

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

\*

\*

ACCIDENT INVOLVING AMTRAK TRAIN

\*

#89 AND MOW EQUIPMENT AND

\*

Docket No.: DCA16FR007

EMPLOYEES, NEAR CHESTER,

\*

PENNSYLVANIA ON APRIL 3, 2016

\*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: TOM CARPER

Amtrak  
Washington Union Station  
Washington, D.C.

Thursday,  
September 29, 2016

## APPEARANCES:

RICHARD HIPSKIND, Chairman, Track and Engineering Group  
National Transportation Safety Board

RYAN FRIGO, Investigator-in-Charge  
Chairman, Operations Group  
National Transportation Safety Board

BOB BEATON, Ph.D., Division Chief  
Human Performance and Survival Factors Division  
National Transportation Safety Board

ANN GARCIA, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

FRAN WALKER, Track Safety Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

LOU TOMASSONE, IIC  
Federal Railroad Administration

DONALD HILL, Safety Task Force  
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

WILLIAM BATES, Co-Director, National Transportation  
Safety Team  
SMART Transportation Division

THERESA IMPASTATO, Deputy Chief Safety Officer  
Amtrak

JOHN BONVENTRE, Esq.  
Landman, Corsi, Ballaine & Ford, PC  
(On behalf of Mr. Logue)

JOHN BONVENTURE, Esq.  
Landman, Corsi, Ballaine and Ford  
(On behalf of Mr. Carper)

MICHAEL HOEPF, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board  
(Observer)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Tom Carper:		
By Mr. Hipskind		6
By Mr. Frigo		14
By Mr. Walker		18
By Mr. Tomassone		18
By Dr. Beaton		19
By Mr. Hipskind		27

I N T E R V I E W

(9:10 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. HIPSKIND: -- Hipskind and I am the Track and Engineering  
4 Group Chairman for NTSB for this accident. We are here today on  
5 September 29, 2016 at Amtrak's Washington Union Station in  
6 Washington, D.C. to conduct an interview with Mr. Tom Carper who  
7 is a board member and who works for the National Railroad  
8 Passenger Corporation, or Amtrak.

9 This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of  
10 a collision of Amtrak Train 89 with maintenance-of-way equipment  
11 and employees on April 3rd, 2016 at Milepost 15.7 on Amtrak's PW  
12 Line near Chester, Pennsylvania in Delaware County. The NTSB  
13 reference, accident reference number is DCA16FR007.

14 Before we begin our interview and questions, let's go around  
15 the table and introduce ourselves. Please spell your last name,  
16 and please identify who you are representing and your title. I  
17 would remind everybody to speak loudly and clearly enough so we  
18 can get an accurate recording.

19 I'll lead off and then pass off to my right. Again, my name  
20 is Richard Hipskind. The spelling of my last name is H-I-P-S-K-I-  
21 N-D. I am the Track and Engineering Group chairman for NTSB on  
22 this accident.

23 DR. BEATON: I'm Bob Beaton, B-E-A-T-O-N. I'm with NTSB.

24 MR. HOEPF: I'm Michael, H-O-E-P-F. I'm an investigator with  
25 NTSB here today.

1 MS. GARCIA: Anne Garcia, G-A-R-C-I-A, with the NTSB.

2 MR. WALKER: Fran Walker, W-A-L-K-E-R. I'm FRA Track Safety  
3 Inspector.

4 MR. TOMASSONE: Lou Tomassone, T-O-M-A-S-S-O-N-E. I'm the  
5 IIC for the FRA on this accident investigation.

6 MR. BATES: William Bates, B-A-T-E-S, SMART Transportation  
7 Division, National Transportation Safety Team.

8 MR. HILL: Donald Hill, BLET, Safety Taskforce.

9 MS. IMPASTATO: Theresa Impastato, I-M-P-A-S-T-A-T-O, Amtrak  
10 deputy chief safety officer.

11 MR. HIPSKIND: And Ryan, would you please put yourself on the  
12 record?

13 MR. FRIGO: Ryan Frigo, F-R-I-G-O, investigator-in-charge and  
14 Operations Group chairman for the NTSB.

15 MR. HIPSKIND: And Mr. Carper, would you place yourself on  
16 the record?

17 MR. CARPER: Tom Carper, C-A-R-P-E-R, Amtrak Board of  
18 Directors.

19 MR. HIPSKIND: Mr. Carper, do you mind if we proceed on a  
20 first name basis in our discussion today?

21 MR. CARPER: That's fine. Yes.

22 MR. HIPSKIND: So I can call you Tom?

23 MR. CARPER: Yes, you can.

24 MR. HIPSKIND: All right. Tom, do we have your permission to  
25 record our discussion, our interview with you today?

1 MR. CARPER: Yes, you do.

2 MR. HIPSKIND: And do you wish to have a representative with  
3 you?

4 MR. CARPER: Yes, I do.

5 MR. HIPSKIND: John?

6 MR. BONVENTRE: John Bonventre, B-O-N-V-E-N-T-R-E, of  
7 Landman, Corsi, Ballaine and Ford, here representing Mr. Carper.

