

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2729
THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR JOHNSTON CITY, ILL., ON
SEPTEMBER 19, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Missouri Pacific
Date: September 19, 1943
Location: Jonnston City, Ill.
Kind of accident: Collision
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Bus
Train number: 336
Engine number: Gas-electric 650
Consist: Motor car, trailer
Estimated speed: 25 m. p. h. : 30 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; 4°57' curve; 0.90 percent descending grade westward
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle of 94°22'; 1.55 percent descending grade northward
Weather: Clear
Time: 7:25 a. m.
Casualties: 8 killed; 55 injured
Cause: Failure to operate a passenger-carrying vehicle approaching railroad crossing at grade in accordance with requirements of law

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2729

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

THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

November 15, 1943.

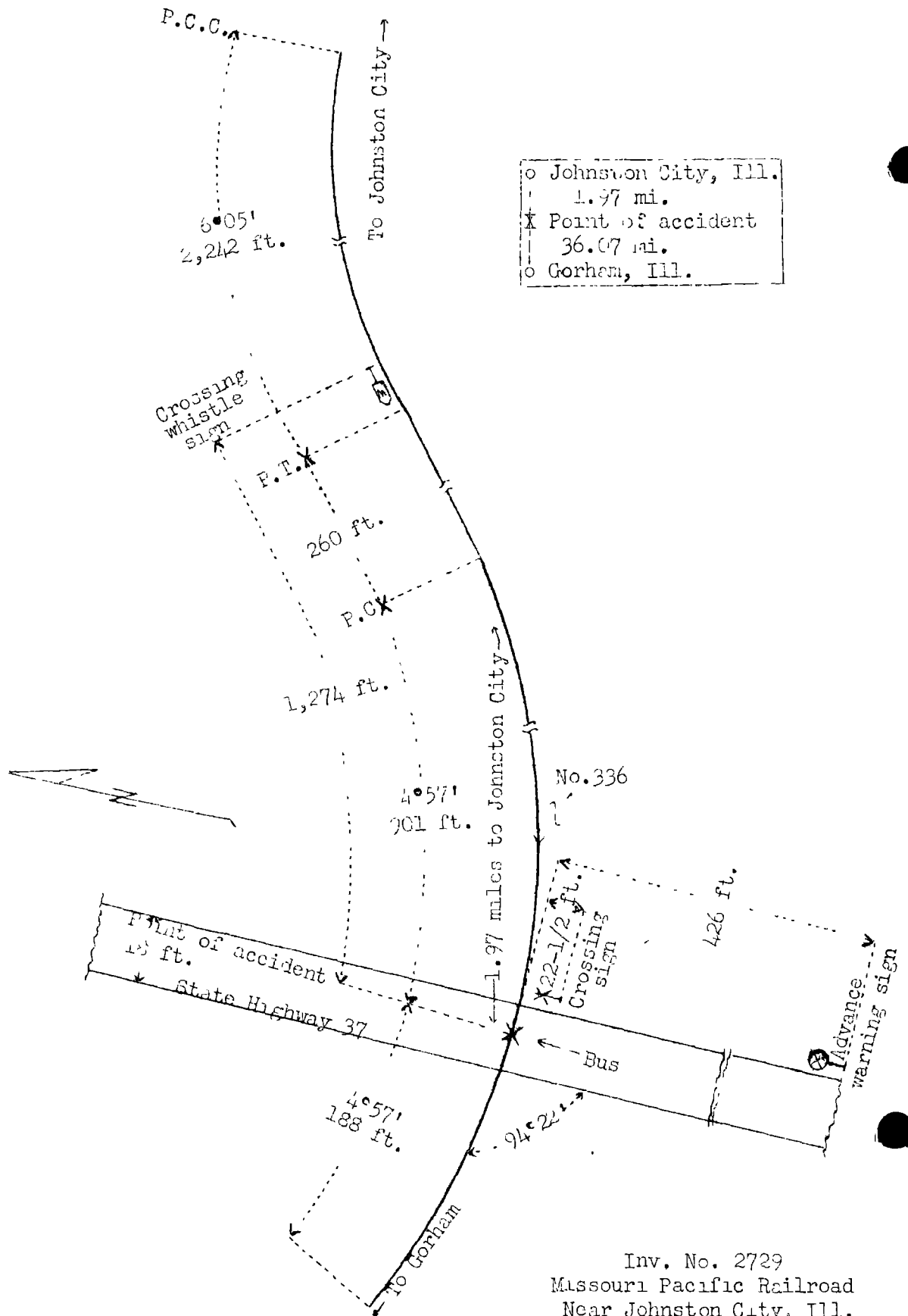
Accident near Johnston City, Ill., on September 19, 1943,
caused by failure to operate a passenger-carrying
vehicle approaching railroad crossing at grade in
accordance with requirements of law.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On September 19, 1943, there was a collision between a passenger train of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and a bus at a grade crossing near Johnston City, Ill., which resulted in the death of 7 bus passengers and the bus driver, and the injury of 49 bus passengers, 3 train passengers and 3 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

¹Under 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 Johnston City, Ill.
 1.97 mi.
 X Point of accident
 36.07 mi.
 o Gorham, Ill.

