

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
IN PIEDMONT, ALABAMA
ON MARCH 9, 2023

Accident No.: RRD23LR008

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Interview of: DIETRICH BOYD, Locomotive Engineer
Norfolk Southern

Oxford, Alabama

Friday,
March 10, 2023

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. FRIGO: All right. So good morning. My name is Ryan
3 Frigo, I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety
4 Board. Today is March 10th and we are here in Oxford, Alabama
5 with Mr. Dietrich Boyd, who's an engineer with Norfolk Southern.
6 And this is in reference to NTSB accident number RRD23LR008, a
7 derailment on Norfolk Southern.

8 So before we begin, we're going to go around the room and
9 introduce ourselves. And for the benefit of the transcriptionist,
10 please spell your last name and identify the agency or company
11 that you are with. So I'll begin and pass it off to my left.
12 Once again my name is Ryan Frigo, F-r-i-g-o, NTSB.

13 MR. CAMPBELL: Matt Campbell, SMART Transportation Division,
14 C-a-m-p-b-e-l-l.

15 MR. FRANSEN: Ryan Fransen, F-r-a-n-s-e-n, BLET Safety Task
16 Force.

17 MR. SARVER: Robert Sarver, S-a-r-v, as in Victor, -e-r,
18 Norfolk Southern.

19 MR. STANLEY: Brian Stanley, S-t-a-n-l-e-y, Norfolk Southern.

20 MR. CHAMBLISS: Michael Chambliss, that's C-h-a-m-b-l-i-s-s,
21 FRA, Federal Railroad Administration.

22 MR. PITTS: Russell Pitts, P-i-t-t-s, SMART Local 622,
23 Chairman.

24 MR. BOYD: Dietrich Boyd, Norfolk Southern, locomotive
25 engineer, B-o-y-d.

1 MR. FRIGO: Mr. Boyd, could we go on a first name basis?

2 MR. BOYD: That's fine.

3 MR. FRIGO: Great. Dietrich, thank you. Dietrich, do you
4 wish to have a representative here with you today?

5 MR. BOYD: That's fine.

6 MR. FRIGO: Okay, great. And -- so I have your permission to
7 record our conversation here today?

8 MR. BOYD: Yes.

9 MR. FRIGO: Dietrich, thank you.

10 INTERVIEW OF DIETRICH BOYD

11 BY MR. FRIGO:

12 Q. All right. So how long have you been an engineer?

13 A. I think I qualified three years ago, so I want to say 2019
14 maybe.

15 Q. 2019, okay. Is this your first job on the railroad?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. It is, okay. All right. So started as an engineer?

18 A. Started as a conductor.

19 Q. Started as a conductor, okay. So when was that?

20 A. 2000.

21 Q. In 2000. Okay, so you were --

22 A. 2010.

23 Q. 2010, okay.

24 A. Sorry.

25 Q. All right. No, I was going to say you're looking good.

- 1 A. I'm sorry, not 2000.
- 2 Q. So you have to read the previous -- read the transcript with
3 the conductor and you can hear our conversation about age and what
4 happens to us. So 2010 is --
- 5 A. 2010 is when I started on the railroad, yes.
- 6 Q. Okay. You worked that whole time from 2010 to 2019 --
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. -- conductor? Okay. Thank you, Dietrich, for that
9 clarification. Where is your home terminal?
- 10 A. In Birmingham.
- 11 Q. Birmingham. In Birmingham the whole time since 2010?
- 12 A. Yes, that's right.
- 13 Q. Okay. And it's my understanding that this job, the other --
14 that -- the accident job -- that originated out of Atlanta?
- 15 A. Yes, the 245. It originates out of Atlanta.
- 16 Q. All right. And so when did you -- that was on the -- when
17 did you report on duty in Atlanta?
- 18 A. I think it was 10:30 on the, I think, the 9th.
- 19 Q. 8th.
- 20 A. It was the 8th? Yes, that's the --
- 21 Q. Yes.
- 22 A. 10:30 p.m. on the 8th.
- 23 Q. On the 8th. Is that like a regular assignment for you?
- 24 A. No.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So -- you mean like full term? So it's like a first in,
2 first out type of deal. So there's no assigned train to schedule
3 it or --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- whatever.

6 Q. Okay. But you -- I mean, you know that territory?

7 A. Yes, that's right.

8 Q. You're qualified on that territory?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And you were on that territory as a conductor also, right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So is it safe to say you've been running on that territory as
13 either a conductor or an engineer since 2010?

