

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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In the Matter of: *

DERAILMENT AND SUBSEQUENT * Docket No.

COLLISION OF TWO METROLINK * DCA-05-MR-009 *

COMMUTER TRAINS IN *

GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA *

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Wednesday,
January 26, 2005

INTERVIEW OF: REGGIE TAPLIN

PRESENT: MIKE FLANAGAN

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. FLANAGAN: It is January 26, 2005, about
3 2:15 in the afternoon. Mike Flanagan conducting an
4 interview with Mr. Reggie Kaplin, who was the engineer
5 on Train number 100 this day. I am sorry, conductor on
6 Train number 100, my mistake.

7 And just for the record, as I told Mr.
8 Kaplin, I have your permission to tape record this
9 interview.

10 MR. KAPLIN: Yes, you do.

11 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Great. And also with
12 Mr. Kaplin is Mr. Poplar, who is his representative and
13 was requested by him to be here.

14 We will go ahead and start -- Let me start by
15 just asking you a real general question, and tell me
16 what happened.

17 MR. KAPLIN: We stopped in Burbank, and let
18 passengers off. And we proceeded to Glendale. And I
19 heard the air and we went to emergency, so I figured
20 there was something on the track -- It all happened so
21 fast, by the time we went into emergency, you know, we
22 came to a sudden (inaudible) and the lights went out
23 and it started, you know, doors popped open and I
24 started walking around, started checking people out,
25 going out, you know, seeing if anybody was hurt or

1 anything and it was like, it was chaos. (Inaudible) I
2 was checking on the passengers and (inaudible) was
3 going to happen like, you know --

4 MR. FLANAGAN: Which car were you on?

5 MR. KAPLIN: I was in the fifth car.

6 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Did you see the engineer
7 before this, just before this happened, did he come out
8 of the cab or --

9 MR. KAPLIN: No.

10 MR. FLANAGAN: No. And as far as the day and
11 the equipment, everything up until that point pretty
12 normal.

13 MR. KAPLIN: Yes.

14 MR. FLANAGAN: Any abnormalcies with equipment
15 or problems with equipment?

16 MR. KAPLIN: No, none.

17 MR. FLANAGAN: And you did (inaudible)

18 MR. KAPLIN: Yes.

19 MR. FLANAGAN: Were you on the upper or lower?

20 MR. KAPLIN: Lower.

21 MR. FLANAGAN: You were on the lower.

22 MR. KAPLIN: Yes.

23 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And in terms of getting
24 people off the car, were there any difficulties in
25 trying to do that or --

1 MR. KAPLIN: I don't, I mean, most (inaudible)

2 MR. FLANAGAN: Yesterday.

3 MR. KAPLIN: Yesterday. (Inaudible) from

4 MR. FLANAGAN: Getting away from the fire.

5 MR. KAPLIN: Yes.

6 MR. FLANAGAN: Was that pretty immediate, the
7 fire?

8 MR. KAPLIN: (Inaudible)

9 MR. FLANAGAN: And did you have any
10 interactions with the emergency response personnel when
11 they got there?

12 MR. KAPLIN: No.

13 MR. FLANAGAN: No.

14 MR. KAPLIN: No, just telling them to get
15 bandages and, bandages (Inaudible.)

16 MR. FLANAGAN: So did you talk with emergency
17 response personnel?

18 MR. KAPLIN: Yes, I was present, you know,
19 between the (Inaudible.)

20 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay.

21 MR. KAPLIN: And (Inaudible.) I can't see what
22 was going on, and you know, they started, putting water
23 on the fire.

24 MR. FLANAGAN: Any --

25 MR. KAPLIN: They were waiting for the

1 *emergency --*

2 *MR. FLANAGAN: Any kind of problems develop*
3 *that you could see from your standpoint with that*
4 *effort once this had happened?*

5 *MR. KAPLIN: No. Anything --*

6 *MR. FLANAGAN: So, if I have got it right, you*
7 *didn't actually see anything before this happened, you*
8 *were in the lower portion of the cab car where you*
9 *can't see out front.*

10 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

11 *MR. FLANAGAN: You just heard the air go.*

12 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

13 *MR. FLANAGAN: And then felt it --*

14 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

15 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. How long have you been a*
16 *conductor with -- How long have you been a conductor*
17 *and how long with this Metrolink?*

18 *MR. KAPLIN: Two years, two years and --*

19 *MR. FLANAGAN: Is this your regular job?*

20 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

21 *MR. FLANAGAN: What time did you go on duty?*

22 *MR. KAPLIN: Four, seventeen.*

23 *MR. FLANAGAN: Four, seventeen. Okay. And did*
24 *you work this same job the day before?*

25 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

1 MR. FLANAGAN: What time did you end going off
2 duty?

3 MR. KAPLIN: About 7:30.

4 MR. FLANAGAN: Seven--thirty. Long day.

5 I think that it is all I have got. Let me
6 ask around the room if any other parties have any
7 questions.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have got a few. I
9 have just got one, Reggie.

