



PRELIMINARY REPORT

Railroad

**SEPTA Passenger Killed
While Walking Between Cars
on a Moving Subway Train**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
September 23, 2018
RRD18FR011

The information in this report is preliminary and will be either supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.

On September 23, 2018, about 5:35 p.m., eastern daylight time, a Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) subway train operator stopped a SEPTA southbound subway train between the Alleghany Station and the North Philadelphia Station on the Broad Street Line when a passenger activated an emergency alert.¹ While stopped, the train dispatcher instructed the train operator to perform a ground level inspection of the train. While performing the inspection, the operator found, between the running rails about 10 feet south of the Alleghany Station platform, a child that had been struck by the train. According to witness statements to SEPTA officials, the 7-year-old boy attempted to walk from car 516 to car 536 through the end-of-car doors as the train moved out of the Alleghany Station through an underground subway tunnel. After the boy passed through the end-of-car door of car 516, he fell between the cars. (See figure 1.)

¹ Passenger emergency switches are in the car under a breakable plastic cover plate. When a switch is activated, an audible alert sounds in all cab compartments of the train. The door open signal indicators illuminate “red” for the car in which the emergency switch was activated.



Figure 1. Photograph of the area between SEPTA Broad Street Line subway cars 516 and 536.

The train operator told National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators that immediately after pulling out of Allegheny Station, a passenger activated an emergency alert. After the operator stopped the train, several passengers told the operator that a child had fallen from the train.

NTSB investigators interviewed SEPTA System Safety and Transportation Management officials who indicated that although passengers are permitted to walk between the cars, this action is highly discouraged. At the time of the accident, SEPTA Broad Street Line subway end-of-car doors were equipped with a singular sign warning that passengers should not use the end-of-car doors to pass between cars. The sign read “NO PASSING THROUGH,” and is located between an overhead light bar and the top of the door. In the following photograph, the sign is magnified and circled in red. (See figure 2.)



Figure 2. Photograph of a SEPTA subway end-of-car door warning sign.

Immediately after the accident, SEPTA officials began placing larger and more prominent warning signs on the interior of the end-of-car doors on the entire SEPTA subway fleet. (See figure 3.) SEPTA also began making station and on-board train announcements to remind passengers that the end-of-car door passage is for emergency use only.



Figure 3. Photograph of an enhanced warning sign on a SEPTA subway end-of-car door.

The NTSB’s investigation into this accident is ongoing. Future investigative issues include risk assessments of gangways between end-of-car doors and strategies to mitigate the identified risks.

Parties to the investigation include the Federal Transit Administration, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Rail Transit Safety Review Program, and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.