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W-0402 - Serious Injury at Capitol Heights Station -August 16, 2024

Document Purpose

This WMSC written report on WMATA Metrorail's safety event investigation and review of Metrorail's findings in accordance with the WMSC Program Standard, in conjunction with the attached Metrorail investigation report that has undergone WMSC staff review, feedback, and Metrorail revision, describes the investigation activities, identifies factors causing or contributing to the accident, and sets forth ongoing, additional, or upcoming corrective actions and further oversight work (such as inspections and audits) as necessary or appropriate. The WMSC's ongoing oversight during the investigative process, including safety event reporting and verification, participation in investigative interviews, data review, consistent communication with the Metrorail investigations team, and feedback on Metrorail's reports leads to further improvements prior to consideration of the reports by WMSC Commissioners for adoption. The WMSC's safety event investigation oversight assures the sufficiency and thoroughness of Metrorail's investigations. The WMSC Commissioners are considering these documents (the WMSC review and Metrorail's investigation report) as a unified item for adoption at the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission meeting on October 21, 2025.

WMSC staff recommend adoption of this investigation.

Safety event summary:

On August 16, 2024, at Capital Heights Station, a customer attempting to climb the fare gates, lost their balance and fell onto the roadway below. Another customer witnessed the fall and informed the Station Manager, who immediately halted all train movement. At 2:59 p.m., about three minutes after the customer fell onto the roadway, the third rail power on Track 1 was de-energized.

The Communications Agent in the Control Center notified the Prince George's County Fire Department (PGFD), as well as Metro Transit Police (MTPD). A Rail Supervisor used a hot stick to confirm the third rail near the tunnel's end gate was de-energized .PGFD personnel entered the roadway to rescue the patron and transported the person to a hospital for further treatment. The command scene was transferred to the Rail Supervisor, the third rail power was restored, and normal train service resumed.

It was later discovered that Facilities Maintenance did not conduct the required biohazard clean-up to remove bloodborne pathogens for over an hour after revenue operations had resumed.

During post-accident investigative activities, review of closed circuit (CCTV) recordings showed two safety issues, The first being that the Metrorail rail supervisor did not use protective high voltage gloves when they conducted the third rail power de-energization verification. Metrorail rules require that Employees shall wear the appropriate approved PPEfor the work location, tool/equipment being used, and task being performed.

19.9.2 High-voltage electrical safety gloves must be worn for:

- Shunt placement/removal
- · When confirming the status of third rail power
- · When installing/removing a Warning Strobe and





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Alarm Device (WSAD)

- · Performing third rail gauging activities
- · Working on energized equipment
- · When booting third rail cables
- · When removing switch heater and third rail heater shoe box fuses

Post accident investigative activities also show that the first responders from the Prince George's County Fire Department (PGFD) did not conduct independent third rail power de-energization verification. This step is emphasized by Metrorail when it conducts full scale emergency exercises with local jurisdictional first responders. These full scale exercises provide instruction and opportunities to master skills such as verifications of third rail power for the participating first responder personnel.

WMSC Staff Observations:

In the 2024 Roadway Worker Protection Audit the WMSC wrote in Finding 1 that Metrorail is not effectively ensuring that its personnel on and around the roadway are consistently following the Roadway Worker Protection rules designed for their safety. Metrorail has an approved open corrective action plan (C-0280) which it is implementing to address this safety issue, wholistically, including establishing a roadway worker protection rules compliance program that mirrors the Federal Railroad Administration rules compliance program. The Rail Supervisors actions of not wearing high voltage gloves – which pertains to adhering to personal protective equipment rules – is specified in the WMSC's finding. This corrective action plan is now about 40% complete with all of the corrections expected to be implemented in the next 10 month by August 2026.



