

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*

*

METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN

*

CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK

*

Docket No.: HWY-15-MH-005

FEBRUARY 3, 2015

*

*

* * * * *

Telephonic Interview of: ROBERT BURNETT

Doubletree Hotel
Tarrytown, New York

Sunday,
February 8, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: DAVID BUCHER
Railroad Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

DAVID BUCHER, Railroad Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BRUCE PARKIN, Safety Inspector, Region 1
Federal Railroad Administration

THOMAS PALMER, Road Foreman
Harlem Division
Metro-North Railroad

MICHAEL SCIORTINO, General Road Foreman of Engines
Metro-North Railroad

TOMMY COOPER, Locomotive Engineer
Harlem Division
Metro-North Railroad

KIRK THOMAS
Association of Commuter Rail Employees

MICHAEL BELLUCCO
Association of Commuter Rail Employees

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Robert Burnett:	
By Mr. Bucher	4
By Mr. Parkin	8
By Mr. Palmer	8
By Mr. Cooper	9
By Mr. Bucher	9
By Unidentified Speaker	10

I N T E R V I E W

(11:15 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. BUCHER: This is Dave Bucher, Rail Accident
4 Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board.

5 This is the interview of Robert Burnett, locomotive
6 engineer on the Metro-North Train Number 672. This is a telephone
7 interview, reference accident that occurred on February 3, 2015,
8 NTSB accident number HWY-15-MH-005.

9 To my left, I have --

10 MR. PARKIN: Bruce Parkin, Federal Railroad
11 Administration, Safety Inspector, Region 1.

12 MR. PALMER: Tom Palmer, Metro-North Railroad, road
13 foreman, Harlem Division.

14 MR. SCIORTINO: Mike Sciortino, General Road Foreman of
15 Engines, Metro-North.

16 MR. THOMAS: Kirk Thomas, ACRE.

17 MR. COOPER: Tommy Cooper, locomotive engineer, Harlem.

18 MR. BELLUCCO: Mike Bellucco, ACRE.

19 MR. BUCHER: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF ROBERT BURNETT

20
21 BY MR. BUCHER:

22 Q. Robert?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. If you could, if you could go back to February 3rd and
25 relate to us anything you can remember about your last trip

1 through the Commerce Street crossing, and I guess specifically to
2 train 672, I'd appreciate it.

3 A. Well, what I can recall is that we were coming south on
4 track 2, and the thing that stuck out the most about it was -- I
5 don't know what the road is actually called. I call it the Bronx
6 River Parkway because it's the access between Taconic and the
7 Bronx River. That road was jammed going north with cars. It was
8 packed because obviously there was an accident on the Taconic,
9 which I didn't know. But that took me by surprise that the
10 traffic was bumper to bumper, and there was -- it seemed like
11 there was police officers at every light, which would represent
12 our crossings, but they were directing traffic on the road. And
13 other than that, really, my trip went pretty normal as it does on
14 most, you know, days. There was no big, big thing other than
15 that, that I took notice of.

16 Q. Okay. Can I pause for one second --

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. -- Robert? We're going to just pause for a second here.
19 Thank you.

20 (Off the record.)

21 (On the record.)

22 MR. BUCHER: Okay. This is Dave Bucher. We're back
23 with Mr. Burnett.

24 BY MR. BUCHER:

25 Q. Yeah, go ahead, Bob, about the Taconic Parkway jammed

1 with traffic.

2 A. Well, yeah. It's the road they -- like I said, I call
3 it the Bronx River because that's what I know it as. But, yeah,
4 it was bumper to bumper jammed with traffic. There was police out
5 and I thought maybe there was an accident on that road, and that
6 was really the only thing that stuck out. Because like I said, we
7 come down 2, we were doing fine. I think we were doing good on
8 time and, you know, I was making normal stops and -- I mean, I
9 didn't notice anything out of the ordinary track-wise or crossing-
10 wise. So that's about all I can tell you.

11 Q. Okay. Dave Bucher. Okay, so basically, and I -- you're
12 saying that traffic at Commerce Street didn't appear out of the
13 ordinary, just normal traffic for that time of the day?

14 A. Yeah, you see a few cars wanting to cross, you know, at
15 each of the crossings. Well, Stevens is usually dead. I mean,
16 there's really hardly any traffic there. But Commerce and
17 Lakeview, you see some traffic and -- but I figured there was, you
18 know, as always, once you see the road jammed up like that, you
19 know that there's going to be more traffic because people, if
20 they're struck dead in traffic, they're going to go both ways,
21 east and west, off of the Taconic access road because it was
22 blocked going northbound and there was no traffic southbound, so I
23 guess they weren't even letting people on it southbound.

24 Q. Okay. All right. Just a couple of background
25 questions.

1 A. Sure.

2 Q. We'll go around the room here, and I don't think we're
3 going to have a whole lot, but -- when were you first hired by the
4 railroad?

5 A. By the railroad, November 1987.

6 Q. Okay. And when were you promoted to engineer?

7 A. January of 2000.

8 Q. That's one good thing about railroads, they know all the
9 dates when they get promoted.

10 Okay. All right, in your history, going through the --
11 through -- on the Harlem Line going through Commerce Street, how
12 often do you go through there a day or a week?

13 A. Usually I go through there, one, two, three -- four
14 times a day on a weekday and twice on weekends. So 3 days a week
15 I go through there four times and on the weekends, twice.

16 Q. Okay. And in your experience, you've never been
17 involved in any accidents at Commerce Street or any of the
18 adjacent crossings there?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Have you ever have had any close calls or known of any
21 close calls?

22 A. Yes, I had one close call about 4 or 5 years ago, but
23 that was at Cleveland Avenue just south of Valhalla, and that was
24 a moving van; a large moving van was stuck in the crossing because
25 of the grade up from the road to the crossing. And we were able

1 to stop in time because I was already slowing down for the station
2 stop and there's a speed restriction there of 40 miles an hour, so
3 that made it easy to stop. I stopped, you know --

4 Q. Okay. Great.

5 A. -- I think approximately 100 yards before it, before the
6 crossing.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. BUCHER: I'm going to go around and anybody else
9 that has questions will field you a couple here, and that should
10 be about it, buddy.

11 MR. BURNETT: Okay.

12 BY MR. PARKIN:

13 Q. Bob, Bruce Parkin, FRA. On November 1987, what did you
14 hire out as?

15 A. I hired out as an electrician.

16 Q. An electrician, okay.

17 A. Maintenance of equipment electrician.

18 Q. Okay. And the years that you've been operating over the
19 Harlem Line, did you ever experience any problems, malfunctions at
20 Commerce Street?

21 A. No, none that I can recall.

22 Q. Okay. Thank you. I have no other questions, Bob.
23 Thanks.

24 A. All right.

25 BY MR. PALMER:

1 Q. Bob, Tommy Palmer. Just one question. Going through
2 Commerce Street, did you notice any exceptions with the gates?
3 Was everything working as intended?

4 A. Yes, everything was working as intended when I went
5 through Commerce Street, Tom.

6 Q. Thank you, Bob. That's all.

7 A. Okay.

8 MR. SCIORTINO: I have no questions for you, Bob.

9 MR. BURNETT: Okay.

10 MR. THOMAS: I'm good. No questions.

11 MR. BELLUCCO: I don't have any questions.

12 BY MR. COOPER:

13 Q. Bob, Tommy Cooper.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Do you remember the number of cars you had in the
16 consist of 672?

17 A. Yes, eight cars. We get eight cars every day.

18 Q. Okay. And you took no exceptions to the Commerce Street
19 crossing, just another crossing as many on the Harlem?

20 A. Yes, just a normal crossing as any other.

21 Q. No further questions at this time, Bob. Thank you.

22 A. Okay.

23 BY MR. BUCHER:

24 Q. Okay. Bob, Dave Bucher. Just one more question. About
25 -- in your estimate, about what time did you go through Commerce

1 Street? I understand you don't have them exact. I just was
2 asking if you have a ballpark time.

3 A. Between I would say 5:40 and 5:46, if that gives you a
4 better --

5 Q. That's fine. That's fine. I'm just trying to get a
6 ballpark when you went through there. That's great. Thank you.

7 A. Okay.

8 MR. BUCHER: Anything else?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

10 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

11 Q. One other question, Bob, to add to Dave's question about
12 that. When you went through the crossing at Commerce, what was
13 the lighting like? Was it daylight still or was it dark?

14 A. No, it was dark.

15 Q. Okay. Thank you.

16 A. Sure.

17 MR. BUCHER: Anything else?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm good.

19 MR. BUCHER: All right. I think that's it, Bob. Thank
20 you so much for staying available for the call.

21 MR. BURNETT: Not a problem.

22 MR. BUCHER: And that concludes the interview of
23 Mr. Burnett.

24 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: METRO-NORTH RAILROAD FATAL TRAIN
CRASH, VALHALLA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 3, 2015
Telephonic Interview of Robert Burnett

DOCKET NUMBER: HWY-15-MH-005

PLACE: Tarrytown, New York

DATE: February 8, 2015

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the interview.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber