

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2809
THE WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT MOBERLY, MO., ON
MAY 19, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Wabash
Date: May 19, 1944
Location: Moberly, Mo.
Kind of accident: Derailment
Train involved: Passenger
Train number: 14
Engine number: 699
Consist: 4 cars
Estimated speed: 45 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders,
and manual-block system for
following movements
Track: Single; 15° curve; level
Weather: Cloudy
Time: 3:23 a. m.
Casualties: 3 injured
Cause: Train entering diverging route
at high rate of speed, as a
result of an improper aspect
being displayed for the route

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2809

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY

August 28, 1944.

Accident at Moberly, Mo., on May 19, 1944, caused by a train entering a diverging route at a high rate of speed, as a result of an improper aspect being displayed for the route.

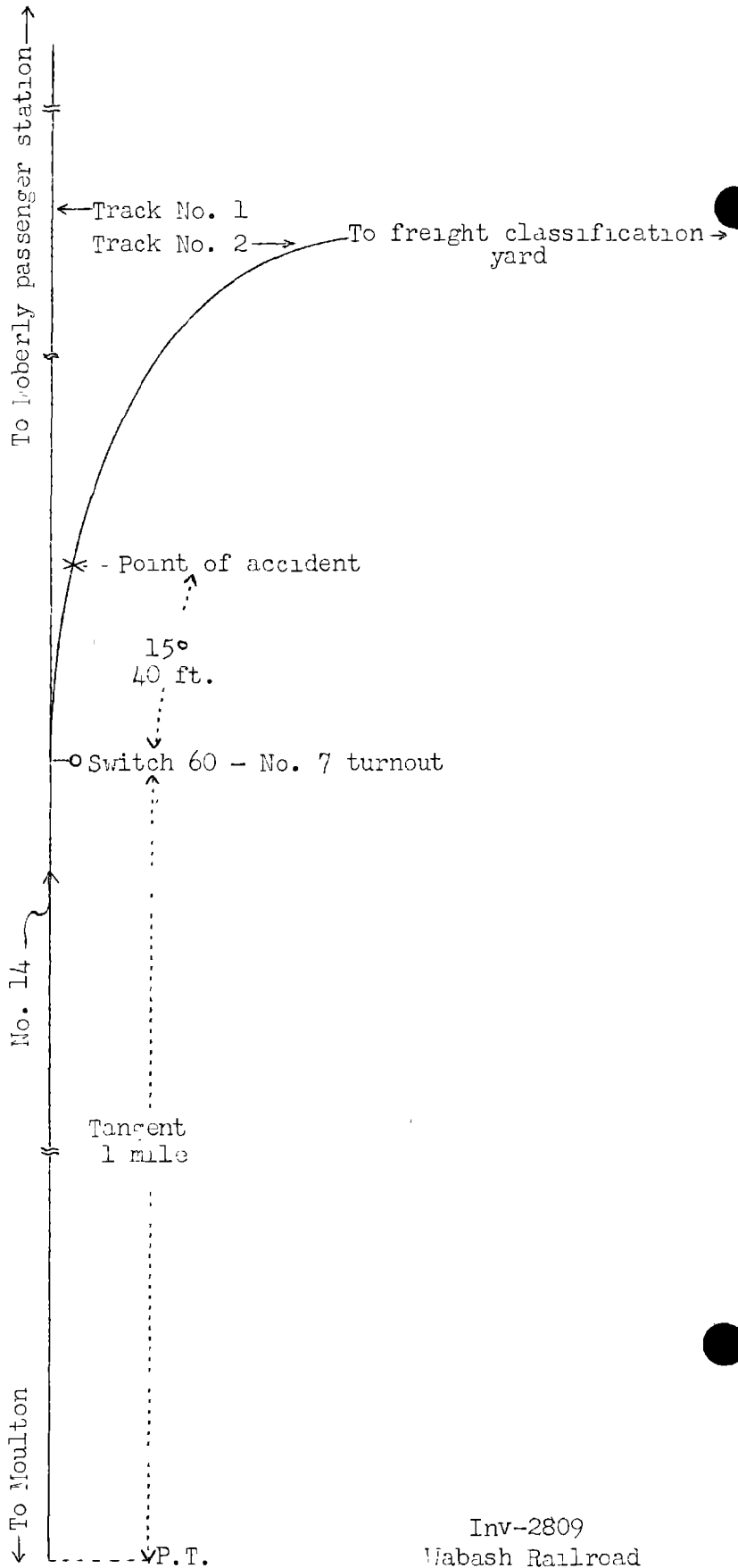
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On May 19, 1944, there was a derailment of a passenger train on the Wabash Railroad at Moberly, Mo., which resulted in the injury of three employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.