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Department of Safety (SAFE) Office of Safety Investigations (OSI)

FINAL REPORT OF INVESTIGATION A&I E24651

Date of Event:	August 16, 2024				
Type of Event:	A-2 Serious Injury				
Incident Time:	14:56 hours				
Location:	Capitol Heights Station, Track 1				
Time and How received by SAFE:	15:08 hours – Safety Information Officer				
WMSC Notification Time:	17:00 hours				
Responding Safety Officers:	None				
Rail Vehicle:	N/A				
Injuries:	Severe brain injury, neck Injury, and fractured ribs.				
Damage:	None				
Emergency Responders:	Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department (PGFD) Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD)				
Safety Management System Incidents/Accidents (SMS I/A) Incident Number:					

Incident Date: 08/16 /2024 Time: 14:56 hours

Final Report – Serious Injury Rev. 1

E24651

Drafted By: SAFE 704 10/14/2024 Reviewed By: SAFE 707 – 05/06/2025 Approved By: SAFE 707 – 05/06/2025

Capitol Heights – Serious Injury

August 16, 2024

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIMS Advanced Information Management System

ARS Audio Recording System

CCTV Closed-Circuit Television

MICC Metro Integrated Command and Communications Center

MOR Metrorail Operating Rulebook

MTPD Metro Transit Police Department

NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OSI Office of Safety Investigations

PGFD Prince George's County Fire Department

RTC Rail Traffic Controller

RTRA Office of Rail Transportation

SAFE Department of Safety

Safety Measurement System SMS

WMATA Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

WMSC Washington Metrorail Safety Commission

WSAD Warning Strobe Alarm Device

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Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Department of Safety – Office of Safety Investigations

Executive Summary

Note that all times listed are approximate and may contain minor variations due to differences between systems of record.

On August 16, 2024, at 14:56:48 hours, an incident occurred at Capitol Heights Station involving a customer attempting to evade the fare by climbing the fare gates. Capitol Heights Station Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) footage captured the individual as they began the fare evasion process, standing atop the fare gates before losing their balance. At 14:56:55 hours, the customer fell from the saloon-style fare gate, landing on the roadway below, with their head and upper torso hitting the ground and their legs bridged over the left running rail.

At 14:57:34 hours, another customer witnessed the fall and immediately informed the Station Manager. The Station Manager quickly confirmed the report from the mezzanine level and, realizing the severity of the situation, requested an immediate halt to all train movements at Capitol Heights Station via phone. At 14:59:40 hours, the third rail power on Track 1 was deenergized.

The Communications Agent notified the Prince George's County Fire Department (PGFD) and Emergency Services were promptly dispatched and arrived on the scene at 15:06:40 hours. The Communications Agent then notified Metro Transit Police (MTPD) of the event, and MTPD dispatched units to the scene.

Despite being informed that the third rail power was de-energized, PGFD personnel entered the roadway at 15:09:15 hours without confirming the power status through the standard hot stick process or waiting for the Warning Strobe Alarm Device (WSAD) to be installed. An Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA) Supervisor was observed hot sticking the third rail near the tunnel's end gate at 15:17:15 hours, but it was confirmed through CCTV review that they were not wearing high-voltage gloves, which is a breach of safety protocols.

By 15:19:53 hours, PGFD personnel successfully lifted the customer from the roadway. The customer was then taken off-site for further medical evaluation. The incident was cleared, and command of the scene was officially transferred to the RTRA Supervisor at 15:23:09 hours.

Following the removal of the customer and personnel from the tracks, the third rail power was restored at 15:28:20 hours, and normal train service resumed. However, it was later discovered that Facilities Maintenance did not conduct the required biohazard clean-up to remove bloodborne pathogens until 16:26:10 hours—over an hour after normal operations had resumed. This delay represents a lapse in safety and cleanliness protocols.

During the event, several procedural lapses were identified:

Failure to Confirm Third Rail Power De-Energization by PGFD personnel who entered the roadway without independently verifying that the third rail power was de-energized, bypassing the standard hot stick safety protocol. This action created a significant risk of electrocution and further injury.

Improper Safety Practices by the RTRA Supervisor when CCTV confirmed that the RTRA Supervisor was performing the hot stick procedure without using high-voltage gloves, violating safety regulations designed to protect personnel from electrical hazards.

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Delayed Biohazard Clean-Up when Facilities Maintenance conducted clean-up over an hour after normal train operation had resumed.

The probable cause of the Serious Injury event at Capitol Heights Station on August 26, 2024, was the customer's attempt to evade the fare by climbing over the fare gates, resulting in a loss of balance and a subsequent fall onto the roadway below. The customer's actions directly led to their severe injury, including a head impact and upper torso trauma, as they landed in the track area with their legs bridged over the left running rail.

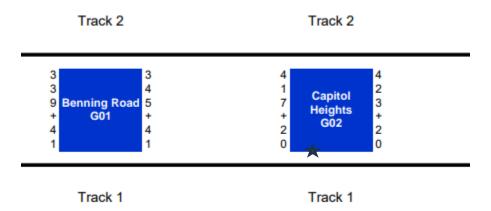
Incident Site

Capitol Heights Station, Track 1. Chain Marker G1- 417+00
Center platform location with upper-level entry to the lower level.

Mezzanine Level Fare gates are equipped with saloon doors to minimize fare evasion.

The upper-level mezzanine level is approximately 20 feet from the track bed. =

Field Sketch/Schematic



The depiction above is not to scale.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this incident investigation and candid self-evaluation is to collect and analyze available facts, determine the probable cause(s) of the incident, identify contributing factors, and make recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

Investigation Methods

Upon receiving notification of the Serious Injury at the Capitol Heights Station on August 16, 2024, SAFE assessed the scene and conducted a subsequent investigation. SAFE team members worked with relevant WMATA subject matter experts to review the incident's facts and data.

The investigative methodologies included the following:

Site assessment through video and document review.

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- Informal Interviews Collected through conversations with individuals during the investigation to provide background and supporting information. Written statements were reviewed from personnel present during the event.
- Documentation Review A collection of relevant work history information and process documentation contained in Metro systems of record. These records include:
 - Metrorail Operating Rulebook (MOR)
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
 - MTPD Event Report
- System Data Recording Review A collection of information contained in Metro Data Recording Systems. This data includes:
 - Audio Recording System (ARS) playback
 - Closed-circuit television (CCTV)
 - Metro Transit Police Department Incident Report

Investigation

On August 16, 2024, at approximately 14:56:48 hours, CCTV footage captured a customer at Capitol Heights Station approaching the fare gates and attempting to evade the fare by climbing over the gate.

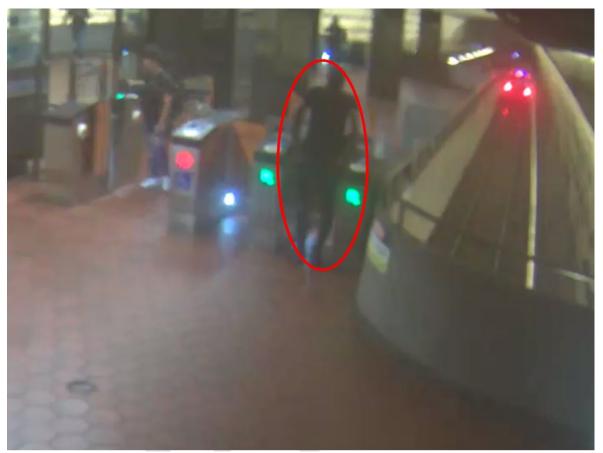


Figure 1 - At 14:56:48 hours, the customer approached the Capitol Heights Station fare gate and started the fare-evading process.

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The customer stood atop the fare gate and lost their balance, causing them to fall onto the roadway below. The customer landed on their head and upper torso, with their legs bridged over the left running rail.



Figure 2 - At 14:56:51 hours, the customer was standing atop the fare gates, entering Capitol Heights Station on the left. At 14:56:55 hours, the customer attempted to dismount the fare gate by utilizing their right hand on the handrail, losing their balance, and falling to the roadway below.

