

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

COAL TRAIN DERAILMENT & BRIDGE \*

COLLAPSE NEAR PUEBLO, COLORADO \* Accident No.: RRD24FR001

ON OCTOBER 15, 2023 \*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: GREG LEONARD, Roadmaster  
BNSF

Hampton Inn and Suites  
Pueblo, Colorado

Tuesday,  
October 17, 2023

## APPEARANCES:

TROY LLOYD, Track Group Chairman  
National Transportation Safety Board

RICHARD SKOLNEKOVICH, Rail Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

DARIUS MACK, Rail Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

GENE THOMPSON, Accident Investigation Team  
BMWED

MATTHEW HAMMOND, AVP and Chief Engineer  
BNSF Railway

MICHAEL COOK, General Director, System Safety  
BNSF Railway

ADAM MILLER, General Director, Maintenance Support  
BNSF Railway

BRIAN CHAVEZ, Track Specialist, District 7  
Federal Railroad Administration

LARRY MILLER, Track Inspector, District 6  
Federal Railroad Administration

BLAIN LUCK, Rail Integrity Specialist  
Federal Railroad Administration

## I N D E X

ITEM	PAGE
Interview of Greg Leonard:	
By Mr. Lloyd	6
By Mr. Mack	10
By Mr. A. Miller	12
By Mr. Lloyd	14
By Mr. Mack	18
By Mr. A. Miller	18
By Mr. Luck	19
By Mr. Lloyd	19

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. LLOYD: All right. We are on the record. Good  
3 afternoon. My name is Troy Lloyd. I'm with the National  
4 Transportation Safety Board. Today is October 17, 2023, and we're  
5 conducting an interview with BNSF roadmaster, Greg Leonard. This  
6 interview is being conducted at Hampton Inn and Suites in Pueblo,  
7 Colorado.

8 This interview is in connection with a BNSF train derailment  
9 and subsequent bridge collapse that occurred in Bragdon, Colorado,  
10 on Sunday, October 15th, 2023. The accident occurred on main  
11 track 1 along BNSF's Pikes Peak Subdivision. The NTSB accident  
12 reference number is Accident RRD24FR001.

13 So, Greg, the purpose of this investigation is not to throw  
14 blame anybody or liability or anything like that.

15 MR. LEONARD: Okay.

16 MR. LLOYD: It's just informal investigation to get the facts  
17 and everything that you know. The NTSB cannot guarantee any  
18 confidentiality or immunity from legal or certificate action.

19 What's good about the interview is it will be transcribed.  
20 So everything that you're hearing, any questions and the answers,  
21 you're going to get a copy of it with an errata sheet and that  
22 will look to any anomalies, wrong dates, wrong times, do those  
23 corrections, and that transcription go in the public docket. So  
24 you're going to see everything that we're asking you.

25 MR. LEONARD: Okay.

1 MR. LLOYD: And everything that you answer. That's good  
2 about how we do the process.

3 You can have a representative of your choice. I don't know  
4 if you -- with management, I don't know if you want -- need to  
5 have one or Matt. I mean that's of your choice. If you want to  
6 it by yourself, go.

7 MR. LEONARD: I think I'm going to go without him here.

8 MR. LLOYD: You want to be his rep, Adam? That means you  
9 can't ask no questions.

10 MR. LEONARD: No.

11 MR. LLOYD: So you going to do it by yourself. All right.  
12 Do you understand everything's being recorded. This will be your  
13 training history, history of the switch, who you've ever seen.  
14 That's it.

15 MR. LEONARD: Okay. That's fine.

16 MR. LLOYD: It's going to be a piece of cake for you. So  
17 before we start the interview, we'll go around the room, again  
18 start on my right. Make sure you say your first name, spell your  
19 last name, make everything clear. So I'll start off with myself.

20 Again, my name is Troy Lloyd. I'm with the National  
21 Transportation Safety Board. The spelling of my last name is L-l-  
22 o-y-d, and I'm the track group chairman for this accident.

23 MR. SKOLNEKOVICH: Richard Skolnekovich, S-k-o-l-n-e-k-o-v-i-  
24 c-h, NTSB, rail investigator.

25 MR. MACK: Darius Mack, M-a-c-k, NTSB, rail investigator.

1 MR. THOMPSON: Gene Thompson, T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n, BMWED,  
2 accident investigator.

