

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*
*

NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
IN ELLISTON, VIRGINIA
ON JULY 6, 2023

*
*
*
*

Accident No.: RRD23FR013

* * * * *

Interview of: MICHAEL MONTGOMERY, Conductor
Norfolk Southern

Roanoke, Virginia

Friday,
July 7, 2023

APPEARANCES:

JOHN RANSCHAERT, Inspector, Operating Practices
Federal Railroad Administration

TIM LYNCH, Investigator in Charge
Federal Railroad Administration

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Michael Montgomery:	
By Mr. Ranschaert	4
By Mr. Lynch	5
By Mr. Ranschaert	9
By Mr. Lynch	9
By Mr. Ranschaert	17
By Mr. Lynch	20
By Mr. Ranschaert	20
By Mr. Lynch	23
By Mr. Ranschaert	23
By Mr. Lynch	25
By Mr. Ranschaert	27
By Mr. Lynch	27
By Mr. Ranschaert	28
By Mr. Lynch	29

I N T E R V I E W

(3:46 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. RANSCHAERT: My name is John Ranschaert, I'm an operating
4 practices inspector for the Federal Railroad Administration based
5 out of Richmond, Virginia. I'm here today with FRA inspector
6 Tim Lynch, mechanical, out of Roanoke, Virginia, and conductor
7 Michael Montgomery, a conductor for Norfolk Southern based out of
8 Roanoke, Virginia. Today's date is Friday, July 7th, the time is
9 3:46 p.m. We're here to gather information about a derailment
10 that happened on July the 6th, 2023, on Norfolk Southern's Blue
11 Ridge Division, Radford Subdivision, concerning Train 814V04 on
12 the date 04. The time of the derailment was 7:43 p.m.

INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

13
14
15 Q. Mr. Montgomery, can you give us some indication -- we'll
16 start out with the time that you were on duty, the location that
17 you were on duty, and then kind of walk us through your day up to
18 the point of derailment and then a little bit after that. We may
19 jump in and ask you some questions while you're -- please feel
20 free.

21 A. Okay. We were called out of Bluefield, Virginia at 10:15
22 a.m. in the morning. I don't know the exact time we got a
23 locomotive because the train was late coming in, but it was
24 approximately 11:00 a.m. when we actually got on the train. We
25 completed all the tests we had to do there for that, brake test,

1 et cetera, and we were delayed about an hour, an hour and a half
2 in Bluefield for traffic and I believe there was -- maintenance
3 was out maybe doing a heat run in front of us and we had to wait
4 on them. But we approximately left Bluefield somewhere around the
5 3:00 p.m. mark. And once we left Bluefield, basically just headed
6 east on the main one and then rode all the way down to Narrows and
7 crossed over to the BN (ph.) side, over the old Virginia side,
8 crossed over to that, and rode through there and rode up to -- you
9 all may know the territory, rode up through the valley there to
10 Eggleston, up to McCoy, BBI Farms, climbed the mountain at Shelby,
11 came through the tunnel at Merrimac, and after we came through the
12 tunnel at Merrimac, we went over the detector at Yellow Sulphur.
13 It's approximately -- I believe it's Milepost 276.3 is what the
14 detector says. And once we crossed the detector, it told us that
15 we had a critical alarm.

16 BY MR. LYNCH:

17 Q. Over the radio?

18 A. Yeah. It told us we had a critical alarm and of course, the
19 engineer started slowing down at that point and we already had the
20 brake on, but there's a steep hill there after you come out of the
21 tunnel. So we continued until we stopped it in a safe manner and
22 once we had stopped, we called our dispatcher, New River
23 dispatcher, and notified him that the detector had gotten us a
24 critical alarm, hot bearing, Wheel Number 299. And once we had
25 talked to our dispatcher, we called wayside and wayside was able

1 to give us a car number as well as a wheel.

