Jonathan M. Rogers
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Testimony for the Hearing on the January 12, 2015 Incident at L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station

January 13, 2015

Honorable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Jonathan Rogers and I have been a resident of the District of Columbia for seven years.

On the afternoon of January 12, 2015 I departed a conference at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center to return to my office in the Navy Yard neighborhood of Washington, DC. At the Mt. Vernon Square / 7th Street / Convention Center station, I mistakenly boarded a yellow line train headed for Huntington. I boarded the second car from the front of the train. According to WMATA's usage history report for my SmarTrip card, I entered the station at 3:00 PM. I can accurately confirm the timeline of events that followed with electronic timestamps from smartphone pictures I took that afternoon.

By coincidence, I took my first photo at 3:11 PM, shortly before the train reached L'Enfant Plaza. That photo depicts a normal, safe experience on the Metro train. After the train departed the L'Enfant Plaza station we entered a tunnel, and after approximately 10 seconds the train came to an abrupt halt. The train conductor announced over the intercom, "There's a problem. Everyone stay calm." Within seconds, gray-colored smoke was visible as it seeped through the tops of the passenger doors. A passenger on our car used the emergency intercom to alert someone that there was smoke on the train. We heard no response. Shortly thereafter, the train conductor entered our car, and made his way to the back of the train. The conductor was using his radio to communicate with "central." I only heard him describing the situation on the train. I did not hear any responses to the conductor's messages. Eventually he passed through our car again, on his way back to the front of the train.

In the first of several announcements, the conductor informed us over the intercom that we should remain calm. The train was going to make its way backwards to L'Enfant Plaza, to escape the smoke. We were told not to evacuate the train, and not to open the doors because the train would not be able to move if we did so. Further, there was zero visibility in the tunnel. The conductor repeated this same message, nearly every two minutes until the train was evacuated. At one point, the conductor assured passengers that there was no fire in the tunnel, only smoke. Approximately five minutes after the smoke had entered the train, the train lurched backward, but failed to move. By this point, only the emergency lights above the doors were lit. My train car was dark, and filling with think smoke.

The next photo I took was at 3:20 PM which was several minutes after the smoke had become thick. As a very conservative estimate, one could mark the beginning of the incident at that time; 3:20 PM. The video I took was recorded at 3:25 PM, which captures passengers struggling to breathe, and also a portion of the train conductor's announcements. Verbatim, the announcement was: "Once again customers, please stay calm, please stay calm. We got one train about to get off the platform at L'Enfant Plaza right now as we speak. As soon as this train leaves, I'll be getting you all back to the platform. Please stay calm. Please do not open the doors. If you open the doors, the train will not move."

In a photo I believe to be the last I took before giving CPR to Ms. Glover, other passengers are laying on the ground, at 3:39 PM. The next photo I took was at 4:01 PM, where it appears passengers are standing

as we lined up to evacuate the train. At no point were we ever told we would be evacuating and walking back to the platform. A line moving toward the back of the train seemed to form on its own. The next photo I took was at 4:20 PM, as the line had slowly advanced toward the back of the train. This photo depicts fire fighters evacuating a passenger who was having a seizure, after other first responders had performed CPR on him. This was the first time I saw any first responders. I cannot speak for when they arrived at the train, but this was the first time I saw them. Fire fighters then guided us out of the side passenger doors, onto a narrow walkway on the side of the tunnel. We followed a single file line back toward the station, with help from fire fighters on the tracks, lighting the way with flashlights. The last photo I took was during that walk, at 4:22 PM; over an hour after the incident began. Once we reached the station platform, we proceeded up the escalators to the street level. Naturally, the scene outside was chaotic. Some passengers sought the help of first responders, and others went on their way. I lingered in the area for a few minutes. No one directed me toward an ambulance or other medical attention.

