Motor Carrier Attachment -

TVSC Transportation

Supervisor interview

transcript

HWY19MH003

(20 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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BUS STOP CRASH * Accident No.: HWY19MH003
ROCHESTER, INDIANA *
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Interview of: BLANE CONLEY
Superintendent/Transportation Director
Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation

Via Telephone

Monday,
May 13, 2019

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN CURRIE, Senior Highway Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

PHILIP ZIMMERLY, Esq.
Bose, McKinney & Evans, LLP
(On behalf of Mr. Conley)

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:01 a.m.)

MR. ZIMMERLY: Hey, this Shawn?

MR. CURRIE: This is he.

MR. ZIMMERLY: Hi, Shawn. Phil Zimmerly with Blane Conley.

MR. CURRIE: Hey Phil. Hi Blane. Sheryl's on too.

MR. ZIMMERLY: Hi Sheryl.

MS. HARLEY: Hello. How are you?

MR. ZIMMERLY: We're well. How are you doing?

MS. HARLEY: Doing fine, sir. Thank you for speaking with us.

MR. ZIMMERLY: Oh, thank you. And, you know, I appreciate you scheduling at this time.

Shawn, thanks for working with my schedule. I really appreciate it.

MR. CURRIE: No worries. No worries.

MS. HARLEY: So, before we get started with everyone, I just wanted to make sure that it's all right if we record this interview?

MR. ZIMMERLY: That's fine.

MS. HARLEY: Okay. And --

MR. CURRIE: That way we can listen, we can actually listen instead of trying to write down notes all the time.

MS. HARLEY: Okay. So if you don't mind, I'm just doing to go ahead and just make a few notations and we can get started. So

it is Monday, May the 13th, 2019. It's 11:01 a.m. And on the phone with me is -- if you don't mind identifying yourselves, gentlemen?

MR. ZIMMERLY: Yes, this is Phil Zimmerly with Bose McKinney & Evans.

MR. CONLEY: Blane Conley, Superintendent, Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation.

MR. CURRIE: And Shawn Currie, C-U-R-R-I-E, investigator with NTSB.

MS. HARLEY: And also, Sheryl Harley, investigator with the NTSB. Thank you again.

We can go ahead and get started, Shawn.

INTERVIEW OF BLANE CONLEY

BY MR. CURRIE:

Q. Okay. Gentlemen, thanks for talking to us today. The going back and forth with emails was getting a little difficult to get the point across, so I appreciate your time. My question -- I have a couple questions for Blane.

So Blane, not only are you the superintendent, you're also the transportation director; is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And about how long have you had the transportation director job?

A. Five years.

Q. About 5 years? Now was that an inherited position or duties

also assigned, or how did you get that?
A. When I became the assistant superintendent, that was part of my duties.
Q. Okay. Now did they send you for any training with that or --
A. Yes. I went to the IDOE's Transportation Conference, training.
Q. And about when was that?
A. That was in my first year of being transportation director.
Q. So 2014-ish?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And is that their Transportation Director 101 course that they offer or is that just a conference?
A. That is -- that is bus driver training.
Q. So it was bus driver training?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Have you had any additional training? They offer a, I think it's Transportation 101 is the name of the course, I believe. I'd have to look at my notes to -- right off. Have you been to that? It's specifically designed for transportation directors.
A. I'm not sure I understand your question.
Q. Okay. You said you went to the transportation conference in 2014, and you said that was bus driver training. I'm asking if you've gone to -- do they have a course that's specific for transportation directors? I believe it's called -- hold on I'm

just opening the email. I believe it's called Transportation 101.
A. I've attended a state conference where -- for transportation directors.
Q. Okay. Is -- was it a conference or was it a training? Did they actually have classes or was it just a conference? Could you tell me what you learned there, I guess?
A. It was a conference. It was my first year as transportation director.
Q. Okay. No, they have a course -- I don't know if you're familiar, they have a course called Transportation 101. Have you ever heard of that?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. Have you received any training on stop risk -- bus stop risk assessment, or anything in that nature?
A. Yes.
Q. Great, but where did you obtain that?
A. That was part of the IDOE's bus driver training.
Q. Okay. Was that training designed more for bus drivers as in how to safely service a route or how to design routes and evaluate the risks involved in that?
A. That was for bus drivers.
Q. Okay. And was that initial training in 2014?
A. Yes.
MR. CURRIE: Okay. Sheryl, that's all I have for right now. Do you want to take over?

MS. HARLEY: Sure.

BY MS. HARLEY:

Q. Blane, I wanted to get back to specifically the route of the incident bus. How many complaints have you received in regard to that route?

A. I received one complaint.

Q. One complaint? When was that?

A. I do not know the exact date.

Q. Was it this year? Was it the -- or should I say, was it the same year --

A. No.

Q. -- of the crash?

A. No.

Q. No?

A. It was not.

Q. Okay. Was it a couple years back?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. All right. So can you describe to me please, you receive a complaint, what is the procedure that you go through as far as addressing the complaint?

A. I go out to the site where the stop is located. I contact the driver, and we discuss the particulars of the situation. I speak to our bus garage. Mr. [redacted], who is one of our mechanics, who's been on staff for 20 years, and then I -- we make the best decision based off of that information.

Q. Okay. So the incident, or the complaint you received, was this the one that was involving the Millie's Bread truck, that actually passed the stopped school bus?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So my question then was how was that handled? How was that investigation done? How was the driver identified?
A. I drove out to the site. I drove through the trailer park. I spoke with the, the driver, [redacted], who had run the route for several years. I spoke with the bus garage. [redacted] had said it was a Aunt Millie's bus -- or bread truck, and we determined that the stop -- stay on State Road 25.
Q. Okay. So did you notify the police?
A. No.
Q. Okay. So my understanding is, and correct me if I'm wrong -- I spoke to [redacted]. You got back to her and say that the driver of the bread truck had been identified. How exactly did that happen?
A. I got on their website and emailed them. And then they had indicated they addressed the situation with their driver.
Q. What was the reason for not calling, contacting the police?
A. I do not know.
Q. You were -- but you were the one that handled the complaint, correct?
A. Yes, ma'am.
Q. Okay. So I guess I'm asking what was your reason for not

contacting the police?
A. I don't have a reason.
Q. Okay. So in addition to complaints about the route, have you ever received any complaints about lighting involving the stop there at the mobile home park?
A. I don't recall.
Q. [redacted] never voiced any kind of concerns about the fact that the lighting was poor and she couldn't see the students?
A. When we discussed the situation, she talked about the lighting within the trailer park.
Q. Okay. So she did complain about the lighting. So what happened with that complaint?
A. We discussed the -- determined that that was the best situation.
Q. So did you forward the complaint on to either the owner of the trailer park or to INDOT, Indiana Department of Transportation, to see if there was any kind of remedy they could do for the lighting?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Going back to the incident route, I know that you have revised a route in order to pick up the kids in the trailer park -- in the trailer park, excuse me. Have you -- is the route now such that the kids actually have what they call near-side boarding, where the bus stops on the same side? Or is it only in the trailer park that you've revised the route?

A. No, we've revised the entire route.
Q. You've revised the entire route. Are you currently revising, looking at all your routes on these roads that have the high speeds on them?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So in this, when your drivers actually make these complaints about these individuals or vehicles or motorists that are actually passing their school bus, do you actually keep a record of these complaints?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Do you use these complaints as a metric in order to reevaluate or do the risk assessment of your routes?
MR. ZIMMERLY: Hey, Sheryl, can I interrupt just quickly? This is Phil.
Did you keep track of the complaints prior to the incident, Blane?
MR. CONLEY: No.
MR. ZIMMERLY: Okay.
MR. CONLEY: Not prior --
MR. ZIMMERLY: So they're -- Sheryl, they're keeping track now, but they did not prior to the accident. I just want to make that clear.
BY MS. HARLEY:
Q. Okay, great. That -- then that's fine. Thank you very much. And, let's see, and I guess my last question is -- just correct me

if I'm wrong. Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation does not have school resource officers?
A. That is not correct. We do.
Q. Oh, you do have -- okay, great. So what is the job of the school resource officer?
A. The school resource officer is stationed here on our main campus, in our high school, which has our middle school on campus, too. He provides safety to our campus. He will -- he travels to our other schools and is a presence there.
Q. So I guess my question is, is that -- would it be correct to say that your school resource officer is a liaison between the school district and local law enforcement?
A. That is correct. He is employed by the Kosciusko County Sheriff's Department.
Q. So then my question is, why don't you report these incidents of people passing school buses to him?
A. We do now.
Q. Okay, you do now. Okay. So I -- oh, one other thing. Does Tippecanoe Valley intend on installing stop arm cameras on their buses?
A. Yes, we have.
Q. Okay. So are all your buses now equipped?
A. No, but they will be by the beginning of the school, next school year. Our -- all of our buses on state roads are equipped.
Q. All the buses on state roads. Does that mean that there are

buses that aren't equipped with stop arm cameras?
A. Half of our fleet is equipped with stop arm cameras.
Q. And just to confirm. How many buses are we talking about that are actually equipped?
A. Twelve.
Q. Twelve buses? Okay. And the other 12 are not being equipped because they're not on state roads; is that what you're saying?
A. No, we will have them all equipped --
Q. Okay.
A. -- by the beginning of the next school year.
Q. Okay. And your internal camera, is that also something that's being reviewed as far as incidents or concerns with safety at the -- at certain stops as well?
A. I don't understand your question.
Q. Okay. So I know that your school buses are equipped with internal -- internal cameras. Specifically it's --
A. Yes.
Q. -- aimed inside the bus for the safety of the students. And I was just wondering, is that something that's also being reviewed by you in regards, when complaints are being made about things such as vehicles passing buses? And will the camera also be used to evaluate to make sure that the bus driver has the stop arm camera -- I'm sorry -- the stop arm deployed correctly and that the lights are on, and the situation? I was just wondering if this is also being used?

