

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2767
THE WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ST. LOUIS, MO., ON
JANUARY 23, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Wabash
Date: January 23, 1944
Location: St. Louis, Mo.
Kind of accident: Collision
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Bus
Train number: 206 :
Engine number: 661 :
Consist: 5 cars :
Estimated speed: 30 m. p. h. : 2 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable, train orders and
automatic block-signal system
Track: Double; tangent; 0.65 percent
descending grade southward
Street: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 74°40'; practically level at
crossing
Weather: Clear
Time: 6:36 p. m.
Casualties: 11 killed; 7 injured
Cause: Bus being driven upon street
grade crossing immediately in
front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2767

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

THE WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY

February 24, 1944.

Accident near St. Louis, Mo., on January 23, 1944, caused
by a bus being driven upon a street grade crossing
immediately in front of an approaching train.

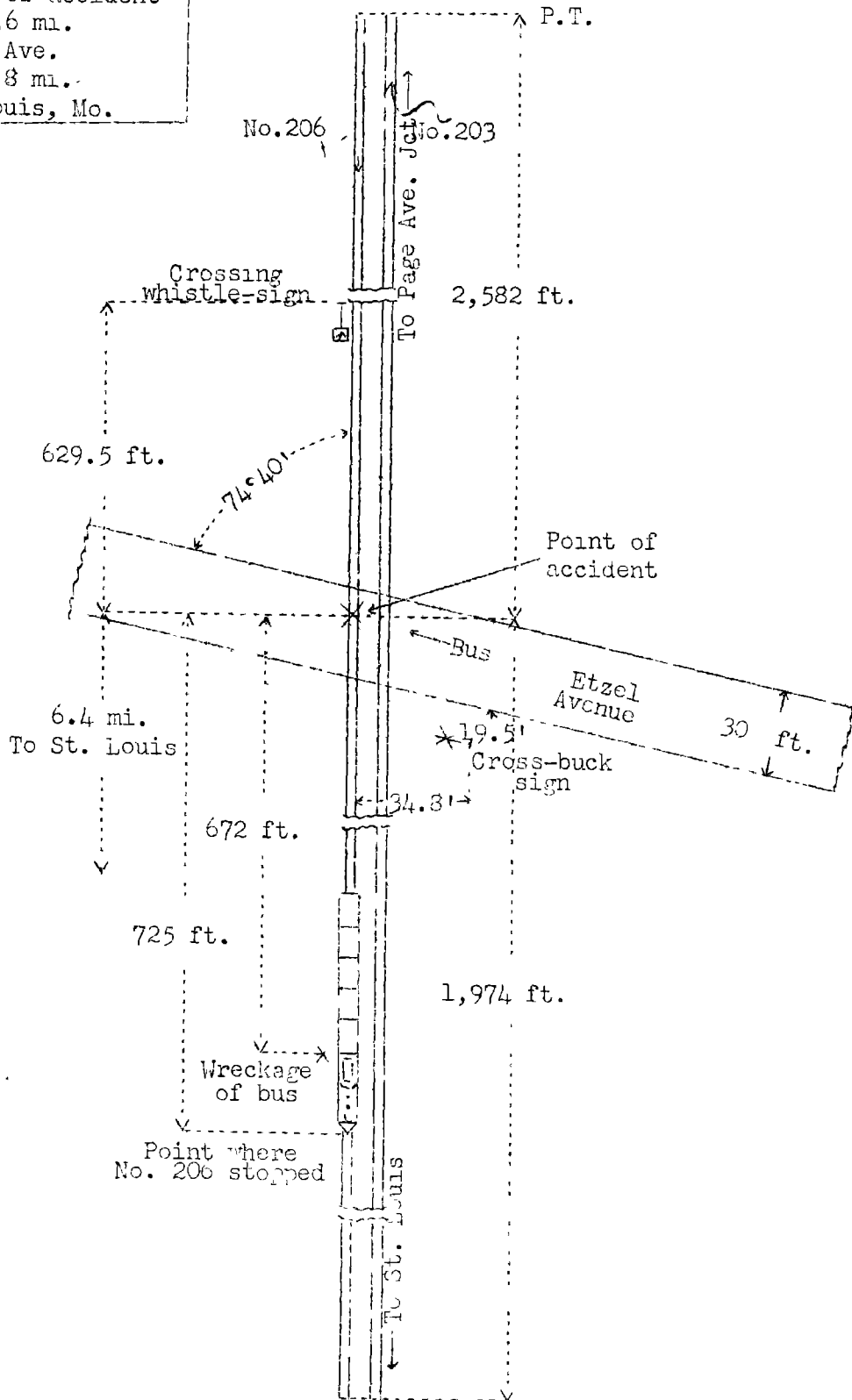
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On January 23, 1944, there was a collision between a passenger train of the Wabash Railroad and a bus at a street grade crossing near St. Louis, Mo., which resulted in the death of 10 bus passengers and the bus driver, and the injury of 7 bus passengers.

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

Page Ave. Jct., Mo.
0.5 mi.
Point of accident
4.6 mi.
Grand Ave.
1.8 mi.
o St. Louis, Mo.



Inv. No. 2767
 Wabash Railroad
 St. Louis, Mo.
 January 23, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Moberly Division extending between Page Ave. Jct. and Grand Ave., St. Louis, Mo., 5.1 miles. This was a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred on the eastward main track at a point about 6.4 miles north of the station at St. Louis, where the railroad was crossed at grade by Etzel Avenue. The tracks at this point extended north and south, but a train moving southward was east-bound according to time-table directions. From the north on the railroad the track was tangent 2,582 feet to the crossing and 1,974 feet beyond. At this point the grade was 0.65 percent descending southward.

Etzel Avenue extended east and west and crossed the tracks at an angle of 74°40'. The street was tangent throughout a distance of about 1,000 feet east of the crossing and a considerable distance westward. The grade for west-bound vehicles was, successively, 0.65 percent ascending 300 feet, 2.75 percent ascending 100 feet to the crossing, where it was practically level, then 5.5 percent ascending 250 feet beyond. There were four auxiliary tracks at the crossing, and on each side the street was surfaced with concrete to a width of 20 feet. The crossing was 45.75 feet wide, and was surfaced with asphalt. Planks were provided on both sides of each rail.

A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign was mounted on a mast 10 feet in height located to the left of the direction of west-bound traffic, 34.8 feet east of the center-line of the eastward main track and 19.5 feet south of the street. This sign bore the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters. A crossing-whistle sign for east-bound trains was located 629.5 feet north of the crossing.

Operating rules 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. * * *

* * *

General Order No. 33-B of the State of Missouri Public Service Commission read in part, as follows:

Rule No. 53. Driving Rules and Regulations.--

* * *

(c) Every motor vehicle transportating passengers, * * * shall, upon approaching any railroad grade crossing, be brought to a full stop within 50 feet, but not less than 10 feet, from the nearest rail of such railroad grade crossing, and shall not proceed until due caution has been taken to ascertain that the course is clear; provided, that such full stop shall not be required * * * at a railroad grade crossing protected by a watchman or traffic officer on duty or by a traffic-control "stop and go" signal (not railroad flashing signal) giving positive indication to approaching vehicles to proceed. * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains was 75 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 206, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 661, one passenger-baggage car, three coaches and one cafe-parlor car, in the order named. The cars were of steel construction. This train passed Page Ave. Jct. at 6:34 p. m., 4 minutes late, and while moving on the eastward main track at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it struck a bus at a street grade crossing about 0.5 mile south of the tower at Page Ave. Jct.

The bus involved was owned by the St. Louis Public Service Company of St. Louis, Mo. It bore Missouri license No. 4288, City of St. Louis licenses No. 10565 and No. 150. The driver held Missouri chauffeur's license No. 2309, issued January 18, 1943. The bus was a 1939, 4-wheel, single-motor, General Motors model 739, equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels, air-brakes on all wheels, and a hand-operated brake on the drive shaft, and weighed 11,000 pounds. The bus body was 23 feet 10 inches long, 7 feet 8 inches wide, and 7 feet 3 inches high, and had seating capacity for 25 passengers. The windshield and the side windows were so arranged that the driver had unrestricted view ahead and to each side. This vehicle moved westward on the street at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour,

stopped a few feet east of the crossing and, after No. 203, a west-bound passenger train consisting of an engine and 11 cars and moving on the westward main track, had passed over the crossing, it proceeded upon the crossing at an estimated speed of 2 miles per hour and was struck by No. 206.

The bus was demolished, and the wreckage stopped on the west side of the track 672 feet south of the crossing. No. 206 was not derailed, and it stopped clear of the crossing with the front end of the engine 725 feet south of it. The front end of the engine was slightly damaged.

It was clear and dusk at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:36 p. m.

During the 32-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement of trains and switch engines over the crossing was 32. During the 24-hour period beginning at 7 a. m., February 1, 236 busses, 1,156 automobiles, 206 trucks, 26 trains, 16 switching movements and 8 railroad motor-cars passed over the crossing.

Discussion

No. 206 was approaching the crossing at a speed of about 30 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly and both enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The whistle signal for the crossing was sounded in compliance with the rules. The engine of No. 206 passed the rear car of No. 203 about 80 feet north of the crossing. The fireman of No. 206 looked northward for signals from the rear of No. 203, then he looked southward. He saw the bus enter upon the crossing when his engine was about 50 feet north of it, and he called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the brakes became effective.

The crossing was protected by a cross-buck sign, and a watchman was on duty between 6:30 a. m. and 5:30 p. m., but at the time of the accident no watchman was assigned to duty. The bus stopped a few feet east of the westward main track, and, immediately after the rear car of No. 203 passed, the bus moved upon the crossing and was struck. The fuel tank of the bus was ruptured and gasoline became ignited. Some of the casualties were the result of burns. The driver of the bus had considerable experience, and prior to the accident he had made frequent trips over the crossing. He had taken charge of the bus about 6:30 p. m. The bus was found to be in good mechanical condition when it was inspected at the bus garage January 22. While No. 203 was moving over the crossing, the driver could not see No. 206 approaching. The regulations of the Missouri Public Service Commission require motor vehicles carrying passengers to stop

within 50 feet but not less than 10 feet from the nearest railroad track and not to proceed until proper precaution has been taken to ascertain that the way is clear. It could not be determined why the bus entered upon the crossing immediately in front of the approaching train, as the driver was fatally injured in the accident.

The investigation disclosed that on December 18, 1920, the carrier issued a bulletin restricting the speed of all trains over Etzel Avenue crossing to 10 miles per hour, and that a few days later the Missouri Public Service Commission issued an order requiring the carrier to limit the speed of its trains while passing over this crossing to a maximum of 10 miles per hour. Although neither the bulletin nor the order had been rescinded, the current timetable did not carry such restriction, and No. 206 was moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour when the collision occurred. Whether the accident would have been averted if the speed of the train had not been in excess of 10 miles per hour was not determined.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a bus being driven upon a street grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of February, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.