2 Q. Can you recollect that?

3 A. The car number was -- well, I'll tell you, the car number was
4 CR507499 and it was the 71st car and that's not counting the
5 engines, that's just the cars. And he said it was the lead axle
6 on the north rail. So I got suited up, everything on, and of
7 course I had my temperature stick and walked back that way. It
8 probably took me --

9 Q. Do you have any idea what time this was?

10 A. Well, we -- let's see if I put the time in here.

11 Q. About what time the detector notified you until the time you
12 stopped and got on the ground.

13 A. It was approximately 5:35 p.m. when it notified us.

14 Q. Thank you.

15 A. That was about the time we stopped and we talked to the
16 dispatchers and that sort of thing. So I began walking probably
17 about 5:40 p.m. and walked back, it probably took me 20 minutes to
18 get back there, it's pretty rough through there. And I walked on
19 the south rail and of course, checked 20 axles on that side as
20 well as the car that was indicated, then went ahead and went 20
21 axles beyond on the south side and then I crossed over to the
22 north side and inspected the same, the opposite side of those
23 cars, 20 axles ahead and behind. And then I got to the car that
24 was highlighted, CR507499, and checked all the bearings there and
25 the front bearing on that car is the BN front axle. I think it's

1 the B-1, I believe that's what the axle indication is. Anyway,
2 the bearing was warm. I put the temperature stick on it and it
3 did melt it slightly. I also put the temperature stick on the
4 wheel itself and it did not melt it.

5 Q. The wheel didn't melt it, but on the bearing, did you --
6 where did you place your temperature stick at?

7 A. Well, the outer cup, I did the outer cup with the three bolts
8 running in --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- and then I swiped on the inside, too.

11 Q. So you got the end cap, you tested with it, did it --

12 A. Yes, it melted on the end cap and it also melted on what I
13 could get on the side of the bearing housing, I guess you would
14 call it.

15 Q. The cup?

16 A. The cup, yeah.

17 Q. Okay, got you.

18 A. So at that point I checked the car to make sure there wasn't
19 a hand brake on and that the retainer valve was in the correct
20 position exhausting, and I also, of course, checked that on the
21 other cars I looked at. That's all we could go to (indiscernible)
22 because I've seen retainer valves in the incorrect position,
23 break, not releasing and dragging along the way. So anyway, once
24 I'd gotten that far, I continued on, on the north side and walked
25 the rest of the north side back to the head end, got on the head

1 end, had a couple cups of water and we notified the dispatcher
2 that we were back on the head end, called wayside and told wayside
3 my findings.

4 Q. About what time? Just approximate.

5 A. I would say it was 6:30-ish.

6 Q. So you notified the dispatcher and the wayside desk
7 approximately around 6:30 p.m. of your findings with the bearing?

8 A. Yeah. And also while I had wayside, I asked them what the
9 temperature showed on the detector, on the bearing, and at that
10 time he indicated around the 200-degree mark.

11 Q. Yeah. That's what the wayside desk, the critical alarm
12 detector picked up, approximately 200 degrees?

13 A. I was later told by Poletti or somebody and I think it was
14 actually 230-ish something.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. The actual reading they got from whomever, but he relayed 200
17 to me at that point.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And then after that, the discussion was really in their
20 hands, they had to put together what they thought to do and we
21 discussed a little bit, I told him that, you know, I didn't think
22 it was extremely warm and we had had the brake on for over a mile,
23 coming down a very steep hill and, you know, he indicated that
24 well, you know, is there some grease coming out and I said yes,
25 there was some grease coming out, but it wasn't extensive. I've

1 seen quite a few of these and it's -- it wasn't nearly as bad as a
2 lot I've seen.

3 Q. Did you have any discoloration on that bearing? Are they --

4 A. No, no discoloration on the bearing or the wheel itself, at
5 all.

6 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

7 Q. Was the grease exiting from the end cap?

8 A. No, it was exiting behind it.

9 Q. On the back side onto the wheel?

10 A. The back side, yeah.

11 MR. LYNCH: Okay, got you.

12 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yeah. And like I said, it was not very
13 much. Like I said, the previous day we had one that was
14 supposedly 500 degrees and there was grease all over the wheel,
15 it's going everywhere. So this was not like that at all.