3 MR. HAMMOND: Matthew Hammond, H-a-m-m-o-n-d, AVP and chief  
4 engineer, BNSF Railway.

5 MR. COOK: Michael Cook, BNSF Railway, general director of  
6 system safety.

7 MR. CHAVEZ: Brian Chavez, C-h-a-v-e-z, FRA, track  
8 specialist, District 7.

9 MR. MILLER: Larry Miller, M-i-l-l-e-r, Federal Railroad  
10 Administration, track inspector, District 6.

11 MR. A. MILLER: Adam Miller, M-i-l-l-e-r, BNSF, general  
12 director, maintenance support.

13 MR. LUCK: Blain Luck, L-u-c-k, FRA, rail integrity  
14 specialist.

15 MR. LEONARD: Greg Leonard, roadmaster, BNSF, L-e-o-n-a-r-d.

16 MR. LLOYD: All right. You're doing great. Like I said,  
17 we're going to make this short and sweet. We're just going to get  
18 into history and all that stuff and anything you know about that  
19 switch.

20 INTERVIEW OF GREG LEONARD

21 BY MR. LLOYD:

22 Q. So let's start off. Let's talk about Greg. Let's talk about  
23 your history with the BNSF, when you got hired out, how you went  
24 through the promotional ranks to become today's roadmaster. Talk  
25 to me about that.

1 A. Do you want specific years?

2 Q. You -- it's your interview, Buddy. If you've got dates, give  
3 me dates. That's even better.

4 A. Okay. So I've worked for BNSF for 12 years. Been a  
5 roadmaster for the last approximately 18 months.

6 Q. So what year were you hired out?

7 A. 2011 I believe.

8 Q. 2011. And been a roadmaster for the last 18 months?

9 A. Yeah, approximately.

10 Q. So talk to me about that succession. How does one get hired  
11 out and moves up through the ranks to a roadmaster? To me, that's  
12 a pretty major job. How do you get to that point?

13 A. Can you repeat that to me one more time? Sorry.

14 Q. Let's talk about your training, how you went from that guy  
15 that's pounding spikes to the guy that's directing people to do  
16 work? I'm sure you started out as a trackman and worked your way  
17 up to foreman, from a foreman to maybe inspector to whatever. So  
18 I just want to hear that succession that you've done.

19 A. Just along the way, you through operate, tier 1, tier 2  
20 training, tier 3 training. That's really it. You know, as far as  
21 promoting, jobs come available via the company website. You apply  
22 and go through the interview process and selection.

23 Q. So does a track inspector, is he evenly or equally trained as  
24 a roadmaster? Does a roadmaster get more in depth training when  
25 it comes to track maintenance and construction, things of that

1 nature?

2 A. I think the -- you definitely have to be tier 1, tier 2 and  
3 tier 3 qualified for all -- for either of those positions. So.

4 Q. So what is tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3? What is that? What's  
5 that involve?

6 A. So I think for tier 1 -- do I get to ask for any help on this  
7 or no?

8 Q. Sure, sure.

9 A. Tier 1 is WBT, web-based training, just an online test. Our  
10 tier 2 program is a week long class in Kansas City at our training  
11 center and then a field demonstration performed by a tier 3  
12 qualified person in the field who are physically demonstrating  
13 measurements.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And tier 3 is a week long class that is on the division that  
16 people attend for track inspector, track supervisor certification.  
17 That also involves a field demonstration of the measurements and  
18 being able to detect, protect and initiate remedial actions.

19 Q. So you can -- so you're trained to inspect track and know how  
20 to use that -- you know how to draw that Geismar level board. If  
21 you have to use it, you know how to repair stuff. So you know the  
22 difference between BNSF or if it's FRA's defects. So you're  
23 trained to know all that stuff, right?

24 A. Correct. I'm trained to use those tools and anything that I  
25 don't know right off the top of my head, we have engineering



1 instructions, FRA compliance manuals, FRA manuals. They're at our  
2 disposal to help us with that.

3 Q. All right. So the roadmaster, so what's a roadmaster do?  
4 What is a roadmaster?

5 A. Specifically I guess I manage my work group, planning for  
6 them, managing the -- basically everything that involves our track  
7 maintenance.

8 Q. Okay. How many -- how long's your division? What are you in  
9 charge of for division-wise?

10 A. My territory?

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. It's I believe 180 miles, pretty close. I think it's 180  
13 miles.

14 Q. 180 miles. How many work groups would be underneath your  
15 realm, your authority?

16 A. I have 25 guys that work under my authority.

17 Q. So 25 people --

18 A. Twenty-five people.

19 Q. -- that directly report to you.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And that's -- how many track inspectors do you have?

22 A. I've got five track inspectors, track supervisors and  
23 assistant track supervisors. So a total of six.

24 Q. And where the derailment occurred at, that's part of your  
25 division. Pikes Peak, that's your division?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. That's your territory as well.

3 MR. LLOYD: Okay. I'm going to pass it right now to Darius.  
4 Darius, you got anything?

5 MR. MACK: Yes. Darius Mack, M-a-c-k.

6 BY MR. MACK:

7 Q. As far as you mentioned about the 180 mile territory, what  
8 are the limits of that? Is it just this Pikes Peak Subdivision or  
9 does it includes some other subdivisions or parts of different  
10 subdivisions?

11 A. The Pikes Peak Subdivision, Pueblo Subdivision and the  
12 Spanish Peak Subdivision are part of it.

13 Q. Okay. So the complete Pikes Peak?

14 A. No, I have a portion of the Pikes Peak as well.

15 Q. A portion.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. So you mentioned FRA tier 1, 2, 3 training. Are there  
18 times where you conduct inspections as well or are you just  
19 training just to supervise an inspector?

20 A. No, I also conduct inspections as well.

21 Q. Okay. And how often do you do that?

22 A. I can't give you an exact number. I definitely make sure  
23 that I make at least four inspections, one with each track  
24 supervisor for their territory monthly. But that number could be  
25 more also.

1 Q. Okay. You're not completing the frequency inspections, FRA  
2 frequency inspections. You're just going out inspecting as you,  
3 you know, just to know what's going on with your territory.  
4 That's what you're telling me.

5 A. I do sometimes go out just for frequencies as well.

6 Q. Frequency as well. Okay. All right. So when we have a --  
7 like I guess issues on the track, let's say -- let's specifically  
8 talk about rough track. So crews sometime report rough track  
9 incidents and things like that. Are they contacting you when that  
10 happens or how do they do that?

11 A. Are you asking train crew or --

12 Q. Yeah, train crews. How is that? If they report an issue or  
13 something that they've seen, how does that get to you or to an  
14 inspector or to a work group?

15 A. So a train crew would report it to the dispatcher. The  
16 dispatcher would report it to the maintenance desk. The  
17 maintenance desk would report that to me, and I would send an  
18 inspector.

19 Q. Okay. So for the area that we are talking about where the  
20 derailment occurred, do we have any type of incidents like that  
21 within the last week or --

22 A. No.

23 MR. MACK: Okay. That's all the questions I've got for right  
24 now.

25 MR. THOMPSON: Gene Thompson. No questions.

1 MR. HAMMOND: Matt Hammond. No questions.

2 MR. COOK: Michael Cook. No questions.

3 MR. CHAVEZ: Brian Chavez. No questions.

4 MR. MILLER: Larry Miller. No questions.

5 MR. A. MILLER: Adam Miller, M-i-l-l-e-r.

6 BY MR. A. MILLER:

7 Q. Greg, when you're talking about inspection frequency, you  
8 mentioned that sometimes you have to do an inspection to meet  
9 frequency. What frequency are you trying to meet?

10 A. So sometimes we will need to make a frequency of twice a  
11 week, and sometimes it will vary to three times a week. It just  
12 depends on a few different things that determine that. So at  
13 least twice a week we need to make an inspection on certain  
14 subdivisions.

15 Q. Okay. So when you're saying we, does that mean your team?  
16 So do your track supervisors go out and meet that frequency or is  
17 it you personally performing the inspection?

18 A. Track supervisors.

19 Q. Okay. Do you have any requirements to evaluate track  
20 inspectors as their roadmaster?

21 A. Yeah, I do.

22 Q. Can you elaborate what that evaluation looks like?

23 A. What my requirements are?

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. Yeah. So my requirements are as we go monthly and what we're

1 looking for is we're verifying our joint lists. We're verifying  
2 any surface issues we may have, rail defects. Those are really  
3 the three hardest hitters that I have and anything that my track  
4 inspectors are seeing that they feel is a concern and something  
5 that we need to make plans for to --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- do maintenance on.