10 Just a normal day, would you explain
11 your typical normal day as far as --

12 MR. KAPLIN: Okay. I am on duty about 4:30, I
13 was changing -- I changed from one, getting to L.A.
14 about 6:30, at 6:50 we head back towards (Inaudible.)
15 We are in (Inaudible) for about 20 minutes, 25 minutes,
16 we head back to L.A. I leave the station, go to the
17 yard about 10 o'clock, I transport -- until three
18 o'clock. And then at 3:45, get the train together and
19 from the yard and go take it back to the station, and
20 then left the station at 4:33, if I were to take a
21 guess for it. We leave the airport at 5:05, and we go
22 back to -- get there about 5:30 -- we head for -- 7:32,
23 go home, go to bed, and get up and do it again.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

25 MR. FLANAGAN: Thank you.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Reggie, you said --
2 *(Inaudible.)* You start in the morning at Moorpark.

3 MR. KAPLIN: Yes.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And then you back at --

5 MR. KAPLIN: Yes.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. JACKSON: Reggie, Bill Jackson with the
8 FRA. When did you first see your engineer after the
9 incident?

10 MR. KAPLIN: I was helping passengers off the
11 train, and he came up and told me his back was hurt and
12 I tell him, do you want to lay down, he said, yes. So
13 the next time *(inaudible.)*

14 MR. JACKSON: Now, could you tell what was on
15 fire, I mean, was the fire started?

16 MR. KAPLIN: The cab car was like backed up
17 into the -- and stuff like that from diesel fuel and
18 diesel fuel -- and it was coming -- from the cab.

19 MR. JACKSON: Okay. And Reggie, just because
20 *(inaudible)* transporting cars on your off time, 10:45
21 to --

22 MR. KAPLIN: Three o'clock.

23 MR. JACKSON: To three o'clock.

24 MR. KAPLIN: -- 15 minutes.

25 MR. JACKSON: Okay. And obviously train 100

1 *was head car for --*

2 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

3 *MR. JACKSON: And the, did you feel the cab*
4 *car prior to Glendale, did you hear switch, apply the*
5 *emergency.*

6 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes.*

7 *MR. JACKSON: Did you feel the cab car sliding*
8 *or going sideways at all --*

9 *MR. KAPLIN: I mean, I looked out and seen the*
10 *crossing, you know, as we were in emergency, I didn't*
11 *hear the hiss, but I know he pulled -- but, evidently*
12 *when it hit the locomotive -- that was when the sudden*
13 *impact stopped, you know, that was the sudden stop, and*
14 *then I knew something -- Well, to answer the question,*
15 *yes, I did hear that we were derailling. Yes.*

16 *MR. JACKSON: Okay. And Engineer Gray's*
17 *statement was the engine is on fire, the cab*
18 *compartment of the train.*

19 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes. I remember -- because I*
20 *didn't see anything outside the train.*

21 *MR. JACKSON: Okay.*

22 *MR. KAPLIN: -- it was a little further, the*
23 *cab car.*

24 *MR. JACKSON: Okay. Thank you.*

25 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you say you looked*

1 out at the crossing after the emergency application was
2 made?

3 MR. KAPLIN: Yes, as we, right, yes, I just
4 knew that we were going to hit something and I was
5 looking out the window, you know, and I seen him going
6 across the crossing, but I didn't know what we hit
7 until we came to that sudden impact and I just, you
8 know, and there was, as we started coming to it, I felt
9 the gravel, the shaking of the, of the rear of the, I
10 could tell it was more serious than what --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

12 MR. FLANAGAN: One more question I thought of,
13 Reggie. Did you have any communications with the
14 dispatcher after this? Communications to any one at
15 Metrolink?

16 MR. KAPLIN: The engineer was, he was
17 emergency, emergency, emergency --

18 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. You heard that.

19 MR. KAPLIN: Yes, yes, I did, yes.

20 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay.

21 MR. KAPLIN: And people were, you know, all
22 kinds of -- you know, but --

23 MR. FLANAGAN: But, did you have any
24 communication afterwards with the dispatcher?

25 MR. KAPLIN: I started using my phone, yeah,

1 *but I never did get an answer.*

2 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay.*

3 *MR. KAPLIN: I would say --*

4 *MR. FLANAGAN: Did you called Metrolink?*

5 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes, I did.*

6 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And you couldn't get*
7 *through on the cell phone, is that what --*

8 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes, on the cell phone.*

9 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Okay.*

10 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Reggie (inaudible)*
11 *continue to have that problem on -- (Inaudible.)*

12 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And nothing over the*
13 *radio.*

14 *MR. KAPLIN: I wasn't, communicating, and, you*
15 *know, I just --*

16 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. The engineer was*
17 *communicating.*

18 *MR. KAPLIN: Yes. (Inaudible.)*

19 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Okay. I think that is it.*
20 *Anything you want to add?*

21 *MR. KAPLIN: No.*

22 *MR. FLANAGAN: No. Okay. Thanks. I will turn*
23 *this off.*

24 *(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)*