

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3479

CHICAGO, NORTH SHORE & MILWAUKEE
RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR RACINE, WIS., ON

AUGUST 21, 1952

SUMMARY

Date: August 21, 1952

Railroad: Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee

Location: Racine, Wis.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Automobile

Train number: 423 :

Consist: 5 cars :

Estimated speeds: 75 m. p. h. : 25 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and manual block-signal system

Tracks: Double; 0°30' curve; level

Highway: Tangent; crosses tracks at angle of 82°16'; 4.40 percent ascending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 4:30 p. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 110 injured

Cause: Automobile occupying rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3479

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

CHICAGO, NORTH SHORE & MILWAUKEE RAILROAD COMPANY

October 8, 1952

Accident near Racine, Wis., on August 21, 1952, caused
by an automobile occupying a rail-highway grade
crossing immediately in front of an approaching
train.

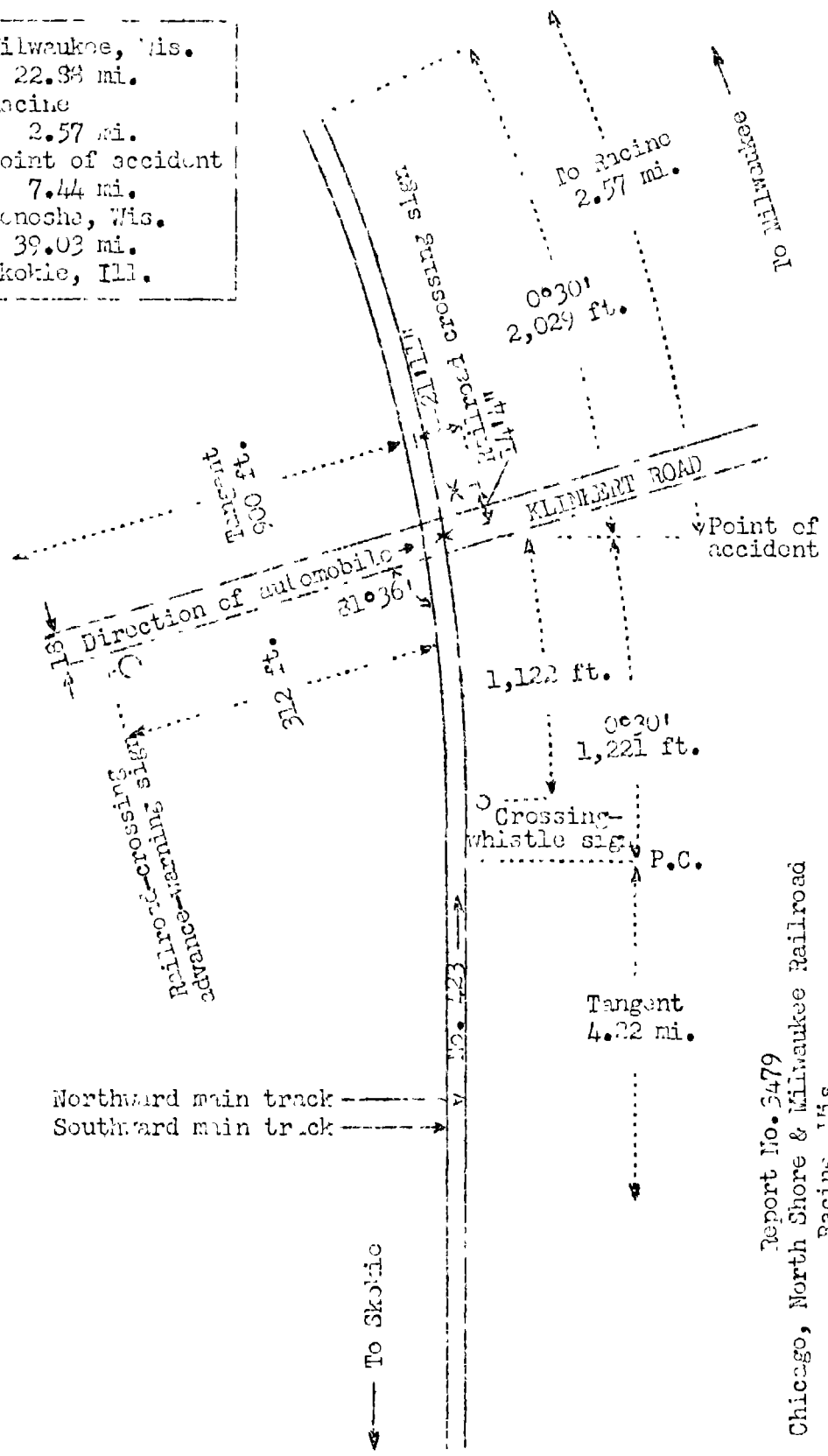
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 21, 1952, there was a collision between
a passenger train on the Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee
Railroad and an automobile at a rail-highway grade cross-
ing near Racine, Wis., which resulted in the death of
1 passenger and the driver of the automobile, and the
injury of 108 passengers and 2 train-service employees.

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

- o Milwaukee, Wis. 22.88 mi.
- o Racine 2.57 mi.
- X Point of accident 7.44 mi.
- o Kenosha, Wis. 39.03 mi.
- o Skokie, Ill.