8 INTERVIEW OF TOM CARPER

9 BY MR. HIPSKIND:

10 Q. All right. Let's proceed.

11 Tom, as we talked earlier before the interview, can you kind  
12 of give us a synopsis of your work history, and take us up to your  
13 present position? And if you would like, just go ahead and kind  
14 of give us a little bit of an understanding of what your duties  
15 and responsibilities are in your present position.

16 A. Okay. I'll start and just take you up through -- as I said,  
17 Tom Carper. I was -- grew up in a small town in Illinois.  
18 Attended college at Western Illinois University in my hometown  
19 where I live now. After spending 3 years in the military, in  
20 Thailand and Vietnam, came back to the city of Macomb and got in a  
21 small business, a nightclub/restaurant/bars, until I ran for mayor  
22 in 1991. I was mayor of Macomb from 1991 to 2003. Then for 3 or  
23 4 years, I did some regional economic development.

24 I was nominated by Senator Durbin through the Bush  
25 administration in March of 2007 and was confirmed by the Senate in

1 March of 2008. So I've been on the board since 2008. Termed out  
2 the board in March of '13 and was reappointed to the board at the  
3 end of July, in July of '13. So I'm about 3½ years into my second  
4 term.

5 I served as chair of the board from, I think, February of '14  
6 until I termed out in -- no, not '14 -- February of '08 -- '09  
7 until I termed out in '13, and now I serve as a board member and  
8 chair of the Safety and Corporate Security Committee of Amtrak.

9 Q. And if you would continue, Tom, just tell us a little bit  
10 about what you typically do as a board member. I'm sure you, from  
11 time-to-time, go to meetings. You're the chair of your  
12 subcommittee on safety and security. Tell us a little bit -- give  
13 us a little bit more visibility in what goes on at those meetings.  
14 Why do you hold them? What's discussed? And then kind of give us  
15 the process of the things that you discuss there, how do they get  
16 implemented, and just paint the picture as broadly as you can.

17 A. Well, upon my re-entering Amtrak, was appointed to chair the  
18 safety and security committee. We meet -- three members on the  
19 committee -- Jeff Moreland, a former Burlington Northern Santa Fe  
20 executive, and Bert DiClemente from Delaware are the three  
21 members. We meet before every board meeting. The board meets --  
22 I think last year, we met nine times and we would have met -- we  
23 would've had nine -- eight or nine safety and security meetings  
24 before the board.

25 There's a set agenda included along with corporate -- or

1 safety is also the Amtrak Police Department, emergency management  
2 and then also cybersecurity, and that's the IT end. So we have a  
3 set agenda. We would typically reach out to each one of the  
4 principals for each one of those areas, if they have issues that  
5 they would like to cover or things that they're working on. And  
6 then we also call for items, the various items from any of the  
7 areas.

8 When it comes to safety, we get a fairly -- well, not fairly  
9 -- we get an in-depth report on the metrics of safety, how we're  
10 comparing to last year, how we're month-to-month. And there's an  
11 awful lot of give and take on the -- in those meetings. One thing  
12 I'll say about the Amtrak board, they're not shy about asking  
13 questions, which is a good thing. And we -- I won't go into the  
14 other three areas because we're going to focus on safety.

15 As it relates to the whole board, to the entire board, we get  
16 a presentation that will show the metrics. That, the majority of  
17 that information is included in, I guess I could say every -- I  
18 can't think of when it wasn't -- every board meeting by director  
19 of operations, DJ Stadtler, will lift most of that and present  
20 that in its entirety to his report to the board.

21 So as far as information that we're getting on the metrics of  
22 safety and issues with the safety, that is transferred to the  
23 board nearly every board meeting. So the flow of information is  
24 pretty steady and consistent. And certainly we operate as any  
25 committee does, we're a little closer to the granular things of



1 what's going on. But in this instance with safety, it's passed up  
2 to the board.