14 A. Yes, for my whole career.

15 Q. Okay. Do you -- can you tell me about before 10:30 p.m. on
16 the 8th when you worked prior to that? Do you remember? And it's
17 okay if you don't know. I'm going to have the railroad send me,
18 you know, your work history and everything so I'll have all that.
19 But do you --

20 A. I can't remember what train I actually came over on.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But -- and I don't remember what time I got off.

23 Q. That's fine. Do you remember approximately when you got on?
24 Morning, afternoon?

25 A. I can't remember.

1 (Crosstalk)

2 A. -- stuff wrote down.

3 Q. You know what? Let's see. I have a way to get you to
4 remember. Let's see if it works. So if you're at the yard at
5 10:30, how do you get to the yard?

6 A. How did I get to -- for the 245?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. From the hotel?

9 Q. From the hotel.

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Okay. How long do you think you were at that hotel?

12 A. Maybe 15 hours.

13 Q. Okay. So you were there for a while?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay, that's good.

16 A. It's pretty close to 15 hours, I think.

17 Q. You answered my question. That's perfect. Okay, so about 15
18 hours at that hotel. All right. And then were you -- you were
19 coming off a previous job before you went to the hotel?

20 A. Yes, correct.

21 Q. Okay. And that was from Birmingham --

22 A. To Atlanta.

23 Q. To Atlanta. Okay, good. I got it. During those 15 hours
24 you were at the hotel, what are you doing?

25 A. Sleep, mostly.

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. Pretty normal for you at the hotel?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. Quiet?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. You're able to get some rest?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Okay. Any other routines while you're at the hotel?
- 10 A. No.
- 11 Q. Okay. Working out or anything at the hotel?
- 12 A. No, I haven't started running yet, so.
- 13 Q. Okay. All right. So you were just taking it easy?
- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 Q. All right. So on 10:30 p.m. on the 8th, you're in Atlanta,
- 16 how are you feeling?
- 17 A. Felt pretty good.
- 18 Q. Okay. Pretty normal?
- 19 A. Pretty normal, yes.
- 20 Q. Okay. What happens when you get to the yard?
- 21 A. So we usually call before we go on duty. The train has to
- 22 end in the yard to figure out, you know, wherever we're going to
- 23 be located, get some engine numbers. We just recently went
- 24 paperless. So we usually log into the MTR (ph.), looking at our
- 25 bulletins, and sometimes they have the train kind of

1 (indiscernible) because the train's pre-built for us and we just
2 have to use a couple of (indiscernible). But sometimes it's in
3 the MTR, which is a new device that we have. Sometimes not. In
4 fact, that day -- this day it was and when we had our bulletins.

5 So we get our main engine numbers from the main, he tells us
6 where they're located. We take a taxi to the location; we get on
7 the engine, and I usually go through the engine and make sure that
8 the ones that we're going to run power are settled correctly.
9 After that, we talk to the main tower again. We would get our
10 route confirmed, we'll get (indiscernible) and get everything
11 ready to go.

12 Q. Everything normal to you in that process the other night?

13 A. Well, the only thing that was abnormal was we had two UP
14 engines, I can't remember the -- and they were supposed to be in
15 power. And our MTR tells us -- it also tells us -- gives us an
16 HPTC (ph.), so which -- what power to actually run with this
17 particular train. And I got to my second power engine, and it was
18 tagged out inoperative, dynamics.

19 So from that point, I called the engine terminal to tell them
20 that I had an engine that was in power with no dynamic, which then
21 left us with one dynamic brake. And he finally got a -- notified
22 we had a (indiscernible), and he looked at it and then he told me
23 over 9800 feet, 7800 tons. And that was a little bit too
24 excessive for not having two dynamic brakes, so I called the
25 engine terminal and asked him about the dynamic brakes. And he

1 didn't give me another one, so I ended up stopping everything,
2 call the main tower and explaining this whole spiel to him. He
3 said he would get in touch with the engine tower and -- I want to
4 say he's powerless -- and he'd get back with me. So he gave me
5 permission to shut my second UP engine level down. I can't
6 remember the number on it, and I'm able to turn on my third
7 engine, which was -- and told us where, which was a 4408. Don't
8 quote me on the number. It was an NS engine.

9 So we were able to run the first and the third full power and
10 that was the only thing that was unusual, because usually when we
11 get to engines, everything is pretty much set up and I'm basically
12 just second-checking and that was the only thing that stood out to
13 me about my power that day.