16 BY MR. LYNCH:

17 Q. So now you're up on the locomotive at this point, to clarify,
18 now you walked it and you found the bearing and your Tempilstik
19 melted --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- and now you're up on the locomotive --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. -- being able to --

24 A. Relay my information to --

25 Q. -- get instructions on what to do now --

1 A. Sure.

2 Q. -- at this point.

3 A. Yeah, that's what --

4 Q. Okay.

5 MR. RANSCHAERT: So --

6 MR. MONTGOMERY: And basically -- I'm sorry.

7 MR. RANSCHAERT: No, I was going to say what -- I was going
8 to --

9 MR. MONTGOMERY: The guy from the wayside indicated, of
10 course, that, you know, there's no way for us really to know the
11 condition of the bearing, they could be bad or binding or getting
12 worse and worse. So his initial indication was well, we need to
13 set it out, so you know, that was good, I was fine with that. And
14 then we had a discussion about that because the next location we
15 could set it out was down at North Fork.

16 BY MR. LYNCH:

17 Q. So this discussion was with the wayside desk?

18 A. And the dispatcher was listening.

19 Q. Okay, so both of them --

20 A. Yeah, they were both listening.

21 Q. -- concurred that the car needed to be set out at this point?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So once --

25 MR. RANSCHAERT: What did you say, was that North --

1 MR. MONTGOMERY: North Fork.

2 MR. RANSCHAERT: North Fork?

3 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yeah. And once wayside had given his
4 opinion, then the dispatcher said, you know, I'll talk to the
5 powers that be, whomever that was, and we'll discuss it and see
6 what, you know, the thinking is. Evidently, they did that but of
7 course, you couldn't hear any of that. And so they came back and
8 said well, we'll set it out at Fagg, that's the name of the
9 next --

10 MR. LYNCH: F-a-g-g?

11 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yeah, F-a-g-g. And the engineer and myself
12 talked about it a moment and realized that with 71 cars and the
13 power we had, we could not shove back up the hill at Fagg and put
14 it in the siding.

15 BY MR. LYNCH:

16 Q. So this would mean you'd had to make a reverse move?

17 A. Yeah, we'd have to come down, cut off and pull down and shove
18 back to the siding, but it was too steep with the power we had to
19 put it in the siding.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. It was 71 cars, approximately 10,000 tons, and we had three
22 units, but only two units were working and we could not -- we
23 could not shove it back, or did not think we could shove it back.

24 Q. So the wayside desk had detected that that would be the best
25 location --

1 A. Yes, that was --

2 Q. -- is to go backwards to the --

3 A. That was the first location that stood out.

4 Q. I understand.

5 A. There was nothing else between there, where we were at, and
6 North Fork to set it out. So once we stated that, then they again
7 put us on hold and discussed it. I'm not sure, I know the
8 dispatcher and wayside were talking and they all were in agreement
9 that we could take it to Riverside and set it out at Riverside.

10 Q. Is that a siding or the first track --

11 A. It's a siding.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It's a siding. Kumis is the west end, Riverside is the east
14 end. And there is a siding there and there's also a maintenance-
15 of-way track there or it's locked up on maintenance of way right
16 now.

17 Q. This would be going east --

18 A. East.

19 Q. -- at this point --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- if you go to this side. How far approximately?

22 A. It's approximately --

23 Q. Where you were at, at that point.

24 A. -- 13 miles, 14 miles. About 14 miles, yes. To actually get
25 to the east end, it was probably close to 15.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. It's Milepost 262, 76, 14 to 15 miles.

3 Q. Did you have the milepost? What did you say?

4 A. We stopped, where we stopped was Milepost 262, V262. It was
5 another mile down there in the siding to get to that small track
6 where we could set out and that's an approximation, I don't know
7 exactly.

8 Q. From where you're sitting at right now, and you're under
9 discussion with the wayside desk and your dispatcher, that it's
10 going to be 14 miles going east, which would be in the forward
11 position.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Forward direction to go to the siding at Riverside --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- to be able to place this car and set it out?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And once they put their heads together and made the decision
19 that we could do that, we were instructed that we can leave from
20 where we were at, signal indication to Riverside, track speed.

21 MR. RANSCHAERT: Is that what they told you, track speed?

22 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes.

23 BY MR. LYNCH:

24 Q. Was that from wayside, wayside telling you that, those
25 instructions, or was that from the dispatcher?

1 A. The dispatcher told us and that was, I guess, they had had
2 their discussion and that's --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- what they had decided, but I don't know all the -- that
5 side of it, really. But we were instructed by the dispatcher that
6 we could leave where we sat, the signal indication to Riverside,
7 track speed.

8 Q. Okay, I understand. Thank you. Do you know right off the
9 bat what was track speed?

10 A. Most coming off the mountain with a coal train, 30 miles an
11 hour. Once you get down next to North Fork, it goes to 35. When
12 your rear clears down next to Fagg, somewhere in between, it goes
13 to 40.

14 Q. So when you're leaving the position you're at --

15 A. It's 30.

16 Q. -- at the wayside detector, then 30 miles an hour would be
17 the track speed?

18 A. Down the mountain until you get to North Fork and before you
19 get to North Fork, I can't tell you the milepost, it goes to 35
20 when your rear clears.

21 Q. So 30 to 35 miles an hour, you had permission from the
22 dispatcher to be able to run that before the detector stopped you,
23 okay.

24 A. Track speed, if we would've done it, it would've been 40 and
25 you all will interview the engineer, we never came close to any of

1 that.

2 Q. All right. So we're at the detector, you've got permission
3 to continue on eastbound toward Riverside siding, so you're on the
4 head end, now start from there.

5 A. Once we left?

6 Q. Yeah, please.

7 A. Okay. Well, once we left, of course, he knocked the break
8 off and we started down the hill. Nothing eventful. I think we
9 averaged about 25 miles an hour down the mountain.

10 Q. ETA of the time, by the chance, sorry, that you were leaving
11 after they made their decision and the time that you left?

12 A. It was approximately 6:50-ish.

13 Q. Twenty, thirty minutes from the time that you --

14 A. From the time I got up there and toned him up and had the
15 discussion, it's another 20 minutes, so I'd say it was about 10
16 until 7:00.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Six fifty-five. That's give or take, I mean.

19 Q. That's fine.

20 A. So we left. Of course, the engineer knocked the brake off
21 and even had a brake application already, so he put the brake back
22 on, but we -- you know, (indiscernible) once so we just went track
23 -- we didn't go track speed down the mountain, we did about 25
24 down the mountain to North Fork and when you get out of North
25 Fork, and he'll tell you all this, you knock the brake off at

1 North Fork because it flattens out down there.

2 Q. Dynamic and air?

3 A. Dynamic and air, coming off the mountain, yes.

4 Q. Okay, now you're leaving, you've been given the okay to
5 continue on at track speed, going to Riverside siding, so now
6 you're leaving. Now pick up from there.

7 A. Okay. Well, like I said, we knocked off the brake, started
8 down the mountain, came down the mountain, and I don't know the
9 exact speed we went, but he put another brake application on. We
10 came by the North Fork signal doing approximately 25, 26, he
11 knocked the brake off and like I said, he can tell you all this.
12 I'm telling you something I probably shouldn't be --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- accounting for, but we were in 25, 26, 27 range coming
15 down through there and of course, it picks up down through there
16 and I do not know the exact speed he got up to and we just
17 continued on toward Riverside and we came over the detector at
18 Milepost 266.6, that's V266.6. Came across that detector and got
19 no defects.

20 Q. Do you know, is it the wayside -- is it a hot box detector or
21 is it an impact detector?

22 A. It was, at one time, a combination of both. I can't tell you
23 a hundred percent sure. I know it's --

24 MR. RANSCHAERT: You said 262.6?

25 MR. MONTGOMERY: Two sixty-six dot six, roughly.

1 BY MR. LYNCH:

2 Q. And no defects were noted, he came across the radio telling
3 you -- okay.

4 A. The radio told us no defects. So which we were happy to hear
5 and we continued on and we came under Interstate 81 and once
6 coming down toward the Kumis signal, round the curve at the Kumis
7 signal and had the signal in sight and we felt a little bit of a
8 tug, it wasn't a -- you know, how when you're on these things, you
9 usually don't feel a whole lot, we felt a little bit of a tug and
10 the train started slowing down and we were already slowing down to
11 go in the siding because it's 25 into the siding. We were already
12 slowing down and it slowed down significantly and then it shot, I
13 think Josh said about at 15, 16 miles an hour.

14 Q. It shot at 15 to 16 miles an hour. How far was your head end
15 from going into the east end of the siding?

16 A. We stopped short of the road crossing. It was probably 12 to
17 15 cars to start in the siding, I'm guessing.

18 Q. Close, okay.

19 A. I'm guessing. We were about a mile away from getting to the
20 small track we were going to.

21 Q. And you say your siding was also at 25 miles an hour?

22 A. It's 25 miles an hour into the siding.

23 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

24 Q. You said that you had two engines, were they a single-single
25 DP or both engines on the head end?

1 A. There were three engines total, only two were operational and
2 they were all on the head end.

3 Q. Do you know which locomotives were in power, was it the head
4 end and the middle or was it the head end and the third --

5 A. The head end and the middle. The rear motor was not running.

6 MR. RANSCHAERT: Rear motor not running.

7 MR. LYNCH: Do you remember the engine numbers by chance
8 or --

9 MR. MONTGOMERY: Ten nineteen was the lead. I do not
10 remember the second motor or the third.

11 MR. LYNCH: Okay.

12 MR. MONTGOMERY: Josh has it on his paperwork to show.

13 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

14 Q. Do you recall why the third engine wasn't working?

15 A. Josh had went back and started it in Bluefield. The previous
16 engineer had told him that it shut itself down and would not run
17 and --

18 Q. He didn't mess with it?

19 A. No, he went back and started it up and put it in run and it
20 immediately shut down and it's --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- a failsafe, some kind of failsafe alarm --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- on that locomotive.

25 Q. So there was no distributive power?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Did you have any equipment restrictions in your train?

3 A. No. It was (indiscernible).

4 Q. That last defect detector that you said gave you no defects
5 found --

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. -- do you recall which detector that was?

8 A. It's the one at 266.6.

9 Q. Okay.

10 MR. LYNCH: V266.6.

11 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

12 MR. LYNCH: But you don't know whether it's a WILD detector
13 or whether it's a hot box.

14 MR. MONTGOMERY: I don't know if it is now or not. You know,
15 it used to be it was their latest thing with all the bells and
16 whistles. It would -- I know it would pick up on loads, side to
17 side.

18 MR. LYNCH: Impacted.

19 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yeah.

20 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

21 Q. Do you recall, you said, if I am correct in my notes, the
22 defect detector that you got the reading on was at Yellow
23 Sulphur --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- at Milepost 276.3?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. So it was about 10 miles difference?

3 A. Yeah, it was -- between detectors, yes.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Yes.

6 BY MR. LYNCH:

7 Q. Is that the only detector that you passed between Bluefield
8 and there that would --

9 A. It's not the only one between there and Bluefield, no.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. We passed three others before we got to the one at Yellow
12 Sulphur.

13 Q. The only one that gave you the -- is the one at Yellow
14 Sulphur out of all the detectors?

15 A. The rest said no defects.

16 Q. No defects, okay, that clears that up.

17 A. Yes, yes.

18 MR. LYNCH: Thank you.

19 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

20 Q. So I'll make sure I got my notes right. There were three
21 detectors prior to Yellow Sulphur?

22 A. Give me one second to think.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I'll count them up in my head.

25 Q. Sure.

1 MR. LYNCH: I believe the one in front of the one that you
2 stopped at was a WILD, which is not going to give us -- but you
3 had three or so.

4 MR. MONTGOMERY: At least three.

5 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

6 MR. MONTGOMERY: Four, four.

7 MR. RANSCHAERT: Four?

8 MR. MONTGOMERY: I'm sorry, there's -- up next to McCoy.
9 That would be four.

10 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

11 MR. LYNCH: But unaware what they picked up.

12 MR. RANSCHAERT: They can look at the timetable.

13 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yeah, yeah.

14 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

15 Q. Do you recall what kind of signals that you were receiving,
16 clears, approaches?

17 A. We were running all clear indication.

18 Q. Clear indication. So you weren't following anybody or --

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Nobody close enough to affect us.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. There was a coal train out in front of us, but he was --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- a couple hours ahead of us.

1 Q. These are engineer questions, throttle position, brake handle
2 position.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. And how many cars derailed?

5 A. Nineteen.

6 Q. Nineteen cars derailed. So after you came to a stop --

7 A. After going into emergency.

8 Q. After going into emergency, can you lead us from that point
9 to --

10 A. Yes. Of course, we called the dispatcher and told him we
11 were in emergency. So at that point, it's fairly steep there so I
12 had to tie the train down, so I went back and he, of course,
13 didn't turn the air back to see if he could get any air on the
14 rooter (ph.) because it's too steep, so I tied it down. And once
15 I had tied it down, I notified him that we were -- we were good to
16 turn the air back and he turned the air back. Of course, we sat
17 and waited to see if it was going to rise on the rear and of
18 course, it did not.

