

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3781

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

WHITESIDE, TENN

SEPTEMBER 16, 1957

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington

SUMMARY

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DATE	September 16, 1957	
RAILROAD	Louisville and Nashville	
LOCATION	Whiteside, Tenn	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Rear-end collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Track motor-car with trailer	Passenger train
TRAIN NUMBER		Southern Railway 30
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBER		Diesel-electric unit 6900
CONSIST		4 cars
ESTIMATED SPEED	10 m p h	Undetermined
OPERATION	Timetable, train orders, and automatic block-signal system	
TRACKS	Double, 4°51' curve, vertical curve	
WEATHER	Raining	
TIME	8 05 a m	
CASUALTIES	5 injured	
CAUSE	Track motor-car and trailer occupying main track, without adequate protection, on time of overdue first-class passenger train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3781

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

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

April 7, 1958

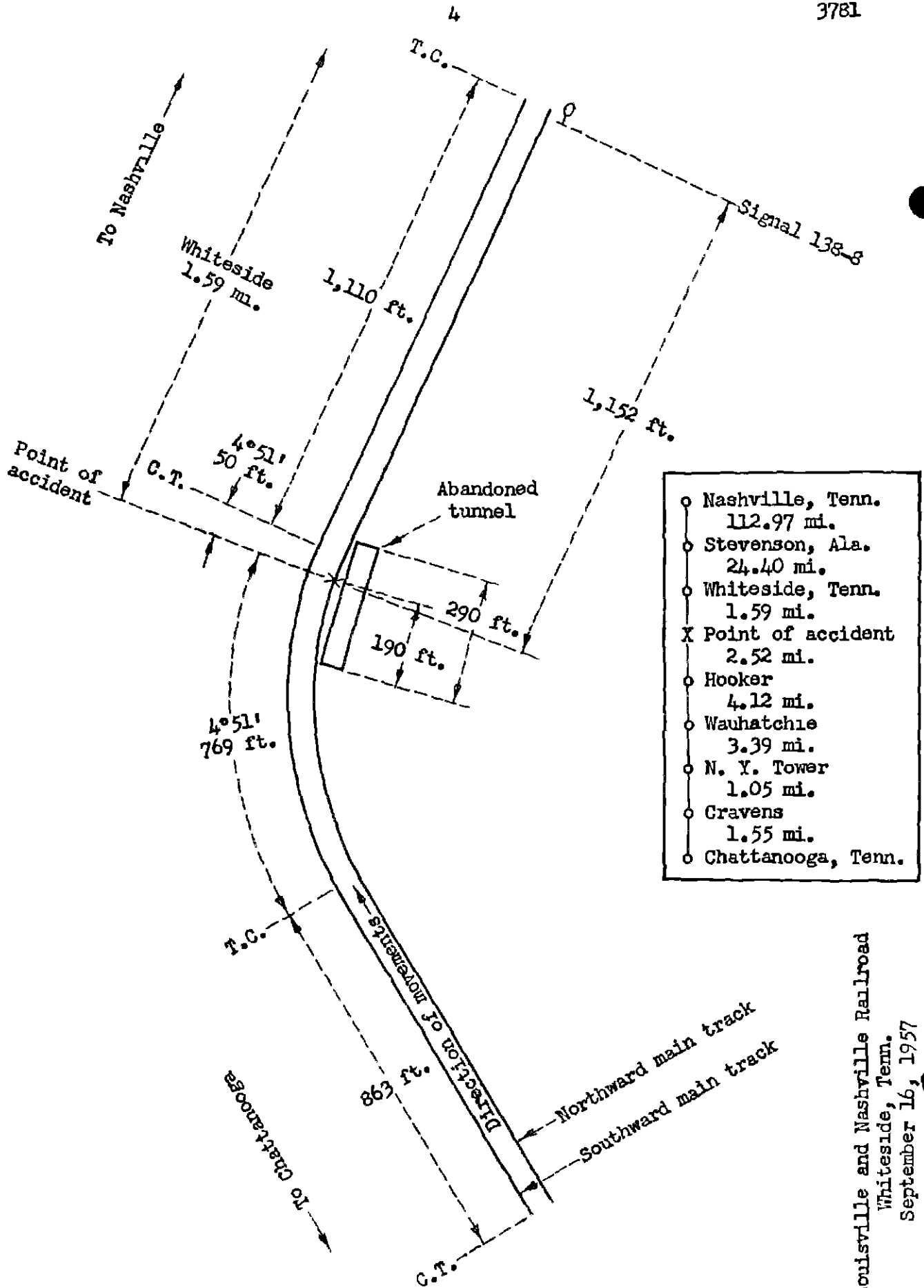
Accident near Whiteside, Tenn , on September 16, 1957, caused by a track motor-car and trailer occupying a main track, without adequate protection, on the time of an overdue first-class passenger train