Inv. No. 2729
 Missouri Pacific Railroad
 Near Johnston City, Ill.
 September 19, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Illinois Division extending between Johnston City and Gornam, Ill., 38.04 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. Compass directions on the railroad are east and west. The accident occurred 1.97 miles west of Johnston City where the railroad was crossed at grade by State Highway 37. From the east on the railroad there were, in succession, a compound curve to the left 2,242 feet in length, the maximum curvature of which was 6°05', a tangent 260 feet, and a 4°57' curve to the right 901 feet to the point of accident and 188 feet beyond. The grade for west-bound trains varied between 0.52 percent and 1.00 percent descending 1,300 feet to the point of accident, and was 0.90 percent at that point. Highway 37 crossed the track at an angle of 94°22'. From the south the highway was tangent a considerable distance to the crossing and beyond. The grade for north-bound vehicles was 1.55 percent descending 700 feet to the crossing. The highway and the crossing were 18 feet wide. The highway was surfaced with concrete and the crossing with asphalt.

An advance warning railroad-crossing sign was located 426 feet south of the crossing and 5 feet east of the highway. This sign was a disk 30 inches in diameter mounted on a mast. It bore two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles at its center and the letters "R. R." in black and in colorless reflector buttons. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign was located in the southeast angle of the crossing 22-1/2 feet south of the track and 11 feet east of the highway. This sign was mounted on a mast and bore the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black and in colorless reflector buttons. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains was located 1,274 feet east of the crossing.

Operating rules of the railroad read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

Note.-The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds. * * *

Sound.	Indication.
* * *	
(1) ___ o ___	Approaching public crossings at grade. To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is occupied by engine or car. * * *

* * *

Article XII, of the 1941 Revised Motor Vehicle Laws of Illinois, reads in part as follows:

84. Certain Vehicles Must Stop at all Railroad Grade Crossings.- (a) The driver of any motor vehicle carrying passengers for hire, * * *, 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 the passenger train was 30 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 336, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of a gas-electric-motor passenger-car and a baggage-mail trailer-car, in the order named. The equipment was of steel construction. This train departed from Johnston City about 7:20 a. m., and, while moving over a highway grade crossing 1.97 miles west of Johnston City at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour, it was struck by a north-bound passenger bus.

The bus involved was owned by the Dixie Greyhound Lines, Inc., of Memphis, Tenn. It bore Tennessee license No. 2D61, Kentucky license No. 83, Illinois license No. H854, and I. C. C. certificate No. 2612. The driver held Tennessee special chauffeur's license No. 224059. The bus was a 1938, 4-wheel, single-motor, Yellow Coach model, equipped with dual tires on rear wheels, air-brakes on all wheels, and a hand-operated brake on the drive shaft. The bus was 32 feet 10 inches long, 8 feet wide, and 9 feet 10 inches high. It weighed approximately 19,000 pounds and had seating capacity for 38 passengers. The windshield and the side windows were so arranged that the driver had unrestricted view ahead and to each side. This vehicle was moving northward on the highway at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour when it struck No. 336.

A west-bound train approaching on the railroad could be seen by the driver of a north-bound vehicle throughout a distance of approximately 500 feet.

The bays struck the left front side of the first unit of No. 336, and this unit was overturned to the right and stopped, considerably damaged, 111.5 feet west of the crossing. The front truck of the second unit was derailed. The front end of the bus was demolished and the roof was sheared from the side sheets practically the entire length of the bus.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:25 a. m.

The conductor, the engineer and the baggageman of No. 336 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement of trains over the crossing was 5.7. During the 24-hour period beginning at 8 a. m., September 22, 1,779 automobiles, 569 trucks, 22 busses, and 6 trains passed over the crossing.

Discussion

No. 336 was approaching the crossing at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 30 miles per hour. The whistle signal for the crossing was sounded in compliance with the rules. The engineer saw the bus approaching on the highway about 500 feet south of the crossing. When the front unit of his train was a short distance east of the crossing the speed of the bus appeared to be too fast for it to stop short of the crossing. He increased the speed of his train in an unsuccessful attempt to clear the crossing before the bus reached it.

The driver of the bus was an experienced driver and was familiar with the route. He had been off duty several days prior to the time he started the trip, and at the time of the accident had been on duty about 9 hours. Several passengers in the bus saw the train approaching the crossing before the collision occurred, and, although some of them shouted or screamed warnings, the driver made no attempt to stop the bus short of the crossing. The laws of the state of Illinois require motor vehicles carrying passengers for hire to stop within 50 feet but not less than 10 feet from the nearest railroad track and not to proceed until it is safe to do so. It could not be determined why the driver failed to take action to stop the bus short of the crossing in accordance with this provision of the law, as he was killed in the accident.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to operate a passenger-carrying vehicle approaching railroad crossing at grade in accordance with requirements of law.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifteenth day of November, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.