19 Q. Yeah, okay.

20 A. Which at that time I continued to walk on west, walking the
21 train and about 25, 26 cars from the head end I came to a trestle
22 with no walkway, so I couldn't get across the river. So I came
23 back to the head end and there was a maintenance-of-way guy,
24 Hodges (ph.), Mr. Hodges, I think he was track hour and
25 maintenance-of-way, and he came over there and gave me a ride to

1 the rear, he had already been to the rear and saw that it had
2 derailed and told us, and he took me to the rear and I walked the
3 cars and got the car numbers from the east-most car, which was
4 this CR507499, and then the west car number and I do not have that
5 number with me.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. But it was 19 cars.

8 Q. So how far from the head end to the trestle?

9 A. About approximately 25 cars, where I couldn't walk any
10 further west on the track.

11 Q. Twenty-five cars.

12 A. Approximately.

13 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. All right.

14 BY MR. LYNCH:

15 Q. So you tied down, at that point you'd already tied down the
16 head cars --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- and he turned the air back at this point?

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. And there was no reading on the rear?

21 A. Nothing on -- no rising on the rear. The flow stayed up over
22 a hundred at that point and it was a pretty good indication there
23 was separation. So we waited probably 5 minutes to let it kind of
24 build.

25 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

1 Q. Do you recall how many hand brakes you put on?

2 A. Yes, I put 12 on.

3 Q. Twelve hand brakes. Do you know what the grade is there, off
4 the top of your head?

5 A. I do not.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Steep.

8 Q. I wouldn't expect you to.

9 A. You come over, you come over a little hill there, it drops
10 down, as you close to Kumis, more of the train has crossed over it
11 and that's why I had 12 brakes, it's quite steep where it was.

12 Q. Sure. All right. Just for curiosity sake, when you departed
13 and he -- the dispatcher gave you permission to run track speed --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- did you and the engineer have a conversation about the
16 speed?

17 A. Yeah, we didn't have what you'd call a conversation. We were
18 both a little surprised because it was, you know, track speed, but
19 you know, we basically just went by what he said. But we didn't
20 have a discussion saying well, we're not going to do track speed
21 or anything like that. We both have been out here quite a while
22 and done this and I can -- we didn't have the discussion, but I
23 don't think either one of us was comfortable running 40 miles an
24 hour. So like I said, we did 25 down the mountain. I think he
25 got up in the thirties, low thirties as we came past Fagg and it

1 drops down and kind of flattens out and it rolls back up a little
2 bit, I believe he got in -- and he'll tell you for sure, but we
3 probably got up to the low thirties.

4 Q. Okay. Did that give you any cause for concern?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. We'd already, you know -- and we were coming by the detector
8 and it said everything was good, you know, we were pretty
9 comfortable.

10 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

11 BY MR. LYNCH:

12 Q. So you basically went from the time that you stopped after
13 the detector indication, roughly 13 miles from the detector, from
14 the time you had stopped --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- heading toward the siding --

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. -- before it went into emergency and it varied from 25 to 30
19 mile an hour?

20 A. Low thirties.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. We never got anywhere near 40, I know that.

23 Q. Okay. So it went into emergency. At this point you found
24 the cars, when you went to the rear and come back up, be able to
25 see the cars that had derailed?

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. Now, you notified your dispatcher what you had found at that
3 point?

4 A. Yes, I did. And the road foreman had asked us to give him
5 the information, as well. He had called us and wanted us to
6 keep --

7 MR. RANSCHAERT: Over the radio?

8 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes.

9 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

10 MR. MONTGOMERY: Over the radio.

11 BY MR. LYNCH:

12 Q. The road foreman?

13 A. Yes, road foreman desk, I guess you could say.

14 Q. No exact road foreman name, just a desk?

15 A. Well, the engineer may know one, but it wasn't our local road
16 foreman that I know of.

17 Q. Well, at that point, when you give them that answer, you had
18 19 cars --

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. -- et cetera, what was the response and your instructions at
21 that point?