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

TUGGLE, Commissioner

On September 16, 1957, there was a rear-end collision between a track motor-car with trailer and a passenger train on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad near Whiteside, Tenn , which resulted in the injury of five maintenance-of-way employees

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



Louisville and Nashville Railroad
Whiteside, Tenn.
September 16, 1957

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Chattanooga Division extending between Chattanooga and Nashville, Tenn., 151.59 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 an automatic block-signal system. Trains of the Southern Railway are regularly operated over the Louisville and Nashville Railroad between Wauhatchie, Tenn., and Stevenson, Ala., 5.99 miles and 38.62 miles, respectively, north of Chattanooga. The accident occurred on the northward main track at a point 12.63 miles north of Chattanooga and 1.59 miles south of the station at Whiteside, Tenn. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 863 feet in length, a 4°51' curve to the right 769 feet to the point of accident and 50 feet northward, and a tangent 1,110 feet. The grade for northbound trains is, successively, an average of 0.91 percent ascending 3,000 feet, a vertical curve 507 feet to the point of accident and 493 feet northward, and 0.98 percent descending 1,000 feet.

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident an abandoned tunnel 290 feet in length and 20 feet in height parallels the main tracks on the east. The south end of the tunnel is 190 feet south of the point of accident. The base and the top of the west wall of the tunnel are, respectively, 13 feet and 25 feet east of the centerline of the northward main track.

Automatic signal 138-8, governing northbound movements on the northward main track, is located 1,152 feet north of the point of accident. This signal is of the color-light type and is approach lighted. It displays three aspects.

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

DEFINITIONS

SPEED, REDUCED - A speed not exceeding 20 miles per hour.

OPERATING RULES

11 (g) A train finding a fusee burning yellow on or near its track must immediately reduce to Reduced Speed and continue at not exceeding Reduced Speed, keeping lookout for stop signal, for a safe flagging distance, after which authorized speed may be resumed.

This carrier's rules governing the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

290 Definition. Hand cars include all cars which are put on or taken off the track by hand. The text of the rules which follow will clearly indicate to which class of hand cars a rule is applicable.

297 FLAGGING FOR HAND CARS (a) When hand cars are not clear of a track, a proper lookout in both directions for trains and other hand cars must be kept, and in addition, cars must be fully protected by signals as may be necessary.

(c) Person in charge of car must have it gotten clear of track as soon as possible after it is known that a train is approaching, except if flagman was instructed to hold trains
* * *

* * *

(d) * * *

Hand cars, when moving, must also be protected against following trains when necessary, by caution signal given by torpedoes or yellow fuses or both * * *

(j) Before placing a hand car on a main track, person in charge must, when practicable, get information from train dispatcher as to how important trains are running and avoid delaying them unless an emergency exists, but such information will not, in any way, relieve person in charge of car from properly protecting it against all trains

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident is 45 miles per hour. The maximum authorized speed for track motor-cars is 20 miles per hour.

Wayside telephones are provided at various locations between Wauhatchie and the point of accident.

Description of Accident

On the day of the accident a section force consisting of a foreman and 10 sectionmen reported for duty at Cravens, Tenn., 1.55 miles north of Chattanooga, at 6:00 a. m. Shortly after, the foreman and eight sectionmen departed northbound on the northward main track on a track motor-car and trailer. Stops were made at N. Y. Tower, 1.05 miles north of Cravens, and at a point a short distance north of N. Y. Tower. The section force departed northward from the point north of N. Y. Tower on the track motor-car and trailer about 7:25 a. m. The track motor-car was occupied by the foreman and six sectionmen, and the trailer was occupied by two sectionmen. About 40 minutes later, while the track motor-car and trailer were moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour, the trailer was struck by No. 30. The accident occurred at a point 1.59 miles south of the station at Whiteside.

No. 30, a Southern Railway northbound first-class passenger train, consisted of diesel-electric unit 6900, 1 baggage-express car, 1 mail car, 1 passenger-baggage car, and 1 coach, in the order named. This train entered the northward main track of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad at Wauhatchie, departed from that station at 7:52 a. m., 40 minutes late, and while moving at an undetermined speed it struck the track motor-car and trailer.

The track motor-car and trailer were demolished. No. 30 stopped with the front end of the locomotive 954 feet north of the point of accident.

Five of the sectionmen were injured.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 8:05 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the northward main track in the vicinity of the point of accident was 12.22 trains.

The track motor-car was of the belt-drive type, was powered by an 8 horsepower engine, and was equipped with 4-wheel brakes. It was provided with a metal top, windshield and wipers at the front end, and canvas curtains on the sides and rear. It weighed approximately 850 pounds. The frame and superstructure of the trailer were constructed of wood. The trailer weighed approximately 700 pounds.

Discussion

The track motor-car was being operated by the section foreman. When the track motor-car and trailer arrived at N Y Tower the foreman obtained a copy of a line-up of train movements from the operator at that point. The line-up was issued by the train dispatcher at 5 48 a m on the day the accident occurred and read in part as follows:

* * *

NO CALL ON NO 22

* * *

NO 30 CALLED 10 MINS LATE

The foreman did not discuss the contents of the line-up with the other members of the section force. He said that he was aware that No 22, a northbound third-class freight train scheduled to depart from Cravens at 5 00 a m, could be expected at any time. The section force proceeded northward on the track motor-car and trailer to a point a short distance north of N Y Tower where work was performed. The foreman instructed a track patrolman, who was assigned to that territory, to provide flag protection for 10 minutes after the movement departed from that point. The foreman said that the track motor-car and trailer passed Wauhatchie about 7 38 a m. No 30 was scheduled to depart from that station at 7 12 a m. The foreman said that since the line-up indicated No 30 was called 10 minutes late, he assumed that the train had already departed from Wauhatchie. He did not consult the operator at that point to determine the location of No 30 either when he was in the vicinity of the station or by use of a wayside telephone when en route. As the track motor-car and trailer proceeded northward the foreman dropped a lighted 10-minute yellow fusee adjacent to the northward main track at a point approximately 3 8 miles south of the point of accident. When the movement passed Hooker, 2 52 miles south of the point of accident, about 7 55 a m, the foreman instructed a sectionman who was performing work at that location to place a lighted 10-minute yellow fusee adjacent to the northward main track, and the sectionman complied with the foreman's instructions. Members of the section force on the track motor-car and trailer were maintaining a lookout ahead and to the rear. The first the foreman became aware that a following train was closely approaching was when signal 138-8 came into view as the track motor-car and trailer moved on the curve near the south end of the tunnel. He observed that the signal was lighted and that it was displaying a green aspect. He said he thought the approaching train was third-class freight train No 22. He immediately reduced the speed of the movement temporarily to permit a sectionman to alight to provide flag protection. He instructed the flagman to hold the train 10 minutes. He said that he intended to proceed to the location where work was to be performed by the section force and to set the track motor-car and trailer off at that point. The flagman's view of an approaching northbound train was materially restricted by the tunnel, curvature of the track, and vegetation. He said that he had proceeded southward about 20 feet when No 30 came into view. He estimated that the speed of No 30 was about 60 miles per hour at that

time. He gave stop signals with a red flag. The engineer of No. 30 acknowledged the signals by sounding the horn. The brakes of the train were applied in emergency when the train passed him. The foreman and the other members of the section force alighted immediately before the collision occurred.

As No. 30 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted. The engineer and fireman said that they did not observe a lighted yellow fusee and that no torpedoes were exploded by the train en route from Wauhatchie. The view of the track ahead from the control compartment of a northbound train is materially restricted in the vicinity of the point of accident by the tunnel, curvature of the track, and vegetation. The engineer said that when the train was approaching the south end of the tunnel the flagman came into view a short distance ahead. He immediately initiated an emergency application of the brakes and acknowledged the flagman's signals by sounding the horn. The engineer estimated that the speed of the train was about 35 miles per hour at that time. He said that the track motor-car and trailer were about 100 feet north of the locomotive when they came into view. Members of the section force estimated that the speed of No. 30 when it came into view was between 45 and 60 miles per hour. The foreman estimated that the speed of No. 30 was about 45 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Under the rules of the carrier the person in charge of a track motor-car must, when practicable, get information from the train dispatcher as to how important trains are running and avoid delaying them unless an emergency exists, but such information will not, in any way, relieve the person in charge of the track motor-car from properly protecting it against all trains. A track motor-car, when moving, must be protected against following trains when necessary, by caution signals given by torpedoes or yellow fusees, or both. The section foreman said that he understood the requirements of the rules. In the instant case the section foreman misunderstood the information contained in the line-up concerning the movement of No. 30, and, as a result, he failed to have the track motor-car and trailer in the clear for No. 30. He did not provide adequate protection for the track motor-car and trailer against a following train as prescribed by the rules.

During the past 10 years the Commission has investigated 66 collisions, including the present case, in which track motor-cars were involved. These accidents resulted in the death of 87 persons and the injury of 191 persons.

Cause

This accident was caused by a track motor-car and trailer occupying a main track, without adequate protection, on the time of an overdue first-class passenger train.

Dated at Washington, D. C. this seventh day of April, 1958

By the Commission, Commissioner Tugale

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. MCCOY,

Secretary