X	Moberly, Mo. (P. of A.)	
	22.6 mi.	
o	Macon, Mo.	
	72.7 mi.	
o	Moulton, Iowa	



Inv-2809
 Wabash Railroad
 Moberly, Mo.
 May 19, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Moberly Division designated as the 15th District and extending eastward from Moulton, Iowa, to Moberly, Mo., 95.3 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for following movements only. On this line east-bound trains en route to the passenger station at Moberly entered a lead track, hereinafter referred to as track No. 1, at switch 60, located some distance west of the passenger station, and east-bound trains en route to the freight classification yard, located to the south of track No. 1, entered a lead track, hereinafter referred to as track No. 2, at switch 60. Entry to track No. 2 at switch 60 was made through a No. 7 turnout to the right. The accident occurred on the turnout of track No. 2 about 40 feet east of switch 60. From the west the main track was tangent 1 mile to switch 60, and track No. 1 was tangent a considerable distance eastward from switch 60. At the point of accident on track No. 2 the curvature was 15°. The grade was practically level.

The switch-stand of switch 60 was on the south side of the track and was of the hand-throw, intermediate type. The switch-stand was provided with an oil lamp and a red circular target. When the switch was lined for entry to track No. 1 the target and a red light were displayed. When the switch was lined for entry to track No. 2 a green light was displayed. A switchtender was regularly assigned in this vicinity between 11 p. m. and 7 a. m.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

10. Color Signals.

Color.	Indication.
(a) Red.	Stop.
* * *	
(c) Green.	Proceed, and for other uses prescribed by the Rules.
* * *	

109. Bulletins will be numbered consecutively on each division, beginning with January first of each year, and will be posted in bulletin books at each bulletin station, where they will remain during the current year. They will be issued and cancelled by the proper officer and unless otherwise specified will expire with calendar year.

* * * conductors, enginemen and * * * must record information in the manner provided on prescribed form, indicating that they have read and understand bulletins posted before commencing each day's work or trip. They will be held responsible for compliance with bulletins and other instructions posted before commencing work.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 14, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 699, a 4-6-2 type, one baggage car, one baggage-mail car, one coach and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Macon, 22.6 miles west of Moberly and the last open office, at 2:56 a. m., 44 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour it entered track No. 2 at switch 60 and was derailed.

The engine and the first car were derailed and damaged. The engine and tender stopped on their left sides, north of track No. 2 and at right angles to it, with the front end of the engine about 300 feet east of the point of derailment. The first car stopped practically upright, north of the track and at an angle of about 15 degrees to it. The front end of the second car was slightly damaged.

It was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:23 a. m.

The conductor, the engineer and the fireman were injured.

Discussion

No. 14 was moving on tangent track at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 50 miles per hour, when it entered track No. 2 through a 15-degree turnout at switch 60. There was no super-elevation, and the overturning speed on this curve was about

43 miles per hour. The engine and the first car were derailed.

As the train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the headlight was lighted brightly. The first the enginemen were aware of anything being wrong was when the engine reached a point about 200 feet west of switch 60 where the fireman observed that this switch was lined for entry to track No. 2. He called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the engine entered track No. 2 and overturned before the brakes became effective.

The investigation disclosed that the normal route for No. 14 was tangent a considerable distance both west and east of switch 60. When switch 60 was lined for this route, the aspect displayed by the switch lamp was red. The other route was through a No. 7 turnout to the right for east-bound movements, and a green aspect was displayed when the switch was lined for this route, which was normally used by freight trains in proceeding to and from the freight yard.

A bulletin stating that the normal position of this switch was for the route to the freight yard was issued in 1934, but this matter was not covered in the consolidated bulletin issued January 1, 1944, nor in the current timetable, and no bulletin pertaining to it had been issued since the date of the consolidated bulletin. The maximum authorized speed for the passenger train in the vicinity of the switch was 50 miles per hour. Under the rules of this carrier, a red aspect is a stop signal, but, according to practice at this point, if a red aspect had been displayed at switch 60, No. 14 would have been permitted to pass it at a speed as high as 50 miles per hour. Other switch lights near switch 60 were arranged to display green for through movement on the tangent track and red for movement through the turnouts.

The engineer of No. 14 was qualified to operate passenger trains, but his regular assignment was in freight service. In addition to the trip involved, he had made two trips in this territory in passenger service since January 1, 1944. He was familiar with the territory and understood the arrangement of the aspects displayed by the switch lamp of switch 60. However, on his previous trips in passenger service this switch had been lined by the switchtender for the route to the passenger station. He said that, because the switch lamps of several switches in the vicinity of switch 60 displayed green, he momentarily forgot that the green aspect displayed by the switch lamp of switch 60 indicated that this switch was lined for entry to the turnout, and he did not realize that the switch was not lined for the intended route for his train until the

fireman warned him. The switchtender stated that it was his practice to line switch 60 for No. 14 to enter track No. 1, but, when the accident occurred, he was engaged in handling switches in the vicinity of the passenger station. Several engineers who regularly operate trains in this territory stated that the arrangement for displaying a green aspect by the switch lamp of switch 60 when the switch was lined for the turnout created a confusing and hazardous condition. Protests had been made to operating officials prior to the occurrence of this accident, but no action had been taken to correct this condition.

In view of the hazardous situation disclosed in this investigation, operating officials of this railroad should immediately change the aspects at this switch to conform to the practice at other turnouts on this railroad.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a train entering a diverging route at a high rate of speed, as a result of an improper aspect being displayed for the route.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-eighth day of August, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.