At 14:57:16 hours, another customer observed the fall and immediately informed the Station Manager. By 14:57:34 hours, the Station Manager visually confirmed the incident from the mezzanine level and promptly contacted the Metro Integrated Command and Communications (MICC) Center - Communications Section to request an immediate halt to all train movement at Capitol Heights Station due to them laying on the roadway.

Third rail power was de-energized on track 1 at 14:59:40 hours.

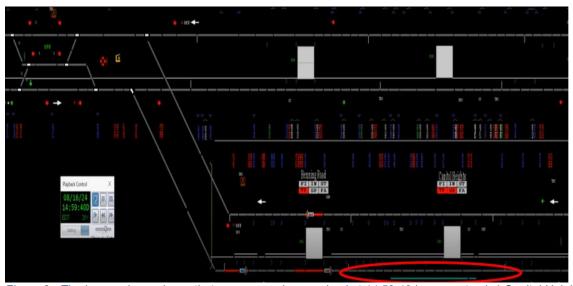


Figure 3 - The image above shows that power was de-energized at 14:59:40 hours on track 1 Capitol Heights Station.

The Communication Agent contacted PGFD and requested emergency medical services for the injured customer. At 15:01 hours, the Communications Agent notified MTPD that the customer fell on the tracks MTPD dispatched units to the scene, and at 15:06:40 hours, PGFD personnel

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arrived on the platform to assist. Despite being informed that third rail power had been deenergized, PGFD personnel entered the roadway at 15:09:15 hours, without confirming the power status by using a hot stick or waiting to install the WSAD.

At 15:11:13 hours, MTPD Command received verbal confirmation from rail operations personnel that the third rail power was de-energized, but instructed them to hot-stick the area to ensure safety. At 15:17:15 hours, the RTRA Supervisor was observed hot sticking the third rail near the tunnel's end gate.



Figure 4 The images above show the RTRA Supervisor hot-sticking and returning to the platform without visible high-voltage gloves.

At 15:19:53 hours, PGFD personnel retrieved the customer from the roadway and removed them from the station for further medical treatment at Capitol Regional Hospital. The customer sustained a severe brain injury, neck Injury, and fractured ribs. By 15:22:46 hours, all emergency personnel and equipment had cleared the roadway, and command of the incident scene was officially transferred to the RTRA Supervisor at 15:23:09 hours. At 15:28:20 hours, third rail power was restored at Capitol Heights Station, Track 1.

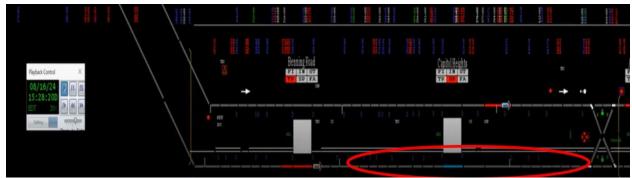


Figure 5 - The image above shows third rail power energization on Track 1, Capitol Heights Station at 15:28:00 hours.

The RTRA Supervisor reported that Track 1 was ready for rail vehicle movement, and normal train service resumed. At 16:26:10 hours, Facilities Maintenance personnel conducted the required biohazard clean-up, which involved removing blood-borne pathogens from the area where the person had fallen so service could be restored.

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Chronological ARS Timeline

A review of ARS playback, i.e., phone and radio communications, revealed the following timeline:

