit the car. We thought the car was on fire. It was not, and I gathered my belongings and quickly left the second car.

I thought at first that we had derailed, but when I looked outside of the second car to examine the first, I realized that it had been destroyed after it hit another train. I saw debris and at least one person thrown from the first car to the ground. People were already moving to help that person. He had on khaki shorts and was bleeding badly from his leg. I told the other passengers to not look forward and move to the back of the train.

I helped the last people out of the second car and then climbed back into it. Two men had moved from the third car into the second car and were attempting to open the door between the second and first car. I joined them and tried to force the interior door open. It was stuck. We tried to release it by pulling the ceiling fixtures from above the door. The ceiling panel came down, but it revealed that the second car had also buckled under the impact, and a metal strut prevented the door from opening. The entire roof of the car had been pushed down by 8 to 10 inches. The door would not budge.

We could now see into the first car. The entire flooring had been pushed back and up like an accordion. The chairs and handrails were twisted and poking out in all directions. I could only see 4 to 5 passengers. They were screaming and crying. They could not exit via the side doors. The doors were closed, and the outer shell of the train had separated from the flooring and was pointing up. The virtual wall of flooring prevented the passengers in the rear of the car from reaching the doors.

One young man in the first car could communicate with us. He tried to force the interior door of the second open. When this failed he said that he was going to break the glass between the cars. He took off his shirt, wrapped it around his hand, and started to hit the glass. I and the two men with me moved back to avoid the broken glass, but the window did not break at first.

At this time, a Metro employee wearing a safety vest and carrying a walkie-talkie entered the second car from the third car. He told me and the other two men to leave the train quickly. We left through the third car. The Metro employee was the first official that I saw on the scene.

I jumped from the train at the third or fourth car. These cars were empty, but once I moved toward the rear of the train I helped people get out of the cars who could not jump. It was a pretty big jump from the door to the ground, and we were against a metal fence. At this point, someone asked for nurses or doctors to help with the people ejected from and trapped inside the first car. I remember this distinctly because I helped lower a woman from the train in scrubs. She had been hurt in the initial impact, but she said she was a nurse and went towards the first car anyway. There were still people in the last car, and they could not move one person to the side door because of their injuries.

Two plain clothes police and some firemen had now arrived at the back end of the train. They looked as confused as we were. No one knew if the third rail was disabled, and the passengers stood on the tracks in the sun. A group of at least four passengers grabbed

their belongings and started to walk back towards the Takoma station before any first-responders knew that these passengers had left. I heard later over an ambulance radio that one of these passengers had been found dazed at a nearby Starbucks.

The firemen had parked next to a community garden and warehouse just north of the accident. They could not get to the group of passengers at the rear of the train because of the fencing that separates the Metro tracks from the CSX tracks. The firemen were also busy trying to get their equipment to the first car. They had to carry their Jaws of Life and circular saws on stretchers to the wreckage. No trucks or other vehicles could get the accident below the bridge.

Some of the people who had survived the crash in the first car made their way to the back of the train. They were covered in soot and blood and looked confused. The firemen used a wand to check the third rail and eventually cut through the fence.

We exited the tracks through the fence and entered the parking lot next to the community garden and warehouse for Jabroe Printers. The firemen and EMT had set up a triage in the parking lot using chairs from the printers. The firemen seemed confused by the size and scope of the situation. They had setup chairs for the tougher, but not life-threatening cases directly in the sun when there was shade just around the corner of the building. One fireman also announced that if we had given our names and numbers to a Metro official and we were not in need of medical assistance we could leave. We could call someone and be picked up in the neighborhood. Some people from the train left.

Another group of walking passengers left on a bus. They were not told where they were going when they asked. I remained in the parking lot. I was the last passenger not on a stretcher to leave. I wanted to help some of the people who could not move or get water. When these passengers were put into ambulances I asked a fireman with a clipboard and white top how I was going to get to a hospital. He told me that I could walk, and he was taking names for those who needed an ambulance. I asked if I could take another bus. He did not know and was not willing to put me in an ambulance. Finally, someone else agreed that I could ride along with another passenger in an ambulance. We did not know where we were going until we were on the road.

I arrived at Holy Cross Hospital later that evening. I was examined by a PA. My wife works as a nurse at Holy Cross. She picked me up from the emergency room by 10:00 pm, and we went to get our other car at the Metro garage in Wheaton. I had canceled my night class by calling campus security using my cell phone while standing on the tracks.

To this date, no representative of Metro or the NTSB has contacted me. Why has Metro not attempted to speak with me over the last two weeks? I have received several bills from Holy Cross Hospital, and I have not yet inquired how Metro will reimburse me for those bills or the trauma that my family and I have experienced.

One final comment: on June 22, 2009, the conductor of my train announced to the passengers that we had to wait in between stations because another train had not left Fort Totten. I also believe that she had used the emergency brake before we hit the other train in between Takoma and Fort Totten. I distinctly remember the car shuddering and hearing a grinding noise before the crash. This evidence suggests that she was alert and was not aware of the presence of another train waiting on the tracks near the New Hampshire Street Bridge. She should not be held responsible for the errors and oversight that led to this tragedy.

Sincerely,

Patrick B. Tuite