3 Q. And is that the function of your safety and security  
4 committee, is to go over your agenda to know and understand what's  
5 going on in the real world, and then your committee or somebody on  
6 your behalf makes a presentation or forwards that up to the  
7 greater board when they assemble?

8 A. Yes, yes. I mean, as -- I guess, as in any committee, you're  
9 a little bit closer to the issues and you have more of an  
10 opportunity to ask, you know, to ask more questions. But what I  
11 -- but with the topic of what Michael Logue presents and Theresa  
12 presents, that is, you know, with the other three entities of the  
13 committee, I would bring that to the board on certain occasions or  
14 we would do it in a written report. These issues are brought to  
15 the board and presented to the board, the metrics, the slide -- if  
16 it's a PowerPoint slide, are brought to the board on the screen.  
17 So most of what we see when it comes to systems safety is  
18 presented at every board meeting to the entire board, which  
19 includes, as you well know, the, you know, the federal rail  
20 administrator.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And well, we're just surrounded by safety experts. Our CEO  
23 who just left was a former federal rail administrator. So safety  
24 is extremely important to all of them.

25 Q. Okay. Help me to understand, in all the -- and I understand

1 that there probably are other board members on other subcommittees  
2 on other topic areas --

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. -- and when all of you get together in the larger board when  
5 it assembles, is this -- is the general goal of all this, is just  
6 to keep people abreast of changes and developments in the Amtrak  
7 Corporation or is there -- are there other functions I should know  
8 about?

9 A. Explain functions. Meaning?

10 Q. Well, as you're presented information, do you guys make  
11 decisions? Do you render -- we would like for you to do this; we  
12 would like for you to initiate that? Or is it just a matter of  
13 being informed?

14 A. Now, if you look at the staff -- as we look at the staff that  
15 we have, sitting next to the federal rail administrator with a  
16 former federal rail administrator sitting at the head of the  
17 table, with the staff that we have, including Theresa and Michael  
18 and others, to make recommendations that are, you know, not part  
19 of a -- we don't feel that that's -- you know, I don't feel that  
20 that's my function and the board doesn't either. But the board is  
21 very inquisitive about what's going on and -- but we rely on the  
22 experts in this area. Quite frankly, I don't think you would want  
23 someone like me making critical decisions on programs, safety  
24 programs, when we're sitting in a room with some of the best  
25 safety experts in the industry. So --

1 Q. So then definitely, one of the goals is to be informed about  
2 everything that's going on around you in the corporation?

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. All right. Does the board ever render some decisions?  
5 Or what is the primary function of the greater board meeting and  
6 going over all the presentations from the different subcommittees?

7 A. Well, those issues are important to the board. It's  
8 important that the board is knowledgeable. You know, we set  
9 financial priorities, and that's where the decision making comes  
10 in, to make sure that we have adequate resources and focus is  
11 happening on certain issues, and particularly on safety. I mean,  
12 that's witnessed by the fact that of all the four entities in my  
13 committee, the one that is brought forward each time is the -- is  
14 system safety. You know, I do bring other issues before, from  
15 Amtrak Police Department and the MCS and that, but the particular  
16 one, in particular interest for not only my committee but the full  
17 board is the safety.

18 Q. Okay. Then, and I heard you use the word "financial." Let  
19 me just try to come at this a different way.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. As the board receives the presentations and whatnot, is some  
22 of the things that were going on in the back of your mind or even  
23 in the forefront of your mind, are we getting the proper bang for  
24 our buck? Are things being properly funded? Do we need more  
25 funding? Is that, maybe, how I should understand the primary

1 function of the board?

2 A. I'm not sure that that's the primary function. It's  
3 certainly one of the functions.

4 Q. Okay. Well, are there other functions of the board? And if  
5 there are, could you help me to understand those?

6 A. Well, I think we think that it's important that the board  
7 members have a -- have knowledge of what's going on in the  
8 company, not only in safety, but in all the other committees that  
9 we meet. So --

10 Q. But like ridership and --

11 A. Well -- absolutely. You know, revenue, ridership, customer  
12 service scores, yes, yes.

13 Q. And all the forward-thinking planning, like procurement, what  
14 are our needs for the next 5, 10 years, and all that kind of  
15 stuff?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You're nodding? Okay.

18 A. Yes, yes.

19 Q. All right. All right. Is there anything else that maybe I  
20 haven't covered that you think I should know about the work that  
21 the board does? Or your work?