8 Q. Do you recall the last time you went over the switch at South  
9 Bragdon with your track inspector?

10 A. I can't give you an exact date, but I know that I went over  
11 it with him in the month of September.

12 Q. Okay. Within the straight side of that turnout, was there  
13 any mainline rail joints existing?

14 A. No, there were not that I can recall.

15 Q. Okay. Do you know if any were existing during the  
16 derailment?

17 A. Any rail joints?

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. Not that I recall.

20 Q. Okay. Another thing with the switch, do you recall if they  
21 replaced panels in front of the switch going over the bridge?

22 A. Yes, they do.

23 Q. Approximate rough time of when that occurred?

24 A. Approximately -- and you're talking in front of the switch  
25 going across the bridge?

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. I would say approximately November of 2022.

3 Q. Okay. Within turnouts, do you know what the standard is for  
4 anchoring turnouts?

5 A. It should be solid box anchored.

6 Q. Can you elaborate what solid box anchored means?

7 A. Solid box anchored would mean every tie.

8 Q. Every tie. So we would see four anchors per tie?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. Do you know what distance that has to be from around  
11 the switch area?

12 A. I do not know off the top of my head. I would need to refer  
13 to BNSF EI.

14 Q. Okay. Do you know if that was incorporated for South  
15 Bragdon?

16 A. I don't recall if it was or not but --

17 MR. A. MILLER: Okay. No further questions.

18 MR. LUCK: Blain Luck, FRA. No further questions.

19 BY MR. LLOYD:

20 Q. So back to me, Greg. Troy Lloyd, L-l-o-y-d, from the NTSB.  
21 Greg, talk to me about a regular day. So let's say Monday or  
22 Tuesday. What's your general day look like as a roadmaster?

23 A. My general day starts off with -- usually I come in earlier  
24 than everybody else, and just 6:30 call for track windows, just to  
25 make sure that what we have planned is going to be going into

1 place for the day. I meet with my guys for a briefing at 7  
2 o'clock. There's no real set time limit on that. Then we go out  
3 to work, and I try to spend as much time as I can out in the field  
4 with the guys whether it be riding with the track inspector or  
5 just visiting with my work groups.

6 Q. Okay. So what other, what other class positions have you  
7 held? Have you ever been a track inspector?

8 A. I was a track supervisor, yes.

9 Q. So you were a track supervisor. Before that, were you ever a  
10 track foreman?

11 A. Yeah, I was a track foreman.

12 Q. So talk to me about the positions that you've held prior to  
13 becoming a roadmaster.

14 A. Trackman, machine operator in some capacity, welder and track  
15 supervisor.

16 Q. So with your recollection of this, the accident switch, do  
17 you know any concerns that the track inspector might have been  
18 reporting or do you know of any yellow tags, red tags, anything  
19 that might have been at that switch or threw that switch at any  
20 one time?

21 A. I don't think that there were any, I don't think that there  
22 were any issues in it during the time of the derailment. I do  
23 know that there was a yellow tag that came in over the weekend  
24 from the last geometry car run.

25 Q. How often do you -- do you look at all the data that comes

1 in, automated data such as track geometry, ultrasonic testing,  
2 things of that nature? Does that come to your office so you can  
3 review it and schedule your work plans, things of that nature?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. Any concerns or anything that sticks out in your mind,  
6 particularly this -- the accident switch where they done some  
7 ultrasonic test where there might have been some SSC defects or  
8 anything like that or --

9 A. No concerns. As of recently, no concerns, no.

10 Q. Any maintenance concerns that you've known previously in that  
11 switch? Just looking at your history of knowing --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- knowing that switch.

14 A. So what I can tell you is that we changed the switch point  
15 and stock rail on both sides of that and have replaced IJs --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- within this last year.

18 Q. And what were -- what was the switch point and stock rails  
19 changed for? Were they just getting to the point they were just  
20 getting old and battered?

21 A. I don't remember right off the top of my head. I don't  
22 recall.

23 Q. Okay. And is it normal for when BNSF goes in and installs a  
24 switch point and stock rail, they do marry pairs. The just won't  
25 go out and do a switch point against an old stock rail. It's



1 usually both of them mated together.