Time	blayback, i.e., phone and radio communications, revealed the following timeline: Description
	<u> </u>
14:56:48 hours	Capitol Heights Station, Mezzanine CCTV footage showed a customer approaching the Capitol Heights Station fare gate and starting the fare evade process. [CCTV]
14:56:51 hours	The customer was standing atop the fare gates entering Capitol Heights station. [CCTV]
14:56:55 hours	The customer attempted to dismount the fare gate by utilizing their right hand on the handrail, lost their balance and fell to the roadway below. [CCTV]
14:56:56 hours	The customer landed on their head and upper torso. The customer was between the track gauge horizontal and legs, making contact bridged over the left running rail. [CCTV]
14:57:16 hours	A customer hopped over the fare gates and notified the Station Manager of the event. [CCTV]
14:57:34 hours	Station Manager: Contacted the Communications Agent and reported a customer was on track 1. [Phone]
14:57:54 hours	Communications Agent: Contacted the Button RTC to have Train ID 649 stop because a customer fell to the roadway. [Phone]
14:58:00 hours	The Station Manager visually validated the customers' report from the mezzanine level. [CCTV]
14:58:15 hours	Station Manager: Contacted the Communications Agent and requested all train movement stopped at Capitol Heights Station because the customer was on the roadway with a head injury. [Phone]
14:58:18 hours	Customers rush to render aid to the unconscious customer and called paramedics. [CCTV]
14:59:40 hours	Button RTC: De-energized third rail power on Track 1 Capitol Heights Station. [AIMS]
14:59:40 hours	<u>Communications Agent:</u> Called PGFD and requested paramedics for the injured customer on the roadway; then stated all rail traffic had been suspended. [Phone]
15:01:11 hours	MTPD Dispatch: Dispatched units to Capitol Heights Station for a customer who fell on the tracks. [Radio MTPD-1X]
15:01:32 hours	<u>Communications Agent:</u> Contacted MTPD and reported the customer fell on the tracks, emergency personnel are en route and power was de-energized.
15:04:44 hours	SIO: Contacted emergency management and advised them of the Capitol Heights event. Trains were single-tracking on track 2, and the customer was unconscious; no paramedics were on the scene. [Phone]
15:06:13 hours	MTPD Command: Advised dispatch PGFD on scene at Capitol Heights. [Radio, MTPD-1X]
15:06:40 hours	PGFD arrived on the platform to assist the injured customer. [CCTV]
15:06:51 hours	MICC FLO: Communicated with PGFD and advised no trains were operating on track 1; trains were single-tracking on track 2. PGFD: Requested that the third rail power be de-energized. [OpenMHz]
15:06:56 hours	Radio RTC: Dispatched RTRA Supervisor to Capitol Heights Station. [Radio]
15:07:50 hours	MICC FLO: Advised PGFD that power was de-energized on track one. [Phone]
15:08:16 hours	Radio RTC: Notified Rail Vehicle Operators single-tracking commenced from stadium-armory to Addison Road Stations. [Radio]

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Time	Description
15:08:36 hours	MTPD: Notified dispatch they were on the scene in addition to Engine 305 and EMS. [Radio, MTPD-1X]
15:08:41 hours	Station Manager: Notified Radio RTC the incident location was at Chain Marker G1- 417+00 [Radio]
15:09:15 hours	PGFD placed a ladder in the roadway to access the customer. WSAD or hot stick process was not completed before entry. [CCTV]
15:10:25 hours	MTPD: Notified Police 1 that fire personnel was on the roadway at Capitol Heights Station, track 1. WSAD was in the progress of being installed on the third rail. [Radio, MTPD-1X]
15:11:13 hours	MTPD Command: Notified police 1 that rail has given verbal confirmation that the third rail power was de-energized but instructed them to ensure they hot stick and confirm. [Radio, MTPD-1X]
15:11:52 hours	MTPD Command: Police 1 communicated with the MTPD cruiser to verify if the command post was set up on the platform. [Radio, MTPD-1X]
15:14:59 hours	MICC Assistant Operations Manager: Requested that MOC dispatch ERT personnel to Capitol Heights for blood-borne pathogen mitigation efforts. [Phone]
15:15:35 hours	MTPD Command: Notified Police 1 that the customer did not appear to have life-threatening injuries and requested Plant Maintenance and ERT personnel for Bio-hazard cleanup if necessary. [Phone]
15:16:24 hours	MTPD: Notified Police 1 that one RTRA personnel was at the incident command post. [Radio, MTPD-2X]
15:17:01 hours	SIO: Notified the Senior Safety Officer on duty of the incident of fare evasion and fell onto the roadway and was unconscious. [Phone]
15:17:15 hours	RTRA Supervisor was observed hot sticking the third rail near the tunnel's end gate near the WSAD placement location with one PGFD representative. [CCTV]
15:17:55 hours	RTRA Supervisor was observed returning with hot stick in hand. [CCTV]
15:19:53 hours	PGFD lifted and removed the customer from the roadway. [CCTV]
15:20:54 hours	MPTD Command: Notified Police 1 that the customer was removed from the roadway and personnel and equipment were still present on the roadway [Radio, MTPD-2X]
15:22:03 hours	MTPD Command: Advised Police 1 that the customer experienced a medical emergency(seizure) before failing to the roadway. [Radio, MTPD-2X]
15:22:46 hours	PGFD cleared equipment and personnel from the roadway. [CCTV]
15:22:50 hours	MTPD Command: Advised Police 1 that all personnel and equipment were clear of the roadway, and command was transferred to the RTRA Supervisor on-scene [Radio, MPTD-2X]
15:23:09 hours	MTPD Command: Turned incident scene over to RTRA Supervisor personnel [Radio, MTPD-2X]
15:23:09 hours	RTRA Supervisor: Notified Radio RTC that MTPD released the scene, and MTPD requested ERT bio-hazard clean-up; however, it was at the discretion of the MICC. The RTRA Supervisor reported that track 1 was ready for rail movement. Radio RTC: Confirmed Transmission. [Radio]
15:23:53 hours	MTPD: Communicated with field personnel and advised that they requested ERT and asked if there was biohazard on the tracks that required addressing. [MTPD-2X]

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Time	Description
15:24:03 hours	Power announcements were conducted on all operations channels for third-rail power restoration.
15:24:05 hours	MTPD: Confirmed bio-hazard material required cleaning, and ERT is not required; however, Plant Maintenance will be needed for clean-up. [Radio, MTPD-2X]
15:28:20 hours	AIMS playback showed that the third rail power re-energized on track 1.
15:32:00 hours	AlMs Playback showed Train ID 649 was the first to resume normal service at Capitol Heights on track one. [AlMS]
16:26:10 hours	Facilities Maintenance conducted Bio-hazard cleaning on track 1. [CCTV]

^{**}Note: Times above may vary from other systems' timelines based on clock settings and reporting sources.

Office of Systems Maintenance, Office of Radio Communications (COMR)

Based on the CMOR data. no radio issues were identified for this event.

Weather

On August 16, 2024, at the time of the incident, NOAA recorded the temperature as 85°F, with mostly cloudy skies, winds nine mph, and 49% humidity. Capitol Heights Station is underground with a direct fixation track. The weather did not contribute to this incident (NOAA) at Capitol Heights Station.

Human Factors

Evidence of Fatigue

The biomathematical fatigue modeling application (SAFTE-FAST Web SFC) was not applied for this event.

Fatigue Risk

The biomathematical fatigue modeling application (SAFTE-FAST Web SFC) was not applied for this event.

Post-Incident Toxicology Testing

Post-Incident Toxicology Testing was not conducted for this event.

Findings

- PGFD personnel entered the roadway without verifying that the third rail power was deenergized. The entry occurred before the completion of the hot stick process, and the installation of the WSAD, although trained through exercises in the yard and mainline, posed a significant risk of electrocution to emergency responders.
- Communication between the various agencies, including the Station Manager, Communication Agent, PGFD, and MTPD, was generally prompt. However, there was a delay in confirming the de-energization of the third rail.

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- The RTRA Supervisor was observed conducting the hot stick procedure without the required high-voltage gloves, violating standard safety protocols.
- The biohazard clean-up, which involved removing blood-borne pathogens from the track area, was not conducted until over an hour after normal rail operations had resumed. This delay represents a breach of protocol, as it exposed passengers and staff to potential health hazards.

Immediate Mitigation to Prevent Recurrence

- Train service was stopped.
- Third rail power was de-energized.