22 A. Well, I guess -- and I don't guess, I know that this issue,  
23 this issue in general is -- there's a lot of time spent on safety,  
24 as I mentioned. It's important enough that it's included in all  
25 the board agendas, that DJ Stadtler brings. And it gets a

1 discussion, not only the three people on the committee, but  
2 whoever is attending the board meeting and, frankly, from staff.

3       So I can tell you that when budget time comes around -- and  
4 I'll just tell you what I had -- my conversation with the chairman  
5 was. I was curious about the budget that was coming up. I know  
6 that there are time frames and guidelines and things that we want  
7 to get done, that we need to get done. Some of them are date  
8 sensitive. You know, I indicated that I'm not going to be in  
9 support of the budget that's coming up unless I'm assured that  
10 we're going to do all that we need to do, and all the resources we  
11 have and the focus we have, and the will to go forward with the  
12 safety initiatives.

13       It was easy when Joe Boardman was here. I could look Joe in  
14 the eye -- I've known Joe for a long time -- and that was an easy  
15 thing to do. Talking to the chairman, I didn't have -- I did not  
16 have a chance to talk to Wick Moorman about that, but I've been  
17 assured that Wick Moorman is certainly on board and that is the  
18 focus of the budget and going forward into this next year.

19       So, you know -- and I view that as my role as the chair of  
20 the safety committee. I mean, it's -- they put me in that  
21 position, and I can set the agenda as far as information, and it's  
22 important enough to me -- there was absolutely no doubt in the  
23 chairman's mind that we're going to have the resources, we have  
24 the will, and we have the focus to move forward and make that a  
25 priority. So --

1 Q. Do you --

2 A. So I -- and we take that seriously.

3 Q. Okay. Do you have the freedom and latitude to talk about  
4 some of the safety initiatives that maybe the personnel in your  
5 subcommittee, that they're talking about or planning on?

6 A. Well, you know, in general terms.

7 Q. In general terms would be fine.

8 A. I mean, you know, we -- I view my role as, you know, making  
9 sure that staff knows that it's important and I rely on our staff  
10 to bring those forward and to implement them. So --

11 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay. All right. Tom, that's all I have for  
12 right now. Let's draw Ryan in. He's on the telephone.

13 MR. CARPER: Okay.

14 RICHARD HIPSKIND: Ryan? You're up.

15 BY MR. FRIGO:

16 Q. Okay, Tom. Thank you. And I'm just wondering if you can  
17 elaborate more on, you know, the board's role for basically  
18 setting the philosophy for safety?

19 A. Well, and I'm not trying to duck this question, but in my  
20 instance, in my experience on the board, since we brought Joe  
21 Boardman in early in my term as a board member, that philosophy  
22 was driven down from the CEO down to -- and if we didn't have a  
23 safety philosophy -- and, you know, I'm not a, you know, I'm a  
24 railroad professional, you know, so the philosophy was driven down  
25 from the CEO, and the board is certainly in agreement with the

1 fact that safety is the utmost priority. So that probably didn't  
2 answer your question, but --

3 Q. No, I appreciate that. And, you know, perhaps I need to ask  
4 it in a different way and -- I mean, you mentioned about the  
5 reports that come up through the committee and the value of the  
6 staff and the information that the staff provides.

7 A. Right.

8 Q. Can you recall any time when as a board member you challenged  
9 any of that safety-related information?

10 A. Are you asking if I challenged the validity of the  
11 information or the information itself?

12 Q. Well, not the validity but more the, question the -- you  
13 know, let's use maybe injuries in a mechanical crash as an  
14 example.

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. If something like that is presented to you and, you know,  
17 you're seeing trends, I would assume, over time and there -- I'm  
18 just trying to get a better understanding of the discussions that  
19 are had within this board committee as it relates to safety.

20 A. I'm trying to think of a specific discussion. In general, a  
21 question would be or a comment would be that we want to make sure  
22 that it's the priority of the committee and the priority of the  
23 board and of management that if we're not -- if the safety issues  
24 are significant or if we're above what they ought to be, that  
25 they're recognized, that the board -- it's the board's desire to

1 do all we can do to solve those. And if resources are needed,  
2 then let us know and we will work on that.

3 I mean, I learned -- I'm not trying to duck this question but  
4 this is hard for me to -- a little different for me to be in a  
5 role as a board member, having been running my own business for  
6 some years where I made my decisions and I knew what I was doing.  
7 And then as mayor, I started to learn that I'm probably surrounded  
8 by a lot of subject matter people who are a hell of a lot smarter  
9 than I am and I got to rely on them. And that's what we do, and  
10 I've worked hard at that, and I'm convinced that we got talented  
11 people. So my job has kind of switched from my business time to  
12 my time being on the board is I need to let staff know what the  
13 desire is, that we would like to see this be better, and I expect  
14 back and so does the board, then if you -- we need resources or  
15 more focus, then we'll do that. And I think that's the way it  
16 ought to work. I think that's the way -- well, I'm not a railroad  
17 safety specialist. I mean, and I --

18 Q. No, and I understand that. And I'm --

19 A. Does that make sense?

20 Q. -- I'm not trying to --

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. I'm not trying to bait you, either.

23 A. No, I know that.

24 Q. I -- you know, the reason I wanted to speak to you was  
25 because -- you know, right now is a perfect example. We've got,



1 you know, one outgoing chairman and a new one coming in and the  
2 board is, you know, the board is what remains. And the transfer  
3 of that philosophy from the top down on safety, I think the board  
4 might be, you know, one level of continuity from the outgoing to  
5 the incoming and -- that's really what I was getting at. And it  
6 -- you know, your answer does -- obviously, you know, you state  
7 that you support safety initiatives and the board is obviously  
8 behind all that. We're just trying to understand that a little  
9 bit further.

10 A. Well, if I might -- I mean --

11 Q. That's all I have.

12 A. Maybe if I might, that's why I asked the question of the  
13 chairman when we were voting on the budget. I mean, I -- that's  
14 -- to me that was as close as I could get as a transfer in this  
15 handoff period. And you know --

16 Q. (Indiscernible)

17 A. -- I've been assured that Wick Moorman is going to be as  
18 committed to safety as Joe Boardman was. So, and I thought -- I  
19 felt that that's -- that was my job. I think that's what I ought  
20 to do.

21 Q. Well, and that clarification helps me understand that a  
22 little bit further. Thank you. And I don't have any further  
23 questions. Thank you.

24 MR. HIPSKIND: Okay, thanks, Ryan.

25 Fran?

1 BY MR. WALKER:

2 Q. Yeah, Fran Walker. One question, do you actually approve the  
3 budget and safety items? In other words, say, the Safety  
4 Department says, we want a half million put in to put cameras in  
5 all vehicles because we're going to reduce injuries. Is that  
6 something you, like, sort of approve? Or do you just sort of  
7 approve a big budget? Or how does your role as far as approving  
8 safety stuff?

9 A. Well, it certainly -- it certainly's approved in the big  
10 budget. We don't, you know, approve individual --

11 Q. Items.

12 A. -- individual lines.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But it's discussed in the -- it's certainly discussed in the  
15 safety committee and it's vetted through the whole process up  
16 through, up through the CEO and --

17 Q. Okay. It's the only question I have.

18 A. Okay.

19 MR. WALKER: Thank you.

20 MR. HIPSKIND: Lou?

21 MR. TOMASSONE: Yeah, I just have one question.

22 BY MR. TOMASSONE:

23 Q. As far as new safety initiatives or procedures, rules Amtrak-  
24 wise, do you guys have any say or vote on any of that sort of  
25 stuff or is it mainly financial on the safety side?

1 A. Well, we have, you know, we have input. I mean, input into  
2 what's being -- well, oftentimes, what's being proposed as far as  
3 -- particularly if there's resources needed.

4 MR. TOMASSONE: Okay, that's all I have.

5 MR. HIPSKIND: Willie?

6 MR. BATES: No.

7 MR. HIPSKIND: And Don?

8 MR. HILL: No questions.

9 MR. HIPSKIND: Theresa?

10 MS. IMPASTATO: I have no questions at this time.

11 BY DR. BEATON:

12 Q. Tom, my name is Bob Beaton.

13 A. How are you?

14 Q. And thank you for coming. And I just want to get clear, I  
15 understand you have a subcommittee and you're chair of it.

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Subcommittee -- and you're also a member of the board of  
18 directors?

19 A. Yes, I am.

20 Q. Can you -- and I appreciate the history that you gave me.  
21 Why were you appointed and why were you re-appointed? I mean,  
22 what do you bring in terms of your professional skills to the  
23 board of directors at Amtrak?

24 A. I was the mayor of Amtrak community.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. In 1995, we thought we were going to lose our service in  
2 Illinois. And we -- as the other duties as assigned when you get  
3 into positions, that was one thing. We've been -- when Amtrak was  
4 formed in 1971 and the long-distance network was preserved, our  
5 route from Quincy, Illinois to Chicago was preserved. So we're  
6 probably the first state-supported route in the system. We saved  
7 our depot. So Burlington Northern didn't tear it down. We leased  
8 the depot. So, and my town is a town of 20,000, has a state  
9 university of about 11,000 students, 250 miles from Chicago.  
10 There's about 40 percent of the students are from the Chicago  
11 Metro area or along the corridor. So it's our life blood. So  
12 this is -- you know, we battle for it and fight for it. So as a  
13 mayor, I mean, when those things happen, you go do what you have  
14 to do, that's -- you know.

15 So I got involved with that, and on a regional level and then  
16 on a state level and was fortunate enough to be appointed to an  
17 advisor -- mayor's advisory committee when John Robert Smith from  
18 Meridian, Mississippi was on the board. And stayed engaged after  
19 I got out of being mayor and, you know, my senator thought that he  
20 needed somebody from the western -- the Midwest. So I come from  
21 the advocacy side. I mean, we have such a wealth of knowledge on  
22 this board right now. We have great financial skills and all  
23 kinds of experience. I come from the -- you know, I know how much  
24 passenger rail means to communities and what it can do for  
25 communities. So I come from that area, so --

1 Q. Thank you.

2 A. You know, I -- not necessarily the business end, but the  
3 advocacy end, so --

4 Q. Okay, great. And did I understand you correctly, you were  
5 nominated by Senator Durbin, but were you confirmed by -- is this  
6 a presidential appointing?

7 A. Yes. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay, so --

9 A. So it came through, came through the Bush administration --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- and then was re-appointed in the Obama administration.

12 Q. Oh, okay. So, certainly, congratulations.

13 A. Thank you.

14 Q. I'm looking for your presidential appointing pin. I'm not  
15 seeing it.

16 A. No. No, I didn't know there were those.

17 Q. Oh, okay.

18 A. Yeah, no one ever -- I should have had one.

19 Q. You should have asked.

20 MR. HIPSKIND: Tom, it's in the mail. All right.

21 MR. CARPER: There are, huh?

22 BY DR. BEATON:

23 Q. Very good. Well, maybe they --

24 A. I'm just kidding.

25 Q. -- change it up across the departments that you go to.

1 A. Yup.

2 Q. So let me try to follow Mr. Hipskind and Mr. Frigo with their  
3 questions because we're only interested here in trying to  
4 understand how the super organization works here at Amtrak. And  
5 so we just wanted to try to be smart about the role and the level  
6 of influence that the board has on Amtrak operations. And, you  
7 know, your name was provided to us as chair of the safety and  
8 security committee. And of course, we're here investigating an  
9 accident, so it obviously connects with the safety side of things.  
10 So the more you can share with us how you influence Amtrak  
11 operations from the board level, and in particular, your committee  
12 level, it let's us get a little smarter. So that's what's  
13 motivating us here. As Dick has indicated or maybe Ryan, nobody's  
14 trying to put you into a corner.

15 A. Understood.

16 Q. We're trying to pick your brain, sir. That's all.

17 And so, from the point of view of chair of safety  
18 subcommittee, and I hear you that you're not a railroad  
19 professional and you're relying on these world class experts. How  
20 do you -- how do you, Tom, know that you're not being sold a bill  
21 of goods when some -- you know, the safety department gets all  
22 dressed up, they come on these fancy PowerPoints, there's a whole  
23 bunch of data that they present. You know that DJ is going to  
24 fold that into his brief to the overall board. But how do you --  
25 what criteria are you looking at in these data? Are you -- and I

1 don't want to put words in your mouth, but maybe you could address  
2 that issue?

3 A. Well, two things, two ways in the last 8 years. The federal  
4 rail admin sits on the Amtrak board as a representative of the  
5 Secretary of Transportation.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I mean, that's what Joe Boardman was when he switched from  
8 FRA administrator to the CEO of Amtrak. He was serving under Mary  
9 Peters. When Joe Szabo came on, he sat next to me at the board  
10 meeting. So I'm sitting next to a federal railroad administrator  
11 and a lifelong railroad advocate, a safety advocate, and looking  
12 at the end of the table at a former. So it's not a total reliance  
13 on those people; we're still doing our jobs, but we are -- there's  
14 a lot of of eyes scrubbing the numbers, and that's still the same.  
15 I still sit next to the federal rail administrator, and I'm going  
16 to be looking at the former CEO of the Norfolk Southern who ha, in  
17 the industry, a pretty good safety record.