14 Q. And just help me understand. Is it the territory that you
15 were going to run on, and the length and the gross tonnage, is
16 that what led you to want to make sure that you had two --

17 A. Yes, two working dynamics. Yes, because we try to use air
18 more than we use dynamic. But the territory between Birmingham
19 and Alabama is pretty rough, so to be able to control everything,
20 we'd like to have both enough of dynamic and good air. Not just
21 one.

22 Q. And can you help me understand what rough means?

23 A. It's -- I think you can technically call it undue willing
24 territory.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And we have, like, a bunch of (indiscernible) here. So it's
2 kind of -- it's -- you have to know the territory extensively to
3 be able to run the train over there, to keep it together and make
4 it back.

5 Q. So you knowing that territory, your conductor knowing that
6 territory, you were proactive in making sure --

7 A. Making sure we had everything that we need before leaving.

8 Q. Okay, excellent. Thank you for helping me understand that.
9 So you work on solving that problem in the yard.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And then what?

12 A. My (indiscernible) around a two-hour train, with wind it'd be
13 maybe an hour, an hour and a half, something like that. They were
14 still working the head end, meaning, the car department was still
15 working the head end above the train. Once he finished, he gave
16 us a route to the train. We called the -- then he came over a few
17 seconds later and he said utility was going to come help us, which
18 is the utility in the yard. And the utility had to set out a bad
19 order car. I think it was 12 times that he maybe -- he sent that
20 car out to another track, coupled back up to the train.

21 (Crosstalk)

22 A. Well, coupled back up to the train and in the yard what they
23 usually do then, they don't hang the EOT in the yard per se. We
24 usually pull out so it'll be closer to him and then we can go back
25 to start working --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- for, I guess, for space. And utility started to hang our
3 EOT. We had (indiscernible) linking the EOT. They called us,
4 being 9800 feet and there was a couple of bridges in between where
5 he was and where the head end was. So we had maybe an hour, hour
6 and a half of delay time just trying to work the EOT. We
7 eventually end up pulling to a place called Jackmat (ph.), which
8 is a control point, so he can get the rear to a place outside of
9 the bridges where we can get a good signal. And we linked the EOT
10 up and from that we took off heading to Birmingham.

11 Q. And I mean there's -- being that it took a while to get the
12 EOT hooked up, I mean, does that put any pressure on you to do
13 anything up to move things along a little swifter or --

14 A. No, it's something that we -- when we're that long, we
15 usually anticipate problems with the EOT going in and out,
16 problems with linking it up. So they usually try to link the EOT
17 when they set up the engines. So the guys that set up the engines
18 will go ahead and pre-link the EOT so we won't have that problem,
19 and that moves their thing along swiftly. But sometimes, it
20 doesn't work out that way and we end up having to link the EOT to
21 the VOT (ph.) test and all that, but it was no different in
22 (indiscernible).

23 Q. I'm glad you said that, because in, you know, what you're
24 describing, even though you were having to deal with a few issues
25 such as the, you know, that second locomotive not having the

1 dynamic brakes and having to, you know, getting with the powered
2 escort, whoever was, you know --

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. -- going to give permission to, you know --

5 A. Use another --

6 Q. Yes. So you're dealing with that issue, dealing with the
7 EOT. These aren't things that would throw you off?

8 A. No.

9 Q. This is just normal --

10 A. Just normal, yes.

11 Q. -- this is normal and you --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- normal troubleshooting to --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- get ready to get on the road.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. All right. So you're finally on your way. Okay.
18 How's everything running for you?

19 A. So the first 15 to 20 miles of running any train that I get
20 on, I've got a feel for it, to see how it's rolling, how it's
21 reacting when I do different things and then how -- I would know
22 how to run when we get a little further. So I can take about 10
23 miles of just running it, and doing -- trying different things to
24 see how it reacts to what I do. I did that and I kind of figured
25 out to myself, and it's not a scientific, like -- just, one, it's

1 a slow roller.

2 So I categorize trains into two different things, like, when
3 I get on them and I run them. This one would either run faster
4 than this one. This one would slow down faster than this one, so
5 I kind of figured this one to be one that I didn't want to pull
6 on, meaning I didn't want to put a lot of stress on it, be a
7 little aggressive on the throttle or anything like that. So
8 there's one that I was just taking it easy, keep it together. We
9 might have been a little slower, but we will be together all the
10 way.

11 Q. So that's in your experience?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. And I'm assuming you're -- that first 10, 15 miles
14 you're getting prepared and you're understanding that equipment so
15 that when you get into the territory further towards Birmingham
16 that you described earlier that is rough with the hills and
17 required some skills. So you're just getting -- you want to know
18 what you're dealing with?