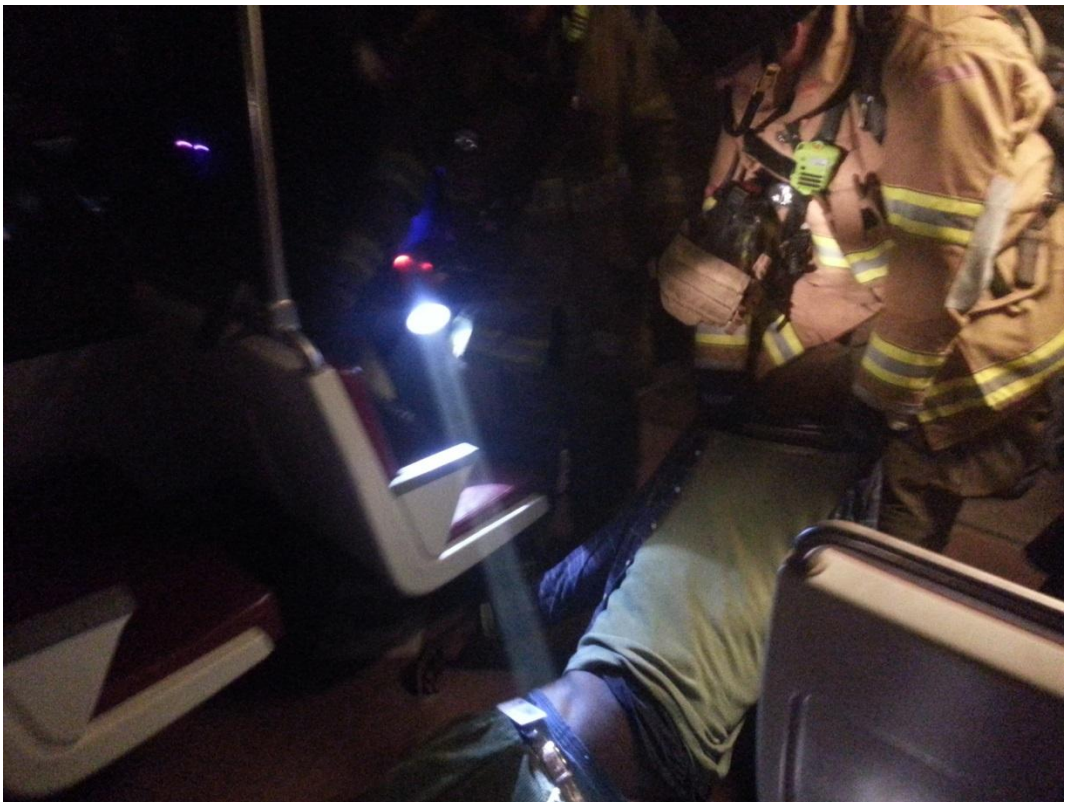
Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.

3:20 PM

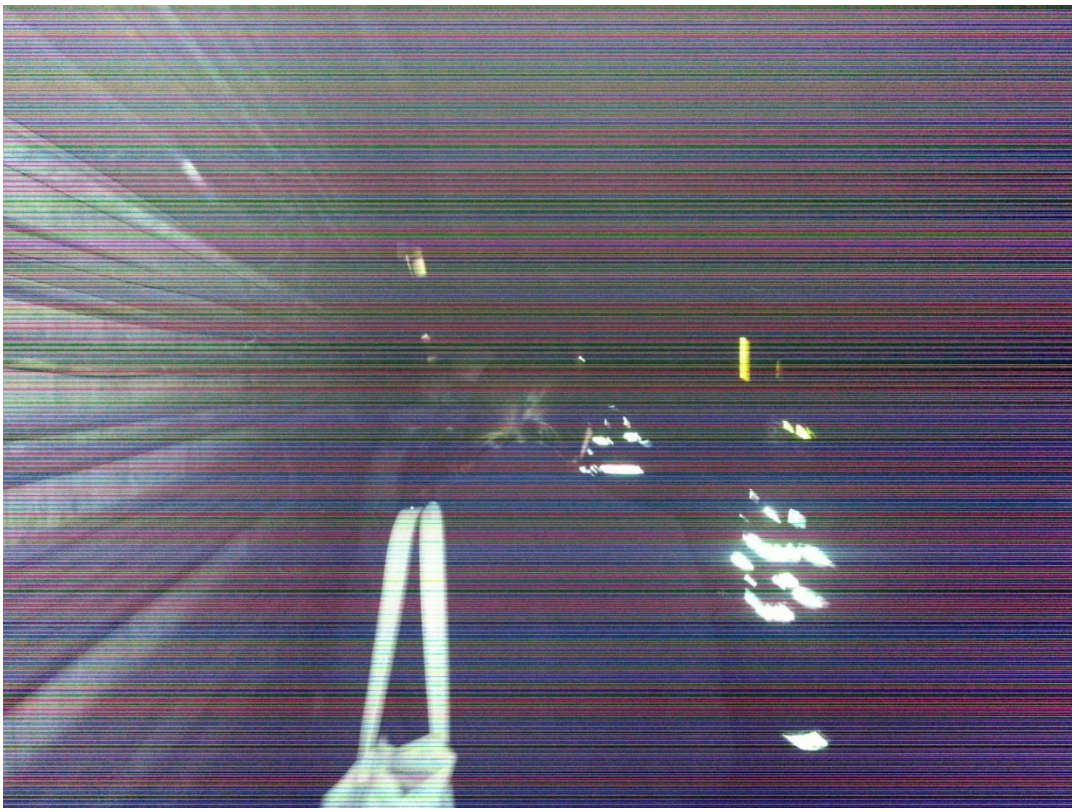
3:24 PM

3:39 PM

4:20 PM



4:22 PM



Biography

Jonathan Mark Rogers

Originally from the state of Maine, Jonathan has been a resident of the District of Columbia for the past seven years. Jonathan holds a Bachelor of Arts from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and a Master's Degree in Public Policy from the George Washington University in Washington, DC. Jonathan has worked for the Government of the District of Columbia since April of 2012, and for the National League of Cities for three and half years prior to that. Jonathan lives in Ward 5 in the District with his wife Julie and his bulldog Teddy.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)

Name: JONATHAN MARK ROGERS

N/A

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2012. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

N/A

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2012, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:

Date: 2/9/15