Probable Cause Statement

The probable cause of the Serious Injury event at Capitol Heights Station on August 16, 2024, was the customer's attempt to evade the fare by climbing over the fare gates, resulting in a loss of balance and a subsequent fall onto the roadway below. The customer's actions directly led to their severe injury, including a head impact and upper torso trauma, as they landed in the track area with their legs bridged over the left running rail.

Recommended Corrective Actions

No corrective actions are required for this report.

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Appendices

Appendix A - MTPD Report

	Event Report						
MIN	Metro Transit Police Department						
1	Type of Report	MTPD CCN	Local Jurisdiction	Local CCN			
1	Closed	2024-15358-001	Prince Georges County				

Event Location							
Street Station Acronym City, St.		tate	County	MTP District	Local District		
133 Capitol Heights Blvd	eights Blvd HEIGHTS PLEA		PLEASANT, Lan MD 20743 Dis		District 3	PG3-Landover-District 3	
Date o	and Time of Event	!			Date and Time	Reported	
From 70 8/16/2024 3:00:00 PM				8/16/2024 3:02:53 PM			
				Category			
Rall Station, Line or Right-of-Way Or			On Bus	n Bus Property		Other	
CAPH - CAPITAL HEIGHTS			Rail Station		MSA6		
Blue							
Specific Location (Foot Bridge, Klosk, Platform, Tracks, Etc.)				For Burglary or B&E Only			
Rail/Tracks/In Tunnel				If Hotel Rule Applies, #Fremises or Facilities Entered:			
Location Description							
Rail Station							

Event Information								
If Incident Use This Block	Offense #	INJURED/SICK PERSON TO THE HOSPITAL						
Incident Classification	Offense Classification							
Incident Description	Description	INJURED/SICK PERSON TO THE HOSPITAL						
	Weapon/Force Type of Activity	/						
Entry Type: Number Premises Entered:								
Hate Crime Motivation	n: None (no bias) (mutually exc	lusive)					
Bias Motivation								
None (no bias) (mutually exclusive)								
Offender Suspected of Using: Modus Open			Modus Opera	ndi (MO):				
Case Status Information If Case Clear			If Case Cleaves	d Exceptionally, Clearance Date				
Case Status (Completed by the Official who signs this report):								
Reporting Officer (Frint) Budge # Second Officer (Frint) Budge #								
Supervisor's Name (Electronically Approved)				Teletype	Investigator Notified	10#		

MTPD CCN: Event Report Page 1 of 4 ORI-DCMTP0000

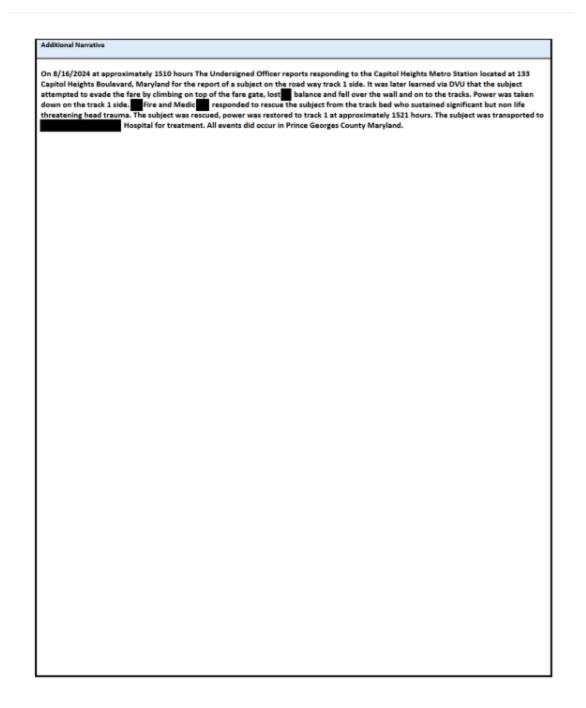
Figure 6 - MTPD Incident Report page 1 of 2

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MTPD CCN: Event Report Page 4 of 4
ORI-DCMTP0000

Figure 7 - MTPD Incident Report page 2 of 2. Please note pages 2-3 are fully redacted for PII and have not information to review.

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