A. Yes, ma'am. Yes.

MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right.

Shawn, did you want to ask any other questions?

MR. CURRIE: Sure.

BY MR. CURRIE:

Q. Blane, obviously there's been some changes since the incident. Can you just outline any new policies or procedures that you all have enacted since the event?

A. Yes, we have a transportation safety review committee that is co-chaired with the two -- from Cobb County, and then the sheriff from Fulton County. We share that committee with our middle school principal; we have a school board member, our two mechanics, and then we have the Kosciusko County Highway transportation safety superintendents. And we sat down with each of our drivers and they presented their routes to the committee, and we made revisions based on those presentations.

Q. Okay. Does this committee have a charter or like a operating guidelines that says -- spells out what they do and --

A. Their -- I mean, their charter would be to create the safest routes possible for --

Q. Right. But, is there -- is it a formal charter or is it just a -- is it written? That's what I'm getting at.

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. No.

Q. Okay. Any other policies or procedures that you've changed since the incident?
A. No.
Q. Okay. So just the like the addition of the Transportation Safety Review Committee.
Did the -- we've heard some conflicting information. Was the driver subject to a drug and alcohol test by you folks or another bus company? Or --
A. Which driver are you -- he's talking about (indiscernible) --
Q. The school bus -- specifically -- I'm sorry -- I only deal with the school bus driver. So I apologize for not being more specific. The school bus driver.
A. He, I mean, he was given a drug and alcohol test by the state police following the accident.
Q. Okay. And you all have a copy of that or you've seen a copy of that, or --
A. I believe so. At least we have the receipt of him having given the test.
MR. CURRIE: Okay. And -- oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.
MR. ZIMMERLY: No, we didn't have anything.
BY MR. CURRIE:
Q. Okay. And Blane, just -- I understand that you're the transportation director, but is there somebody else who has the title of assistant transportation director? Is that the head mechanic, the way I understand it?

A. Yes.
Q. But is he -- he's not responsible for the safety? He's just the mechanical end of it, correct?
A. Correct.
MR. CURRIE: Okay. Sheryl, that concludes my questions.
Thank you, Blane. Thank you, Phil.
MR. CONLEY: Thank you.
MR. CURRIE: Thanks, Sheryl.
MS. HARLEY: And, yeah, I think I'm done as well. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.
MR. CURRIE: Do you folks have any questions? Oh, go ahead.
MR. ZIMMERLY: Shawn, let us know if you need anything else from us. I mean, in terms of timing, do you have an idea of what's left in the investigation and when a final report will be coming out?
MR. CURRIE: Sheryl's actually the investigator in charge, so she would be the one to ask. I just needed these -- I needed to close the loop on these few questions that I had so I could finish up my factual report.
But, Sheryl, do you have any ideas?
MS. HARLEY: So at this particular point, what we're looking at is probably with the -- we're looking at the next, I guess, it would be about 2 months before the reports would be out for what we call tech review. And tech review, as you know, as part of the party, we actually send out our factual reports to our party

members and allow them to take a look at it and to just correct any inaccuracies that they see. This is where you're allowed to give your comments and revisions to the factual report, just to make sure that we've got everything accurate. That'll be in about 2 months.

From that point on, once that's done, and the corrections come back to us, and we have to send it out to all the party members, so that's probably going to take several weeks. Once that get's back to us, then the project manager, who will take all of these smaller investigative reports and put them together into one large report. Now that definitely will not be coming out until, I'm fairly sure, until 2020. But as far as the factual reports, that should be available to be reviewed in about 2 months.

MR. ZIMMERLY: Okay. Great. One other, one other question that we're curious about that is -- you know, I'd just be curious whether or not you've been able to determine anything with regard to the driver, Alyssa Shepherd. I know that the state police ran a forensic report on her phone. Was any information identified with regard to that, that you found probative, one way or the other?

MS. HARLEY: I personally don't have any information about the phone. I do know that they were looking at it, but I don't have any information about that at all.

MR. ZIMMERLY; Okay. I appreciate it. Well, thanks for your

time today. Let me know if you need anything else from us. And we appreciate the call.

MS. HARLEY: All right. Thank you very much.

MR. ZIMMERLY: Okay. Thank you.

MS. HARLEY: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. Have a good day. Bye.

MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

And interview is concluded 11:23 a.m.

(Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m., ,the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	BUS STOP CRASH ROCHESTER, FULTON COUNTY, INDIANA Interview of Blane Conley
ACCIDENT NO.:	HWY9MH003
LOCATION:	Via Telephone
DATE:	May 13, 2019

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.

[redacted]

Transcriber