18 So I think there's a lot of vetting going on of those  
19 numbers. I think my job is to keep quality staff focused and  
20 closer to them, and ensure that we can bring those things forward,  
21 their needs and desires forward and -- you know, I trust the  
22 staff, but I'm not so naïve to think that there doesn't need to be  
23 smart people looking over. But we have those people, that they're  
24 jobs and their reputations rely on them doing just that.

25 Q. Okay. All right. And I understand. I mean, I think what

1 you're hearing is, is that there's a high degree of  
2 professionalism and trust and confidence in one another and so if  
3 issues were to sort of stick out, that they would be caught and  
4 discussed and resolved among the professional team that's there.

5 Is that a fair -- I don't want to put words in your mouth,  
6 but I just want to sort of understand from my --

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. -- my point of view. Okay. And I appreciate the service in  
9 Southeast Asia. In the military, we have a very common phrase,  
10 "Trust But Verify," and so when are looking as chair of the safety  
11 committee, how do you sort of do the systematic review of the  
12 safety issues to verify these things, forward developing,  
13 financial recommendations or guidance or advocacy? I mean is  
14 there a system to the process that you use, or can you articulate  
15 that?

16 A. Well, I'm not sure I could call it a system. But I ask --  
17 you know, I ask questions of people that I know are going to give  
18 me a straight answer. And not that the people are presenting  
19 alone, but you're not going to go to the people who are presenting  
20 information and ask them to verify their information. I'm going  
21 to go to the CEO, I'm going to go to Joe Boardman, or I'm going to  
22 ask the federal rail administrator, the FRA staff that sits in the  
23 meetings, you know. So the scrubbing is constant, but if I sense  
24 that something doesn't sit right or I have a question, it's -- you  
25 know, I go to different people to ask it.



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Now do I have a system? No.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I don't have a checklist that I go down.

5 Q. So we -- Dick has told you, we're not going to get into the  
6 details of the Chester accident, but I do want to -- and I'm not  
7 going to get into the details of the Chester accident.

8 RICHARD HIPSKIND: You've said that twice now.

9 BY DR. BEATON:

10 Q. Oh, I've said that twice. All right. But I want to talk  
11 about system safety at Amtrak.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. It's been described as an evolving program, and we've seen  
14 some pretty remarkable things over the last 3 or 4 years. And  
15 there seems to be a plan to go forward, A build-out plan to make  
16 safety bigger and better.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. Can you give me -- and I'm not asking for any proprietary  
19 information or any budget numbers, but can you tell me from a  
20 fiscal point of view at the board of directors level, what sort of  
21 glide slope we're on? Are we ramping up -- "we" being you --

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Are you ramping up for financial support and growth in the  
24 system safety world at Amtrak or are we looking at flat budgets  
25 through the next administration? Or are we looking at budget cuts

1 on Friday when -- tomorrow when -- well, maybe the Congress has  
2 already kicked over our continuing resolution.

3 A. So are you asking, are we looking at potential budget cuts  
4 internally with --

5 Q. No, let me, let me --

6 A. -- or if Congress --

7 Q. No, I'm sorry. I'm asking of you, as Amtrak board of  
8 directors, are you preparing to build out system safety over the  
9 next, say, 5 years? Or does it seem like it's flat? Or maybe  
10 it's not even a priority on your radar. Can you give me some  
11 insight to -- how are you going to support the evolution system  
12 safety at Amtrak?

13 A. That's what I, that's -- was the question I asked of the  
14 chairman. And he assured me that safety was going to be a  
15 priority and it was going to continue to be a priority. And  
16 because when I asked, I was concerned about the budget --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- and I would have some decisions to make when it came to  
19 the budget, if that was not going to be the case. And I was  
20 assured that that's going to be case and -- so --

21 Q. So, and again, I'm not asking for details, but if I  
22 understand what you're telling me, that you've got a budget  
23 proposal now which has some numbers in it that caused you to go  
24 ask if the new CEO is going to continue to support these numbers?  
25 How -- I guess I'm missing some links here.

