

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3828

INDIANA HARBOR BELT RAILROAD COMPANY

NORTH HARVEY, ILL

DECEMBER 4, 1958

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington

SUMMARY

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DATE	December 4, 1958	
RAILROAD	Indiana Harbor Belt	
LOCATION	North Harvey, Ill	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Freight train	School bus
TRAIN NUMBER	Extra 8813 West	
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBERS	Diesel-electric units 8813 and 8833	
CONSIST	Caboose	
ESTIMATED SPEEDS	20 m p h	Undetermined
OPERATION	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system	
TRACK	Double, tangent, level	
ROAD	Tangent, crosses tracks at angle of 82°, level	
WEATHER	Clear	
TIME	5 30 p m	
CASUALTIES	1 killed, 12 injured	
CAUSE	School bus being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3828

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

INDIANA HARBOR BELT RAILROAD COMPANY

March 27, 1959

Accident at North Harvey, Ill , on December 4, 1958, caused by a school bus being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

FREAS, Commissioner

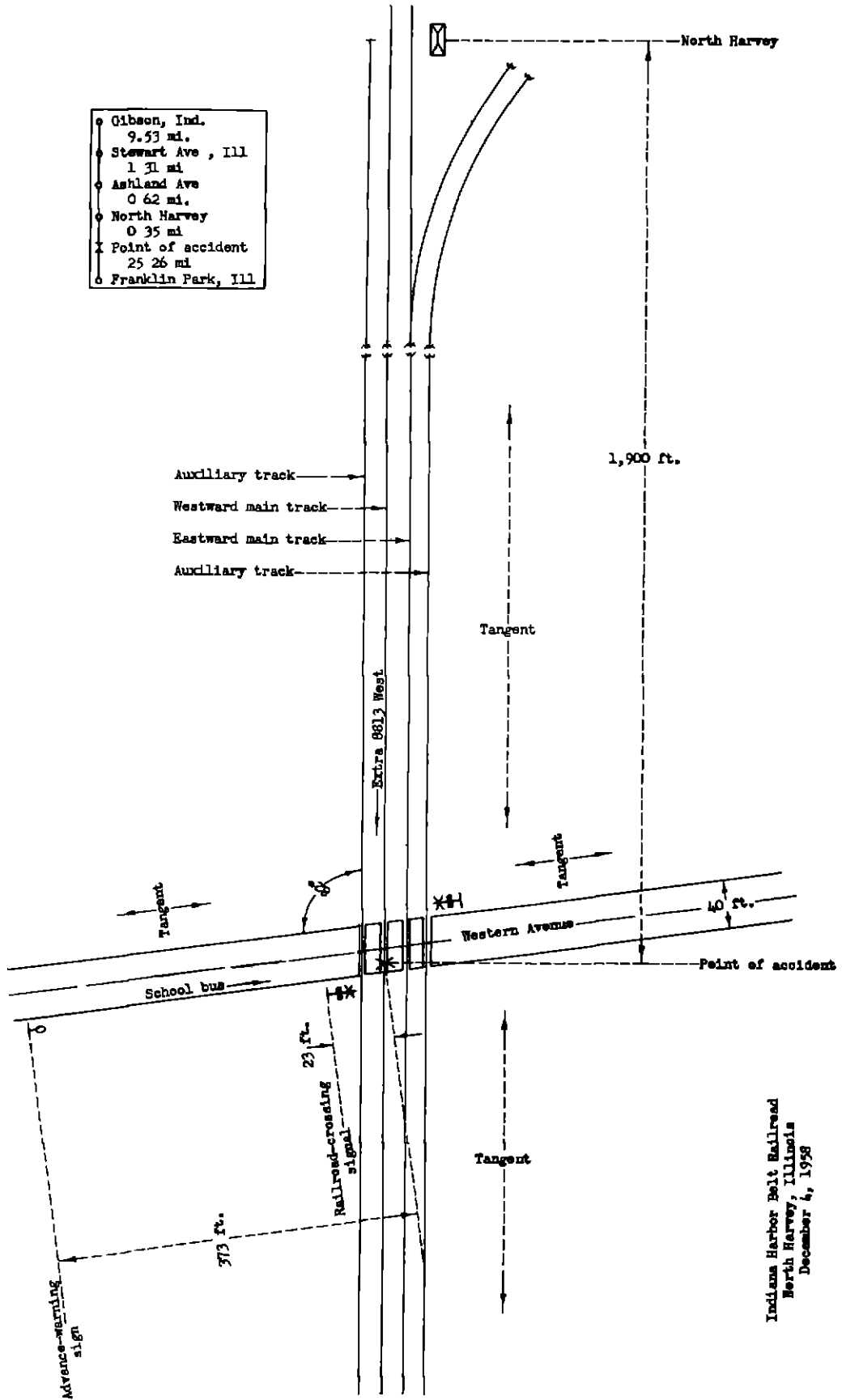
On December 4, 1958, there was a collision between a freight train on the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad and a school bus at a rail-highway grade crossing at North Harvey, Ill , which resulted in the death of 1 passenger in the school bus, the injury of the driver and 10 passengers in the school bus, and the injury of 1 train-service employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the Illinois Commerce Commission

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

To Gibson

- Gibson, Ind. 9.53 mi.
- Stewart Ave, Ill 1.31 mi
- Ashland Ave 0.62 mi.
- North Harvey 0.35 mi
- ✕ Point of accident 25.26 mi
- Franklin Park, Ill

To Franklin Park



Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad
 North Harvey, Illinois
 December 4, 1958

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Gibson, Ind , and Franklin Park, Ill , 37.07 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident, the double-track line is paralleled on each side by an auxiliary track. The accident occurred at North Harvey, Ill , 11.46 miles west of Gibson, at a point 1,900 feet west of the station and where the tracks are crossed at grade by Western Avenue. The tracks are tangent for a considerable distance east and west of the point of accident. The grade is level at the point of accident.

Western Avenue is surfaced with bituminous material to a width of 40 feet, and it intersects the tracks at an angle of about 82°. Planking is laid on each side of the rails throughout the width of the crossing. The remaining area of the crossing is surfaced with bituminous material to a width of 40 feet and to the level of the tops of the rails. The highway is tangent for a considerable distance north and south of the crossing, and it is level in the vicinity of the point of accident.

A circular railroad-crossing advance warning sign, 30 inches in diameter, is located 373 feet north of the centerline of the westward main track and adjacent to the west side of Western Avenue. A standard highway crossing signal of the flashing-light type, with a bell and standard crossbuck, and signs reading "STOP ON RED SIGNAL" is located 23 feet north of the centerline of the westward main track and adjacent to the west side of Western Avenue. A similar highway crossing signal is provided on the east side of Western Avenue, south of the tracks. When a westbound train occupies any portion of the westward main track throughout a distance of 1,938 feet immediately east of the crossing, the bell of each signal sounds and the red lamps flash.

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

17 The headlight will be displayed on the leading end of every train and engine by day and by night * * *

* * *

30 * * * the engine bell must be rung * * * while approaching and passing public crossings at grade * * *

Illinois Commerce Commission General Order No. 176 dated August 15, 1957, reads in part as follows:

* * *

* * * IT IS HEREBY ORDERED by the Commission that each and every railroad in the State of Illinois is hereby excused from sounding a locomotive bell, whistle or horn * * * at such railroad highway grade crossings which are protected by flashing light signals * * * that are automatically controlled and operated by means of track circuits and installed in accordance with the provision of General Order 138 of this Commission * * *

* * *

Bulletin Order No. 1-87, issued by the carrier on September 10, 1957 reads in part as follows:

To ENGINEMEN AND YARDMEN

Illinois Commerce Commission Order No 176, recently enacted, exempts all railroads from whistling at crossings which are protected with automatic flashing lights

Enginemen will be governed accordingly in train movements in the State of Illinois

Illinois Laws Relating to Motor Vehicles, read in part as follows

ARTICLE XII - SPECIAL STOPS REQUIRED

Sec 84 Certain Vehicles Must Stop at All Railroad Grade Crossings (a) The driver * * * of any school bus carrying any school child, * * * before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicle within 50 feet but not less than 10 feet from the nearest rail of such railroad and while so stopped shall listen and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train, and for signals indicating the approach of a train, * * * and shall not proceed until he can do so safely

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 40 miles per hour

Description of Accident

Extra 8813 West, a westbound freight train, consisted of switcher type diesel-electric units 8813 and 8833, coupled in multiple-unit control, and a caboose. This train departed from Stewart Ave, in Blue Island, Ill, 9.53 miles west of Gibson, at 5:23 p. m., passed Ashland Ave, the last open office, 1.31 miles west of Stewart Ave, at 5:28 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it struck a nursery-school bus at a point 1,900 feet west of the station at North Harvey, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Western Avenue.

The school bus was owned by P. Kooyega of Blue Island, Ill. It was occupied by a driver-employee and 11 children. The driver held Illinois chauffeur's license No. B-600-1622-7297. The bus was a 1955 Volkswagen Kombi and it bore Illinois license No. 2424500. It was powered by a 36-horsepower air-cooled gasoline engine and was equipped with 4-wheel hydraulic brakes. The total length of the bus was 13 feet 8 inches, and it had a specified capacity of 8 persons. This vehicle was moving southbound on Western Avenue, when it entered the crossing at an undetermined speed and was struck by Extra 8813 West.

The locomotive of Extra 8813 West stopped with the front end about 200 feet west of the point of accident. None of the equipment of the train was derailed. The first diesel-electric unit was slightly damaged. The bus stopped on the westward main track, 125 feet west of the point of accident, with the front end fouling the eastward main track. The bus was destroyed.

The fireman of Extra 8813 West was injured.

The weather was clear and it was dark at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:30 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily railroad movement over the crossing was 111.4 trains. During the 4-hour period beginning at 3:00 p. m., December 15, 1958, 3,010 automobiles, 274 motortrucks, and 41 buses passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As Extra 8813 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were in the control compartment at the east end of the first diesel-electric unit. The conductor, the front brakeman, and the flagman were in the caboose. The brakes had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted brightly and the locomotive bell was ringing. The members of the crew estimated that the train was moving at a speed of 20 miles per hour as it approached the Western Avenue crossing. The engineer said that when the train was about 1,500 feet east of the crossing he observed the red lamps flashing on the railroad-crossing warning signals at Western Avenue. He said that an automobile crossed the tracks as the train closely approached the crossing, and thus caused him to look to his left, through the window on the fireman's side of the control compartment, to ascertain whether the automobile cleared the crossing. He said that when he again looked ahead he saw a movement directly in front of the locomotive at the instant the collision occurred. The brakes were immediately applied in emergency. The fireman and the members of the train crew said that they were unaware of anything being wrong until the collision occurred. The fireman was injured when he alighted from the locomotive, before it came to a stop, to remove a child thrown on the eastward main track as a result of the collision, and to give stop signals to an approaching eastbound train.

About 5 20 p m the school bus, with a driver and 11 children, departed from a nursery school located in Blue Island, Ill. The driver said that while the bus was moving southward on Western Avenue at a speed of about 25 miles per hour, he saw the red lamps of the railroad-crossing warning signals alternately flashing when the bus was approximately 1-1/2 blocks distant from the crossing. He alleged that when the bus reached a point about 150 feet north of the crossing he noticed that the red lamps of the railroad-crossing warning signals were extinguished. He said that he then stopped the school bus short of the railroad crossing, that he looked to his right and left, and that he did not observe a train approaching from either direction on the railroad. He alleged that the red lamps of the railroad-crossing warning signals remained unlighted, and that the bells of those signals were not operating, when the bus was moved onto the crossing and was struck by Extra 8813 West.

A policeman from the village of Dixmoor, Ill., arrived at the crossing a few minutes after the accident occurred. He stated that the red lamps of the railroad-crossing warning signals were flashing upon his arrival there.

From a point on Western Avenue 140 feet north of the crossing a southbound motorist's view of the tracks east of the point of accident is somewhat restricted by fences and shrubbery. However, the headlight of a westbound train can be seen throughout a distance of about 1,000 feet east of Western Avenue. The view of the westward main track east of the crossing is unrestricted from a point on Western Avenue about 25 feet north of the center-line of the westward main track.

The investigation disclosed that highway vehicles frequently move over the crossing although the warning devices on the railroad-crossing warning signal are in operation and railroad movements are closely approaching the crossing.

Cause

This accident was caused by a school bus being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh
day of March, 1959

By the Commission Commissioner Freas.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary.