

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3326
HOUSTON BELT & TERMINAL RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT HOUSTON, TEX., ON
APRIL 23, 1950

SUMMARY

Date: April 23, 1950

Railroad: Houston Belt & Terminal

Location: Houston, Tex.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Engine with
auxiliary
water car

Train number: 135 :

Engine numbers: Diesel-electric : 2660
units 300L, 300A
and 300B

Consists: 8 cars : 1 car

Estimated speeds: Standing : 8 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and automatic
block system; yard limits

Tracks: Double; tangent; practically level

Weather: Raining

Time: 7:13 p. m.

Casualties: 29 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed
of engine moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3326

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

HOUSTON BELT & TERMINAL RAILWAY COMPANY

June 27, 1950

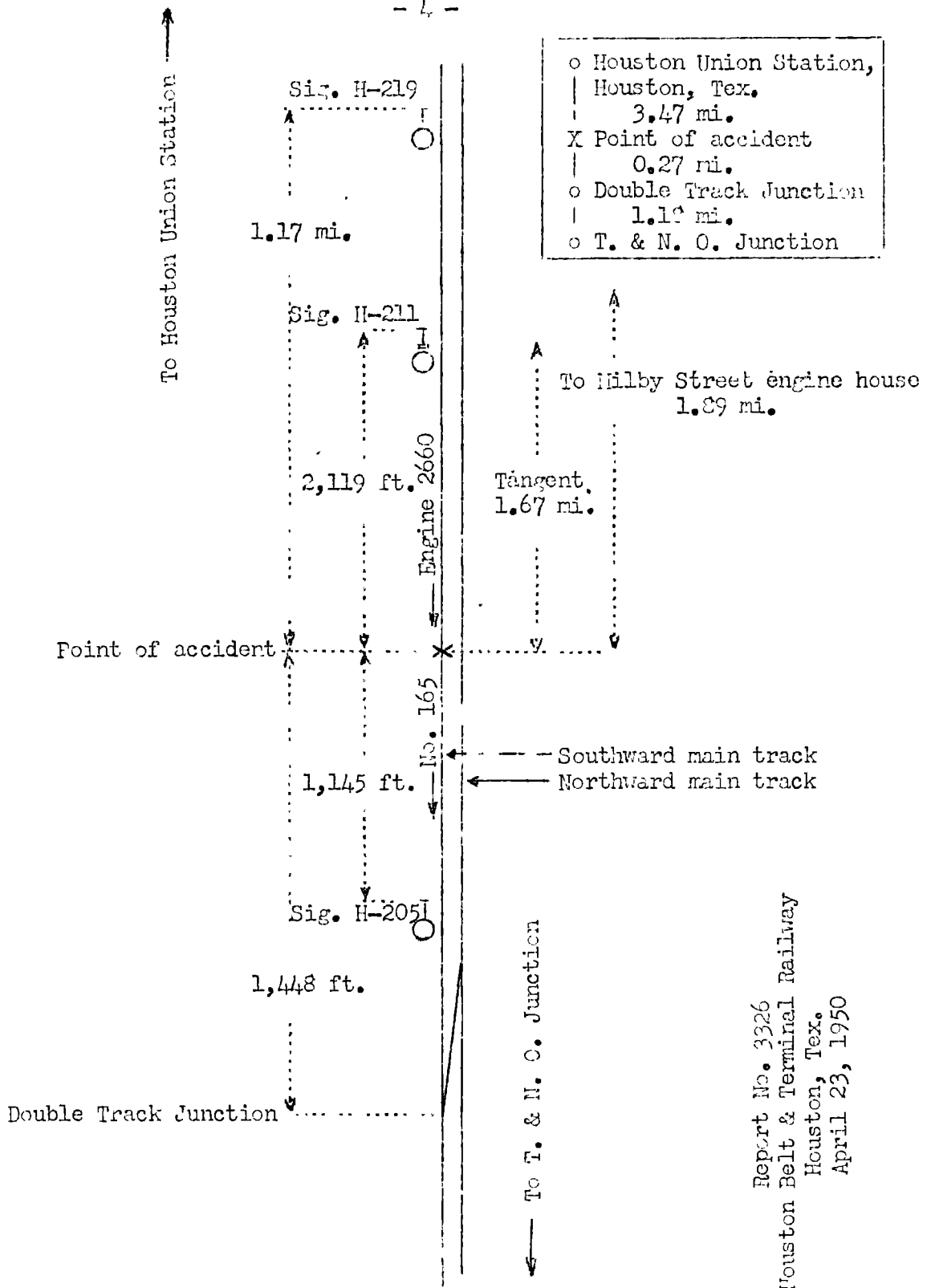
Accident at Houston, Tex., on April 23, 1950, caused
by failure properly to control speed of engine
moving within yard limits.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On April 23, 1950, there was a rear-end collision between a passenger train and an engine with an auxiliary water car on the Houston Belt & Terminal Railway at Houston, Tex., which resulted in the injury of 16 passengers, 6 dining-car employees, 1 lounge-car attendant, 3 Pullman employees, 1 employee off duty, and 2 train-service employees.

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



- o Houston Union Station,
Houston, Tex.
3.47 mi.
- X Point of accident
0.27 mi.
- o Double Track Junction
1.19 mi.
- o T. & N. O. Junction

Report No. 3326
Houston Belt & Terminal Railway
Houston, Tex.
April 23, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the South Belt District extending between Houston Union Station and T.& N.C. Junction, Houston, Tex., 4.92 miles. From Houston Union Station to Double Track Junction, 3.74 miles, this is a double-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. Trains and engines of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway, hereafter referred to as the G.C.& S.F., and the Burlington-Rock Island Railroad, hereafter referred to as the B.-R.I., are operated regularly over the Houston Belt & Terminal Railway, hereafter referred to as the H.B.& T. This accident occurred within yard limits on the southward main track and 1,448 feet north of Double Track Junction. From the north the track is tangent 1.67 miles to the point of accident and a considerable distance southward. In the vicinity of the point of accident the grade for south-bound trains is practically level.

Automatic signals H-219 and H-211, governing south-bound movements on the southward main track, are located, respectively, 1.17 miles and 2,119 feet north of the point of accident. These signals are of the color-light type and are continuously lighted. They display three aspects. The aspects applicable to this investigation and their corresponding indications and names are as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
H-219	Yellow	PROCEED AT RESTRICTED SPEED THROUGH THE ENTIRE BLOCK	PERMISSIVE SIGNAL
H-211	Red, with number plate	STOP, THEN PROCEED AT RESTRICTED SPEED THROUGH THE ENTIRE BLOCK * * *	STOP AND PROCEED SIGNAL

The controlling circuits of these signals are so arranged that when the block of signal H-211 is occupied signal H-219 indicates Proceed at Restricted Speed and signal H-211 indicates Stop and Proceed.

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

DEFINITIONS.

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train or engine to be reduced.

* * *

93. * * *

* * *

Within yard limits the main track may be used without protecting against second and inferior class, extra trains and engines.

Second and inferior class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits at restricted speed.

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, * * *

* * *

509 (a). When a train or engine is stopped by a Stop, then Proceed at Restricted Speed indication it may proceed:

A.-----On any track signaled for traffic in both directions, at restricted speed through the entire block, expecting to find a train in the block, * * *

* * *

Timetable special instructions of the H.B.& T. read in part as follows:

* * *

Trains have no time table superiority between Houston Union Station and Double Track Junction and will move between such limits at restricted speed.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the train and the engine was 18 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 165, a south-bound G.C.& S.F. first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 300L, 300A and 300B, coupled in multiple-unit control, one baggage car, two coaches, one dining car, one lounge car and four sleeping

cars, in the order named. The seventh and eighth cars were of light-weight steel construction, and the other cars were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Houston Union Station at 6:55 p. m., on time, and stopped at Double Track Junction at 7:10 p. m. At 7:13 p. m. the rear end was struck by B.-R.I. engine 2660.