1 A. No, I simply asked with -- I simply asked that the programs  
2 that are -- the things that are being proposed, that are being  
3 talked about, are they going to be supported in the budget? Is it  
4 going to be a focus --

5 Q. Oh, I see. Okay.

6 A. -- and is, you know, the finances, are the finances, the will  
7 and the focus of the company to get done what we have planned and  
8 we need to do and we're mandated to do with safety. That was --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- you know --

11 Q. Thank you, Dick.

12 A. And I probably didn't say it just like that to the chairman,  
13 but that was the intent. That's the discussion we had, and I came  
14 away satisfied that that was going to be it. I have no reason to  
15 believe that wasn't.

16 Q. Okay, good. Thank you. And I had misunderstood that  
17 previously.

18 A. Yup.

19 Q. Thank you for clarifying that. And so -- again, thank you  
20 for your time. I enjoyed learning a little bit about what you do  
21 and who you are. Thank you.

22 BY MR. HIPSKIND:

23 Q. Tom, the wonderful thing about this party system and a lot of  
24 different people asking questions is, it gives me time to think  
25 about the things that you've said, and sometimes they sink in. So

1 before you used the word advocacy, I finally figured out that's  
2 important to you and that's why you're on the board, right?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. In a nutshell.

5 A. Absolutely.

6 Q. So that's great, but here's what I want to know.

7 A. All right.

8 Q. Are there other members of the board that have a specified  
9 function of outreach or advocacy? Are they as -- are they like-  
10 minded to you in terms of advocacy for their various subcommittees  
11 and for Amtrak as a corporation? Or is your, kind of, niche on  
12 advocacy, is that just solely rest with you and other members may  
13 have another niche that they look after? I just kind of want to  
14 understand that a little bit better.

15 A. Yeah, can you --

16 Q. What do I need to clarify?

17 A. Well, I think I heard you ask that -- and I'll put it in my  
18 words. I don't want to put words in your mouth.

19 Q. No, I --

20 A. Are people who chair, say, the audit finance committee, any  
21 less an advocate for that responsibility than I am? Is that what  
22 you, is that what you asked?

23 Q. That's fine. And the answer is?

24 A. Well, I can tell you that the people who are chairing  
25 committees in this company are -- they take it very seriously.

1 They spend a lot of time out, and so -- I think as far as advocacy  
2 goes, it's equal in the committee structure, absolutely.

3 Q. Okay. And then in terms of everything on the Amtrak board,  
4 interfacing with Congress and approvals of funding, the chairman  
5 of the board takes on that function?

6 A. The majority, yes. That's -- the majority of that, yeah,  
7 that's the function. I mean, I -- yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. You know.

10 Q. All right. And that's all I've got for right now. Let's ask  
11 -- let's see what Ryan wants to know, okay?

12 A. Okay.

13 MR. HIPSKIND: Ryan, anything else?

14 MR. FRIGO: No, I'm fresh out. Tom, thank you.

15 MR. CARPER: You're welcome.

16 MR. HIPSKIND: This will, this will go quick. Fran?

17 MR. WALKER: Nope. Nothing.

18 MR. HIPSKIND: Lou? Willie? Don?

19 MR. HILL: Thank you, Tom.

20 MR. HIPSKIND: Theresa?

21 MS. IMPASTATO: Nothing further.

22 DR. BEATON: Thank you, Tom.

23 MR. CARPER: You're welcome.

24 BY MR. HIPSKIND:

25 Q. Anything else that you would like to add that maybe you think

1 that we did not ask that would've add a little bit more visibility  
2 to us understanding the board better or your function, or your  
3 function as chair of the safety committee?

4 A. No. No, I don't believe so.

5 Q. All right. Let me ask you four questions. Is there anything  
6 else that you'd like to add or change about our conversation here  
7 today?

8 A. No, I don't think I misspoke --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- too terribly, I hope. I hope.

11 Q. And I hope we didn't misspeak either. Are there any  
12 questions that we should have asked, but did not?

13 A. No.

14 Q. All right. And do you have any suggestions -- well, I won't  
15 ask that about preventing a reoccurrence. Is there anyone else  
16 that we should interview?

17 A. No, I don't think so. No.

18 Q. All right. Hearing no other comments or suggestions, we will  
19 end the interview.

20 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ACCIDENT INVOLVING AMTRAK TRAIN  
#89 AND MOW EQUIPMENT AND  
EMPLOYEES NEAR CHESTER,  
PENNSYLVANIA ON APRIL 3, 2016  
Interview of Tom Carper

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FR007

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: September 29, 2016

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

---

Deborah A. Ross  
Transcriber