19 A. Exactly.

20 Q. Okay. All right. I appreciate that and I think that's
21 important for, you know, for us to understand. So how'd you find
22 out that something was going on on this, you know, because it
23 sounds like, you know, you had a slow roller --

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. -- but nothing was really out of the ordinary.

1 A. Yes, nothing out of the ordinary.

2 Q. Radios were working.

3 A. Everything was fine.

4 Q. You're passing detectors and you're -- everything was
5 working, right?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Nothing --

8 A. Nothing out of the ordinary.

9 Q. Just a beautiful morning in the office on the slow roller.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. So when did you -- Dietrich, when -- I mean, when did
12 it flip upside down? When did things started going the other way?

13 A. So when the train hit Evansville (ph.), (indiscernible), we
14 met the train that was there. We came out the side and doing 30.
15 Made it over to Owens (ph.), everything was fine. Rolled down
16 into Cleburne (ph.), everything was fine. Came over the hill and
17 getting ready to Iron City. Fine. I think maybe once I pulled it
18 over, I was maintaining like a 30-mile an hour. I got maybe two,
19 three dynamics, probably -- maybe half the train over speed. I
20 can see the accelerometer telling me that we're gaining speed.

21 So as it's telling me I'm gaining speed, I'm increasing
22 dynamic, increasing dynamic. And usually when I get in a curve --
23 I can't quote you the mile post -- there's an object there that I
24 look for outside. It's a school bus. When I get to that point,
25 pretty much on a 10,000-foot train, I know the rear is about to

1 get ready to come over. So that's the point when I usually go
2 full dynamic. Everything was fine, it handled fine.

3 We -- I got full dynamic and then the weight of the rear came
4 over and gave us a little bump, pushed the speed up, 27, 30, 31,
5 32. I grabbed the minimum service to do a split reduction. So I
6 grabbed minimum service to do a split reduction and sometimes good
7 minimum service to do this split reduction. We started decreasing
8 speed, like the minimum reduction hadn't even started exhausting
9 it, and I was, like -- I kind of looked over at the conductor,
10 like, I don't know what's going on, you know. And then finally it
11 came to a stop. So I'm seeing that we're going to have to
12 (indiscernible) and engages, you know. The EOT got
13 (indiscernible). I stayed up flow and I had a flow long day of
14 about 38 and it would go from 38 to 41. That was my flow long day
15 and it's still reading that.

16 And then the conductor looked over and actually said are we
17 in emergency? (indiscernible). And he didn't even get the end of
18 that out of his mouth when the EOT popped up in emergency. I said
19 guess we are in emergency. Take the handle, pushed it to
20 emergency. Telling up the dispatcher and said it was an
21 emergency. He turns around and looked and he said
22 (indiscernible). I'm, like, are you serious. That's when I
23 looked back and see the dust cloud.

24 So I finally get dispatch on the radio, and I tell her --
25 tell him that we're at the 721 at 3. An emergency conductor just

1 went down to one of the cars on the ground. He asked were we all
2 right. Me and him were fine. The conductor got stuff on him, he
3 said he was going to go out there, I think, to and talk to him
4 about the cloud. I was, like, I don't know if I want to go out
5 there in the cloud. But he went and coupled the train up, knew
6 what was in the first six cars. He said it's cement, he'll be
7 okay. He's just going to go out there and try to get a rough
8 estimate.

9 So we went through that spill, he went out there getting car
10 numbers. And I had a -- my MTR, so I was looking for anything
11 dangerous in there (indiscernible). It was all right. We relayed
12 everything. He got to point where he couldn't go in farther. So
13 he gave a rough estimate to me, I relayed it to the dispatcher and
14 I told him to come back to the head end. We turned into the head
15 end and waited on somebody else to get there. Dispatcher told us
16 that track ops will come out there, they're going to be first on
17 the scene. (indiscernible) and take it to rear so we can look at
18 the rear of the train.

19 It took a while, but he finally got back down there and he
20 looked at it. That's when we found out that there were cars on
21 the rear as well. We did the same thing, trying to get the car
22 numbers to try to run them down to relay them to somebody else.
23 We looked for hazmat, he found them. They were all right and I
24 think he asked well, anything leaking. It didn't look like
25 anything was leaking. We told him no, and he eventually got into

1 the head end. By that time, more people had come on scene, was up
2 toward the head end, walking the front of the derailment and that
3 was it.

4 Q. Okay. And I apologize if I asked this already, but I just --
5 I know I did, but I want to hit on it one more time. Prior to
6 this derailment, I want to describe it how you described it. Was
7 this slow roller --

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. -- was it running, like, the other slow rollers that you've
10 run in the past?

11 A. Nothing was different. So I hardly ever looked at the tanks
12 before that, because when I was trained, I was trained to run no
13 matter what I feel in the train. If I try to run it by the
14 profile, you know, you'll miss something. So this slow roller
15 worked -- ran like any other slow rollers, and I'm using that term
16 as just -- this is my term.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. People will say well, this train don't want to roll. So, you
19 know, you got two options. You either try to make it roll or you
20 can just let it do what you -- so we -- I usually try to let them
21 do what they want to do, because if we'll be aggressive with them,
22 you have a chance of snapping the muffler or under wheel
23 (indiscernible), or -- so that's why I'm using that term, like,
24 slow roller.

25 Q. I like that term.

1 A. There was a lot of -- it felt like it was heavier on the rear
2 than it was in the head end.

3 Q. And -- but in your experience in dealing with this type of
4 feeling, this type of train --

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. -- there was nothing that stood out to you?

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. Okay. That's --

9 A. I say it's just something that -- I don't like to say it,
10 it's not indicative of any other engineer. Every train's
11 different. It's just this is what I know works for me in this
12 territory. So if I have one at -- and I, like, it don't want to
13 roll, I don't force it to, you know. I just let it come on over,
14 you know. You can have some trains that will roll just as fast,
15 and the ones who can't stop as fast as other ones.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. You've got to run -- you've got to make the adjustments as
18 the engineer to run for that cause you got speeding, you got
19 carriage and stuff like that. So you need to know will it roll or
20 will it not or will it slow down when you need it to slow down.
21 That was the purpose of me getting the two dynamics from the
22 (indiscernible) because I can use the dynamics and control my
23 speed and I'm -- when I start using air in unruly territory, make
24 one mistake and come out of the throttle too fast. I got air back
25 here and I got power up here, they don't mix, you know. You know,

1 I'll rip the train apart. So usually when I have to slow roll, I
2 try to just take it easy so I don't have to do any of those things
3 that will be out of the ordinary for me.

4 Q. Well, I think that's a really good explanation. How is
5 everything in the cab with the conductor? You worked with him --

6 A. Yes --

7 Q. -- previously?

8 A. -- fine. He's fine. Previous conductor, we've had a bunch
9 of new people on this trip. I work on (indiscernible), so I
10 worked with other guys. So this trip I had a senior conductor
11 that took the
12 -- lots of stress off of me, you know. So everything was fine. I
13 think we was having a conversation about something, I can't
14 remember, but, you know, both of us --

15 Q. It was a good working environment.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Conductor was engaged?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Do you have PTC on?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Everything was --

22 A. Fine with PTC.

23 Q. Okay. Trip optimized everything?

24 A. No, we had no -- we weren't firing engines. So -- excuse me
25 -- the firing engines is not equipped with -- well, the UP firing

1 engines are not equipped with -- and it will be trip optimized on
2 that. The auto throttle -- excuse me if it's all wrong -- it's
3 indicative only to NS, so we didn't have either one. It was
4 manual.

5 Q. Right. So it was you?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. Dietrich, thank you. I don't have any further
8 questions at this time. I'm going to pass it off here.

9 BY MR. CAMPBELL:

10 Q. Okay. Matt Campbell with SMART Transportation Division.
11 Just a couple of questions. The night before when you went from,
12 I guess, Birmingham to Atlanta.

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. Before Atlanta, were you with Conductor Lott on that trip?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. So you have the same amount of rest?

17 A. Yes, same amount of rest.

18 Q. And what's the full train number of the train you were on?

19 The --

20 A. 245A109.

21 Q. 245A109?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 0-8.

23 MR. BOYD: 0-8?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Um-hum.

25 BY MR. CAMPBELL:

1 A. I'm trying to remember now. I remember the first part.

2 Q. Then you had a job briefing, I guess, to go over the train.

3 I mean, is that --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. The train bulletins or train consys (ph.) or what --

6 A. Yes, we usually do that. We don't call it formal as it is,
7 but everything (indiscernible). We have pretty good conversations
8 about it. You know, I mean, I know they say job briefings, but we
9 just had a conversation about the train, you know. What kind of
10 (indiscernible) we got. But the problem that I had with the
11 engines, you know, all these things consist how long we are --
12 that we -- every trip I have we have the same conversation. That
13 way both of us are on the same page. With any move, we have to do
14 so. We just don't --

15 Q. Where is that normally done? Is that normally done on the
16 locomotives or in the crew room or?

17 A. So it starts (indiscernible). Now that we're paperless, we
18 don't have to wait until we get the paperwork. We can actually
19 just pull it up right then and we might just kind of say hey,
20 we're only going to be 9800 feet, 7700 tons, just regular and
21 pass. And, you know, I concur, I get what he's saying.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. It's not as formal.

24 Q. Got you. I guess as far as the makeup of the train once you
25 look that up, did you have any concerns about the way the train

1 was built? Did you notice before you started feeling it out once
2 you were running?

3 A. Yes. So usually, if I look at the tonnage profile or
4 something like that, it's because the conductor (indiscernible)
5 because I'd just rather go by how I feel versus how it's built,
6 because at the end of the day I still got to get it across the
7 rail, you know. If it's built bad, I say I can move it across the
8 rail. So I got -- I usually go by how I feel.

9 Now sometime throughout the trip, I would look at the
10 (indiscernible). I would look at a tonnage profile just in
11 passing, but it's not like a thing that I would focus on.

12 Q. And so the train was around 9800 feet? Is that --

13 A. Yes, I think I typed in 9850 on the -- I mean, on the link
14 counter.

15 Q. Is that link, that -- around 9800 feet, like the kind of
16 normal for train link for trains in that pull or is that long or
17 short or --

18 A. So our pools don't have certain trains. (Indiscernible) is
19 what you get, and 9800 feet has been the norm.

20 Q. Common?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. That's all I have right now. Thank you.

23 MR. FRANSEN: I don't have any questions that Ryan and Matt
24 didn't ask, so I'll pass to the --

25 MR. SARVER: Robert Sarver, no questions at this time.

1 MR. STANLEY: Brian Stanley, no questions for Dietrich.
2 Thank you for being here and a really good account for what --
3 your trip.

4 BY MR. CHAMBLISS:

5 Q. Michael Chambliss, FRA. Let's start with what is the track
6 speed that you were on?

7 A. 35.

8 Q. 35. Is that all the way to Birmingham?

9 A. No -- yes. For the trip?

10 Q. Yes.

11 A. We have over, I want to say, 120 different speed changes. It
12 can range in speeds from 50 to 30, depending on which trains --
13 train you were on. So if you were on the freight train, we have
14 current speeds that are 35 (indiscernible) and passenger a little
15 bit higher than that. I'm not that familiar with --

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. -- passenger trains. We have freight trains that have the
18 lower speed. So we have two different speeds for two different
19 kind of trains that we actually run on and then we have over, I
20 want to say, about 100, 120 different speed trains in between
21 Atlanta and Birmingham.

22 Q. Okay. This particular train, the one you was on --

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. -- that still applies to what you just said?

25 A. Yes, it applies to what I just said.

1 Q. Okay. What is the speed when you're going on curves in this
2 particular (indiscernible).

3 A. So for clarification, you're asking what's the speed --

4 Q. What is track speed from -- let's go back. What is the track
5 speed from Atlanta to Birmingham?

6 A. For this particular train?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. So you're asking, just for clarification --

9 (Crosstalk)

10 A. -- for this train?

11 Q. For this train.

12 A. Yes. So my maximum speed would be 50 miles an hour.

13 Q. Yes. How about when you're going on a curve?

14 A. So it depends on which curve you're talking about. We have
15 curves that are 35 for everybody and then we also have curves that
16 are 30 for freight and 30 for -- 35 for any mode.

17 Q. This train. We're talking about -- everything I'm going to
18 ask you will pertain to your route, this train and what your
19 bulletin said, all that, (indiscernible). It's the curvature
20 right there. Starting right there, right?

21 A. 271?

22 Q. It's either 271 or 171. Don't quote me. Right there, right
23 at the (indiscernible).

24 A. It's 35.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 721.

1 MR. CHAMBLISS: 721.

2 (Crosstalk)

3 MR. CHAMBLISS: Yes.

4 BY MR. CHAMBLISS:

5 Q. So it's 35?

6 A. 35, yes.

7 Q. All right. At what speed -- you took it at 35?

8 A. No, I took it at 30.

9 Q. Took it at 30. At the point of derailment -- which view was
10 run at that time?

11 A. Like I said he got hit, so it was 30, 31. It got up to 32
12 and then it started coming down. So 31 to 32.

13 Q. What was your last signal?

14 A. My last signal was an in immediate signal; in Clayborn it was
15 clear.

16 Q. Clear. Could you see the next signal?

17 A. From that -- from this signal?

18 Q. Yes --

19 A. From the signal I cleared on --

20 Q. You had a clear.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. So you run on clear.

23 A. I run on clear.

24 Q. Visually there was no exception or anything so I'm asking
25 could you see the next signal?

- 1 A. No. We have a lot of curves --
- 2 Q. Um-hum.
- 3 A. -- and hills, so we only actually see one signal at a time if
4 you're saying visually.
- 5 Q. Would you -- let me rephrase that -- would you approach
6 another signal?
- 7 A. Yes, I was approaching another signal.
- 8 Q. But you couldn't see it at that time?
- 9 A. I'm confused.
- 10 Q. I guess what I'm asking you is you had the clear. Your last
11 signal was clear --
- 12 A. That's right.
- 13 Q. -- your last signal was clear, so that's what you were
14 running on.
- 15 A. Um-hum.
- 16 Q. You was approaching another signal. Could you visually see
17 that signal?
- 18 A. From the clear that I just passed? No, you can't.
- 19 Q. No, I understand. You was running on clear?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. You was running, I guess, track speed at that point and you
22 had that clear.
- 23 A. Um-hum.
- 24 Q. Once you were getting there, at some point you were going to
25 approach another signal.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Did you ever come in visual of that other signal prior to
3 your (indiscernible)?

4 A. Yes, that other signal, the 721 at 5, yes. It came clear
5 when we stopped. So we stopped maybe 15 cars away from that next
6 signal, which was also a clear.

7 Q. Oh, so -- okay. So you were running on clear all the way.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. At some point, are you all required, especially coming around
10 curves -- and I understand the darkness or whatever.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. For your period (indiscernible) make sure that train's still
13 in contact and intact?

14 A. Would I look back? Yes, I always look back at the rear of my
15 train. But that curve was -- it would be a right-hand curve, so
16 the rear of the train would have been out of my visual.

17 Q. Okay. Let me see. And you say you've been doing this for 13
18 years?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And the first nine years, you were a conductor?

21 A. The first nine years, I was a conductor.

22 Q. All right. Could you feel as -- when the derailment
23 occurred, could you feel or have any idea where did it occur or
24 just -- I understand you said it was an abrupt stop pretty much.
25 Did you have any idea where the derailment began or anything like

1 that?

2 A. No. Actually, when we stopped, if you would have looked
3 around, we wouldn't have known (indiscernible) and try to be in
4 emergency, so I don't have any idea where it started or --

5 Q. Yes. The reason I ask that question, most engineers that
6 ever been in a derailment -- and I don't think I've -- the rear is
7 -- it's not right when the rear or somewhere --

8 A. No, that's it. All the gauges were -- I looked at all the
9 gauges and they were fine. So, the only way I can tell what's
10 going on in the rear is EOT, my flow and stuff like that. So
11 everything for those couple of seconds when we stopped were fine.

12 Q. Okay. How many cars did you have on the train?

13 A. I want to say it was 108 maybe.

14 Q. Okay. And you didn't -- and plus those two that tow the
15 locomotive?

16 A. The two tow locomotives? Did I count those into the train?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. I usually count those with the power, you know, so I count --
19 my 108 is freight cars or whatever (indiscernible).

20 Q. Unless you went in emergency, did you and the engineer have a
21 job briefing?

22 A. You mean the conductor?

23 Q. Yes, the conductor, excuse me.

24 A. Yes, we had the job briefing, yes.

25 Q. And pretty much you told him to contact dispatch and told

1 them everything that's going on?

2 A. That's right.

3 Q. And what happened after that?

4 A. After --

5 Q. After you called up to dispatch, what did the dispatcher tell
6 you?

7 A. The dispatcher asked were we all right and I think he said he
8 would get back with me. He was going to get, you know, I guess he
9 was going to inform -- I don't know. I'm just speculating to
10 where he was going with that. Once we told him we was on the
11 ground, he said okay and asked were we okay. And like I said, me
12 and the conductor then had a job briefing and he was going to go
13 back there and see what the dispatcher said, got the milepost we
14 were at and said he'll be right back with us.

15 Q. And once you all did that job briefing in Atlanta, were there
16 any restrictions or anything on your bulletin?

17 A. So we go through the consys to see if we have any strict --
18 he would go through the consys and see if we had any restricted
19 cars. We talked about slow waters and we didn't have any.

20 Q. Okay. You were on an incline or decline when that derailment
21 happened?

22 A. Decline.

23 Q. Were you braking?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Which one? How?

1 A. I was using the primary brake, which was dynamic, and --
2 unless we get to (indiscernible) to the secondary, which would
3 be --

4 Q. Okay. All right. That's all I have for right now. I'll
5 probably have questions on the second round if you have a second
6 round.

7 BY MR. FRIGO:

8 Q. Dietrich, how you're doing?

9 A. All right.

10 Q. Okay, good. Ryan Frigo again with NTSB. All right. I'm
11 going to ask a few other questions here. I only have a few left.
12 Do you wear prescription glasses or anything?

13 A. No.

14 Q. No, okay. Any medication?

15 A. No.

16 Q. How would you categorize your health?

17 A. I think I'm pretty healthy.

18 Q. So at the time of this derailment, how were you feeling?

19 A. Fine.

20 Q. Normal?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. We talked about you were at the hotel for about 15 hours. So
23 you felt rested?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. Looking forward to getting back to Birmingham?

1 A. That's right.

2 Q. Okay. In general when you're out running on the territory,
3 are you ops tested frequently, like do you see managers out there
4 checking you?

5 A. I think they monitor your tapes. And I worked in
6 (indiscernible), so I work a little bit where -- so I come in
7 contact with trainmasters all the time. You know, some -- you
8 know, get up, (indiscernible) in, some actually ride with us. So,
9 yes, I pretty much -- yes.

10 Q. So you interact with officials from time to time?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Do you remember when your last, like, ride check was?

13 A. I don't remember the day. I think I had two recently. One
14 was a virtual ride and the other one was with a trainmaster, Mike
15 McGowan (ph.).

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I can't tell you the exact dates on that. I have to look at
18 my license --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 Q. Within the last few months?

21 A. Few months, yes, it's been the past few months.

22 Q. Okay. All right. I don't have any further questions.

23 MR. CAMPBELL: I don't have any questions.

24 MR. FRANSEN: Brian Fransen, BLET.

25 BY MR. FRANSEN:

1 Q. Dietrich, just -- more than anything, just as a DYE (ph.)
2 employee, the maximum speed was 60 between Atlanta and -- what
3 made you 50?

4 A. So this train is originated as a intermobile (ph.) train.
5 But I guess to move tonnage, they would move freight cars with it.
6 So we mix freight in with the intermobile. The most restrictive
7 speed you would have will be the freight cars, which would make us
8 50.

9 Q. Okay, that explains it. All right. Thank you. No other
10 questions.

11 MR. SARVER: Robert Sarver, no further questions. Thank you,
12 Dietrich.

13 MR. STANLEY: Brian Stanley, no questions.

14 MR. CHAMBLISS: Michael Chambliss.

15 BY MR. CHAMBLISS:

16 Q. Just one last -- just for curiosity. You said you had to
17 start by running. Did you never had a break in service in
18 anything or as -- I'm just asking. You might have (indiscernible)
19 start by running again.

20 A. Oh, it's not -- yes, I called it -- started from going to the
21 gym. I got out of shape, then I started back in.

22 Q. Yes, I just figured, you know, you're just coming back to
23 work and you know, you're just saying you had a time --

24 A. No, everything was in the pandemic. They closed down the
25 gym, I was scared to go anywhere and I just haven't started back

1 yet.

2 Q. All right, that's all I have.

3 A. So I haven't gone back.

4 Q. That's all right.

5 BY MR. FRIGO:

6 Q. We all have. Okay. Dietrich, from -- I'd like to close
7 these out kind of with the same question all the time, the same
8 few questions. And, again, just from your perspective, right,
9 because I'm sure you've been thinking about this since yesterday.
10 What -- I mean, can you think of anything that could have
11 prevented this accident? From your perspective, just what you've
12 been thinking of?

13 A. I don't know. I've been wracking my head about it last
14 night, wondering what -- so I don't know what caused it to know
15 how to -- what my perspective on fixing it. So it's like it's
16 perplexing me to think that happened, and it was just a moment
17 that -- I don't really know what the fix is.

18 Q. That's a fair answer. Is there anything that we should have
19 asked you this morning that we did not?

20 A. I can't think of anything.

21 Q. Okay. Dietrich, thank you so much.

22 MR. FRIGO: And with that, we will go off the record.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
 IN PIEDMONT, ALABAMA
 ON MARCH 9, 2023
 Interview of Dietrich Boyd

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD23LR008

PLACE: Oxford, Alabama

DATE: March 10, 2023

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.



Maria Socorro R. Abellar
Transcriber