B.-R.I. engine 2660, headed northward, with an auxiliary water car coupled to the tender, departed from Milby Street engine house, 1.89 miles north of the point of accident, at 7:01 p. m. It entered the northward main track and then crossed to the southward main track. It proceeded southward in backward motion and stopped to permit the train crew to board the engine. It then proceeded southward, passed signal H-219, which indicated Proceed at Restricted Speed, and stopped at signal H-211, which indicated Stop and Proceed. It then entered the occupied block and while moving at an estimated speed of 8 miles per hour it struck the rear end of No. 165.

No. 165 was moved southward a distance of about 10 feet by the force of the impact. As a result of the accident the rail overturned under the west wheels of the rear truck of the ninth car. The rear end of this car was badly damaged. The fourth and sixth cars were somewhat damaged. The front truck of the auxiliary water car of engine 2660 was considerably damaged.

The conductor and the brakeman of No. 165 were injured.

It was raining and dark at the time of the accident, which occurred at 7:13 p. m.

Discussion

As No. 165 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the enginemen were in the control compartment at the front of the first Diesel-electric unit. The conductor and the brakeman were in the third car, and the flagman was in the rear vestibule of the rear car. Interlocking signal H-205, governing south-bound movements on the southward main track, indicated Stop. The train stopped with the rear end 2,119 feet south of signal H-211. The engineer did not sound the engine-whistle signal for the flagman to protect the rear of the train. The flagman remained in the rear vestibule of the rear car. He said that he had placed a lighted red light in the vestibule of the rear car, and that the marker lights on the rear of the train were lighted. He first observed the approach of engine 2660 a few seconds before the collision occurred. He said that he did not see a red light on the auxiliary water car of engine 2660.

As engine 2660 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 8 miles per hour. The enginemen said that they were maintaining a lookout in the direction of movement from their respective positions in the cab of the engine. The members of the train crew also were in the cab of the engine. The fireman said he had placed a lighted red light on the rear of the auxiliary water car before the engine left Milby Street engine house. The back-up headlight on the rear of the tender was lighted. The brakes of this engine had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. Until the collision occurred the members of the crew were not aware that the track was occupied by the preceding train. The engineer and the fireman said that they did not see either the red light or the marker lights on the rear end of No. 165. The brakes of engine 2660 were not applied and the throttle was open when the collision occurred.

The investigation disclosed that before the accident occurred employees of the G.C. & S.F. operating over the H.B. & T. had been instructed by a G.C. & S.F. trainmaster that flag protection was not required between Houston and Double Track Junction. As a result, when No. 165 stopped at Double Track Junction the engineer did not sound the engine-whistle signal for the flagman to protect the rear of the train, and the flagman, although in the rear vestibule of the rear car, made no attempt to provide flag protection. The engineer of engine 2660, a B.-R.I. employee operating over the H.B. & T., had been instructed by a trainmaster of the H.B. & T. that flag protection would be provided for passenger trains between Houston and Double Track Junction. He said that he expected flag protection to be provided. The G.C. & S.F. trainmaster was qualified by the chief train rules examiner of the H.B. & T. to examine G.C. & S.F. employees on the rules for the purpose of qualifying them for operation over the H.B. & T. He said, however, that the question of providing flag protection for passenger trains while occupying the main track between Houston and Double Track Junction was not discussed. He said he assumed that, because trains had no superiority in this territory and were required to move at restricted speed, flag protection would not be necessary. Since this accident occurred, the crews of all passenger trains operating between Houston and Double Track Junction have been instructed that flag protection must be provided in accordance with Rule 99.

This accident occurred within yard limits, and therefore the following movement was required to proceed in such manner that it could be stopped short of a train ahead. In addition, a time-table special instruction and the automatic block signal indications required the following movement to proceed in the same manner as was required under the yard-limit rule.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of an engine moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh day of June, 1950.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.