Report No. 3479
 Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee Railroad
 Racine, Wis.
 August 21, 1952

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Skokie, Ill., and Milwaukee, Wis., 71.92 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual block-signal system. This line is equipped with an overhead trolley system for the electric propulsion of trains. The accident occurred on the northward main track at a point 46.47 miles north of Skokie and 2.57 miles south of the station at Racine, Wis., where the railroad is crossed at grade by Klinkert Road. From the south on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent 4.22 miles in length and a $0^{\circ}30'$ curve to the left 1,221 feet to the point of accident and 2,029 feet northward. The grade is level in the vicinity of the crossing. Klinkert Road intersects the railroad at an angle of $81^{\circ}36'$. This highway is 18 feet in width and is surfaced with bituminous material except for a distance of about 40 feet on each side of the crossing. Throughout this distance it is surfaced with crushed stone. The highway is tangent throughout a distance of more than 900 feet immediately west of the crossing and 1 mile eastward. From the west the grade for east-bound vehicles is, successively, 1.30 percent descending 200 feet, practically level 600 feet, 2.00 percent ascending 50 feet, and 4.40 percent ascending 40 feet to the crossing. An area about 10 inches in width outside each rail and the area between the rails of each track are surfaced with planking. The area between the tracks is surfaced with bituminous material. The east rail of each track is super-elevated $1\text{-}\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and the east rail of the southward main track is level with the west rail of the northward main track. The crossing is even with the tops of the rails.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign 2 feet 6 inches in diameter is located to the right of the direction of east-bound highway traffic at a point 12 feet 6 inches south of the center-line of the highway and 312 feet west of the crossing. This sign is mounted on a mast 2 feet 11 inches above the level of the highway and bears two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located in the northeast angle of the intersection at a point 14 feet 4 inches north of the center-line of the highway and 21 feet 11 inches east of the center-line between tracks. This sign is mounted on a mast 11 feet 8 inches above

the level of the highway and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for north-bound trains is located 1,122 feet south of the crossing.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

Whistle Signals.

95. Whistle signals must always be given at places and under the circumstances indicated below. * * *

SOUND	INDICATION
* * *	
(1) Two Long and Two Short.	Approaching public road crossings * * *
* * *	

There was no specified maximum speed for passenger trains on the line on which this accident occurred.

Description of Accident

No. 423, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of one multiple-unit combination baggage-passenger car and four multiple-unit passenger cars, in the order named. All cars were of all-steel construction. The train was being operated from the front control compartment of car 251, the first car of the train. This train departed from Kenosha, 7.44 miles south of the point of accident and the last open office, at 4:23 p. m., 1 minute late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 75 miles per hour it struck an automobile at the rail-highway grade crossing at Klinkert Road, 2.57 miles south of the station at Racine.

The automobile involved was a 1949 Chevrolet sedan. It bore Wisconsin license No. J-60044. The driver and owner, who was the sole occupant, held Wisconsin driver's license No. 690112. This automobile was moving eastward on Klinkert Road at a speed of about 25 miles per hour when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 423.

The automobile became wedged under the front coupler of the first car, and the front truck of this car was derailed to the east. This truck veered to the east and crossed the east rail about 250 feet north of the crossing. The general derailment occurred at a point about 225 feet farther northward. The first car stopped with its front end toward the south and about 450 feet north of the crossing and 10 feet east of the northward main track. It leaned toward the east at an angle of approximately 25 degrees. The second car stopped approximately in line with the track. Its front end was 790 feet north of the crossing. It leaned to the east at an angle of approximately 25 degrees. The third car remained coupled to the second car. It stopped on its right side immediately east of the northward main track and parallel to it. The fourth car stopped between the two main tracks and parallel to them. Its front end was 40 feet south of the rear end of the third car. It leaned to the west at an angle of approximately 15 degrees. The fifth car stopped upright and in line with the track. Its front end was about 20 feet south of the rear end of the fourth car. The automobile was demolished, and all of the derailed cars were considerably damaged.

The motorman and the conductor of No. 423 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:30 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing was 46.6 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., September 9, 1952, 566 automobiles, 146 trucks, 10 buses, and 17 other vehicles passed over the crossing.

The first car of No. 423 was 56 feet $3/4$ inch in length and weighed 91,000 pounds. It was provided with 4-wheel trucks and was powered by traction motors on each truck. The other cars were of similar construction.

Discussion

As No. 423 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the motorman was maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the first car. The members of the train crew were in various locations throughout the cars of the train. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted brightly. The motorman estimated that

the speed was about 75 miles per hour. He said that when the train reached a point about 2,500 feet south of Klinkert Road he observed the automobile approaching the crossing from the west. The motorman began to sound the grade-crossing whistle signal. Then, when the speed of the automobile was not reduced, he sounded a series of short blasts on the pneumatic horn in an effort to attract the driver's attention. He said that as the automobile closely approached the crossing the driver reduced the speed from about 40 miles per hour to about 15 miles per hour and it appeared that he was preparing to stop short of the crossing. However, instead of stopping, the driver then increased the speed, and the automobile entered the crossing at a speed of about 25 miles per hour. When the motorman saw that the automobile was about to enter the crossing in front of the train he made an emergency application of the brakes. The collision occurred before the speed of the train had been materially reduced. The conductor was in the baggage compartment of the first car. He said that when he heard the motorman sound a warning signal on the pneumatic horn he looked ahead and observed the automobile closely approaching the crossing.

While the automobile was moving throughout a distance of about 1,000 feet immediately west of the crossing, the driver could have obtained a view of the approaching train at any point throughout a considerable distance south of the crossing. A witness to the accident who was in an automobile moving eastward behind the automobile which was struck said he thought the preceding automobile was moving at a speed of 40 or 45 miles per hour. This witness said that when he reached a point about 700 feet west of the crossing he observed the approach of the train. He was about 350 feet west of the crossing when the accident occurred. He said that he did not hear a whistle signal sounded as the train approached the crossing.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an automobile occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighth day of October, 1952.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Acting Secretary.