22 A. Well, it wasn't really an instruction because we were holding
23 at that point, we were running out of time. I had enough time to
24 get a ride back and get on the head end right as we ran out of
25 time, but there was no discussion as far as 19 cars being on the

1 ground at all.

2 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

3 Q. Do you feel that, based on your time left to work, that the
4 dispatchers were affected by -- do you feel that possibly they
5 could've made a bad decision based on how much time you had left
6 to work?

7 A. No, no, I don't think so, because we -- you're talking about
8 once we left after the detector and all?

9 Q. Sure.

10 A. No, because we had plenty of time to get down there and get
11 in the siding and get it put away and get in to Roanoke, as well.
12 So no, at that point, I don't think so at all.

13 Q. Okay, all right. I'm just trying to think of --

14 A. Sure, I get it. Um-hum.

15 Q. -- questions that --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- you know, may have influenced their decision-making
18 process.

19 A. Well, you can imagine, by the time we got stopped and then I
20 walked back and --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- tied all the brakes and then we turned the air back, you
23 know, you're talking about an hour there.

24 BY MR. LYNCH:

25 Q. But you notified them that they were -- if you had derailed

1 cars, no numbers, no nothing at this point was given, you just
2 gave them the --

3 A. When I got -- when I went back and identified the cars, maybe
4 it was -- I knew I'd need the numbers. When I got back to the
5 head end, I called and identified them.

6 Q. Okay, so you had found them and then you --

7 A. The track people had already been informed that there were
8 cars on the ground and leaning over, so they knew it. I didn't
9 inform them, but they knew it. I just gave them the car
10 numbers --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- and I walked off to the maintenance guy back there.

13 Q. So you went to hours of service on the locomotive itself --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- when you were there?

16 A. When I got back from getting the car numbers and stuff, it
17 may have been 10 or 15 minutes before we hauled, something like
18 that. And then there was no need, of course, to tie the other end
19 of the train down.

20 BY MR. RANSCHAERT:

21 Q. Do you recall what that method of operation is through there,
22 is it -- it's not dark territory?

23 A. No, it's signal indication 271.

24 Q. Two seventy-one?

25 A. Those numbers run together, but I think 271. Sorry.

1 Q. No, that's all right.

2 A. But that is signal territory.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But we were running all clears all the way.

5 Q. All right. And did you have any speed restrictions on your
6 paperwork?

7 A. No, no.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. There was one speed restriction and that was V253.0, 253.1,
10 and we were 10 miles from there. Never got to it.

11 Q. Did you happen to take any pictures?

12 A. No, I did not.

13 Q. Okay. And we talked about the weather conditions, you said
14 you had clear visibility --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- partly sunny, 80 degrees plus.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

19 BY MR. LYNCH:

20 Q. So to clarify, the detector and stuff that set off was at
21 Yellow Sulphur Milepost 276.3?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. And you stopped there and the Riverside siding --

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. -- is that at Milepost 262?

1 A. Roughly, it's 261 point --

2 Q. Right where the derailment stuff were, with the 262 and --

3 A. Yes, and right at the --

4 Q. -- from the detector to the siding was roughly 14 miles?

5 A. Yes.

6 MR. LYNCH: Okay, got it.

7 MR. RANSCHAERT: I have no further questions.

8 Tim, do you have any further questions?

9 MR. LYNCH: No.

10 MR. RANSCHAERT: All right. Mr. Montgomery, we appreciate
11 your time. If you have anything that you'd like to add, just --

12 MR. MONTGOMERY: I do not.

13 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay.

14 MR. MONTGOMERY: I do not.

15 MR. RANSCHAERT: We reserve the right to contact you in case
16 something else comes up that we may have forgot to ask.

17 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yeah, that's fine.

18 MR. RANSCHAERT: Okay. That concludes the interview with the
19 conductor, Mr. Montgomery.

20 (Whereupon, at 4:16 p.m., the interview 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: NORFOLK SOUTHERN TRAIN DERAILMENT
 IN ELLISTON, VIRGINIA
 ON JULY 7, 2023
 Interview of Michael Montgomery

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD23FR013

PLACE: Roanoke, Virginia

DATE: July 7, 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.



David A. Martini
Transcriber