2 MR. LLOYD: Maybe that's a question for you, Adam. Do you  
3 all usually do the switch point and stock rails together as a  
4 married pair or can you change one or the other?

5 MR. A. MILLER: Usually a married pair.

6 MR. LLOYD: Okay. So.

7 BY MR. LLOYD:

8 Q. And the reason for the new change. It was fairly new because  
9 you had a weld there was 5/24 of 2023. So what was the  
10 maintenance? What was the reasoning for the switch replacement or  
11 switch point/stock rail replacements?

12 A. If I recall correctly, we changed one side and I thought it  
13 was best to change the other side as well so that we had new rail  
14 on both sides.

15 Q. Okay. And is it pretty normal for, once the switch  
16 point/stock rails are changed out, that they're usually welded in  
17 so that you can have a continuous welded switch?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Do you ever oversee if the welders are going out and  
20 working on your property if they're doing stuff by procedure and  
21 things of that nature, just watching and seeing if they're doing  
22 everything quarterly?

23 A. Yes, I do.

24 MR. LLOYD: Okay. Darius.

25 MR. MACK: Darius Mack, M-a-c-k.

1 BY MR. MACK:

2 Q. You mentioned ultrasonic testing. What is the frequency and  
3 when was the last ultrasonic test on this segment?

4 A. When was the last one? I believe sometime in July, middle of  
5 July.

6 Q. Okay. And any exceptions within the switch?

7 A. Not that I recall.

8 MR. MACK: That's all I have.

9 MR. THOMPSON: Gene Thompson, T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n. No questions.

10 MR. HAMMOND: Matt Hammond. No questions.

11 MR. COOK: Michael Cook. No questions.

12 MR. CHAVEZ: Brian Chavez, C-h-a-v-e-z. No questions.

13 MR. MILLER: Larry Miller. No questions.

14 MR. A. MILLER: Adam Miller, M-i-l-l-e-r.

15 BY MR. A. MILLER:

16 Q. One follow-up question with the yellow tag that was  
17 identified. Do you recall what type of defect that was?

18 A. I believe it was a top core.

19 Q. Was it in the vicinity as in between the control signals for  
20 South Bragdon or was it outside the limits of South Bragdon?

21 A. I don't remember off the top of my head.

22 Q. Okay. Do you recall what type of tag it was?

23 A. It was yellow.

24 Q. Do you recall the defect type?

25 A. It was a top core defect.

1 MR. A. MILLER: No further questions.

2 MR. LUCK: Blain Luck, L-u-c-k, FRA.

3 BY MR. LUCK:

4 Q. Do you do the material ordering?

5 A. I do.

6 Q. Specifically do you order the weld kits?

7 A. Yes, I do.

8 Q. What kits have you been ordering recently or what kits are  
9 your welders using now?

10 A. They use Orgo-Therm.

11 Q. Orgo-Therm. And can I ask why you're ordering Orgo-Therm  
12 versus some of the competitors?

13 A. As far as I know, we're only outfitted on my territory for  
14 Orgo-Therm welding kits.

15 MR. LUCK: No further questions.

16 BY MR. LLOYD:

17 Q. One last here. In your opinion, how would you rate that  
18 switch with just maintenance-wise and integrity?

19 A. I think it's a good switch.

20 MR. LLOYD: Okay. That's I have. Going around the room one  
21 more time. Darius?

22 MR. MACK: Darius Mack. No further questions.

23 MR. THOMPSON: Gene Thompson. No questions.

24 MR. LLOYD: Mr. Hammond?

25 MR. HAMMOND: Matt Hammond. No questions. Sorry.

1 MR. COOK: Michael Cook. No questions.

2 MR. CHAVEZ: Brian Chavez. No questions.

3 MR. MILLER: Larry Miller. No questions.

4 MR. A. MILLER: Adam Miller. No questions.

5 MR. LUCK: Blain Luck. No further questions.

6 MR. LLOYD: And I don't have anything else, Greg. I think

7 we're go. We're off the record. Thank you, sir.

8 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: COAL TRAIN DERAILMENT & BRIDGE  
COLLAPSE NEAR PUEBLO, COLORADO  
ON OCTOBER 15, 2023  
Interview of Greg Leonard

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD24FR001

PLACE: Pueblo, Colorado

DATE: October 17, 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.

  
Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber