

Appendix E

Interview Transcript, Captain Christopher Cooper
Survival Factors Group Chairman's Factual Report

Metrolink train 111
Union Pacific train LOF 65-12
Los Angeles, California
September 12, 2008
DCA-08-MR-009

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

* * * * *
Investigation of: *
*
HEAD-ON COLLISION OF A METROLINK *
COMMUTER TRAIN WITH A UNION *
PACIFIC FREIGHT TRAIN, * Docket No.: DCA-08-MR-009
September 12, 2008 *
Los Angeles, California *
* * * * *

Interview of: CAPT. CHRISTOPHER COOPER

Los Angeles, California

Monday,
September 15, 2008

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: DANA SANZO

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board
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MS. SANZO: My name is Dana Sanzo. I'm an Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, and today we're conducting an interview regarding NTSB Accident Number DCA-08-MR-009, in Los Angeles, California, the collision between Metrolink train and the UP freight train.

And if everyone could just introduce themselves, their name and position.

CHIEF QUINTANAR: My name is John Quintanar. I'm a Battalion Chief with the LAFD. I am part of the NTSB investigative team with Dana.

MR. COOPER: And I'm Christopher Cooper. I'm a Captain II here at the Fire Station 96, Los Angeles Fire Department, Battalion 15, Division 3.

INTERVIEW OF CAPT. CHRISTOPHER COOPER

BY MS. SANZO:

Q. And if you can just tell us about that day starting with when you were dispatched and tell us about the activities on scene that day.

A. Well, we had just returned from a field trip from the Harbor. My memories were kind of relaxing and going into their station activities and they were involved with cooking, preparing for the night's meal, and we got the initial dispatch which came in as a traffic collision, and then it was upgraded to a physical rescue, and we were out within the 60 seconds

1 that we're allotted and started making our way northbound on
2 Topanga Boulevard, Topanga Canyon Boulevard, and we got up to
3 approximately about four miles from the fire station, and we
4 could see smoke coming from the reported address. The reported
5 address is a secluded area, Heather Lee Lane. It's a dead end,
6 and our engine company with its speed was able to get there a
7 little quicker than the truck, they gave a size up of a train
8 collision, and with the truck, the piece of apparatus that I
9 ride on, was a little bit more challenged because of its height
10 and some of the access issues with overgrown trees and the
11 third house from the end of the dead end street that we were
12 responding to, which was 21631 West Heather Lee, was undergoing
13 some kind of renovation, and they had a 20 foot roll off that
14 was a little bit further into the traffic pattern than it
15 should have been, and then they had a larger dump of sand that
16 also kind of produced an access and egress issue for us. So we
17 got the truck in, and from where I could sit, I could only see
18 an actual about 10 degree window of what was going on behind
19 the house of the reported location. I could see a Metrolink
20 car, car number 2. It was upright, and I could see Metro on
21 it, and I could see the fire starting to grow, and that's all I
22 could see. And I was able to give an effective size up based
23 on what was coming out from the Captain I on the engine, that
24 was there with a full view of what was happening. And from
25 there I --

1 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

2 Q. What was the size up just, just for -- just if you
3 can remember?

4 A. His size up, and he was broken. I got the tail end
5 of it. He said that -- I didn't hear him give an address and I
6 didn't hear the part of him identify himself, but I could
7 recognize his voice, and so I knew that was Captain Barrios,
8 but he said that we have a train collision to the rear of the
9 structure and that he was calling for three additional task
10 forces and five paramedic RAs, and I -- he also called for a
11 staging area, which was Owens Knob and Chatsworth, and then I
12 piggybacked on his size up, and I gave the address and Task
13 Force 96 on scene, train collision. I'm going to go ahead
14 based on the information, going to go ahead and double the
15 assignment. We're going to maintain Owens Knob and Chatsworth.
16 I do have access problems, and we're going to be known as
17 (indiscernible). And then I got off the rig and -- I got off
18 the rig and put on the rest of my PPE except for my breather,
19 and then I got back in the truck and started trying to direct
20 companies, and by then, the battalion chief had arrived and set
21 up his command post way -- about a quarter of a mile from where
22 I was, and so I went over to make face-to-face communications.
23 I had to sprint back to his location, and I made face-to-face
24 update and contact with him. I gave him an update on what we
25 had here, and he gave me the assignment to go and be the 2

1 captain at the site, at the command post. The only reason I'm
2 pausing is because the other captain is also named Cooper,
3 Scott Cooper. So I'm Christopher Cooper. So Scott Cooper was
4 given the medical portion of it, and I was given the fire
5 attack. And so I returned back to the fire apparatus in a dead
6 run. I had my breather on, and I grabbed these documents, my
7 map, and a clipboard and my (indiscernible) and started making
8 my way to the rear of the reported address and I could see then
9 the fire attack operation was well underway. They had already
10 laid a line. They had a 2 1/2 inch line over to the south side
11 of the train. They had done what we call a Y it off, so that
12 we could run additional lines, and the firefighting line was
13 being put into operation on the south side of the train. I
14 wasn't sure what was happening from my point of view still in
15 the backyard of the reported address, what was going on, on the
16 north side of the train. And so I climbed over the wall and
17 jumped over and started making my way up the tracks and when I
18 got to the top of the tracks itself, there was about 10 people
19 there and they were all pulling and pushing me and asking me
20 for assistance and they wanted me to go to the number 3 and
21 number 4 car, but my assignment was fire attack and I was
22 determined to get to the north side of the track and see what
23 was going on over there. And then once I got over there, I
24 actually had to navigate my way kind of under the back end of
25 train number 2, car number 2. There was some instability there

1 with that back end of the car. And so I went back to the north
2 side of the train where connects with the locomotive normally,
3 and there was some surface fire going down. Engineer 107s was
4 there with me and we decided to pull a line and attack it, and
5 looked inside the train, car number 2, and my Light Force was
6 already inside, the doorman, the AO and the (indiscernible)
7 were inside with some of the patients.

8 Q. So --

9 A. I could see them. I had seen them actually when I
10 was going to check on the north side of the fire
11 (indiscernible). I could see them in there, but I wasn't
12 really focused on it being them and then on my way back, I was
13 able to see through a window and a crack in the number 2 car,
14 on the north side, and I could see a small fissure and a crack
15 on the south side of that car, and I could see fire through
16 that crack, and so I decided to go all the way back over on the
17 south side again and make sure that there was proper fire
18 attack going on, on the south side of the train.

19 Q. So if I -- if I'm readying you correctly, the fire
20 was in the, the engine of the Metrolink and the UP locomotive
21 also?

22 A. Yeah, there was fire on the locomotive that was on
23 its side.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then there was fire that was impinging on the

1 patient space, the interior car space of number 1 car. And --

2 Q. And you say number 1 car, you're not including the
3 engine of Metrolink?

4 A. No.

5 Q. It's the passenger number 1 car?

6 A. Yeah, there was fire -- I'm not sure if it was in the
7 car, but you could see it, that there was -- from the inside of
8 the car, you could see that there was fire, and three of my
9 people were inside of the car, and I was about this close to
10 saying you guys need to get out of the car because there's some
11 fire issues here, but instead I went around to the south side
12 and helped supervise a little bit better on the fire attack
13 procedure that was going on. And luckily, they were able to
14 knock the fire down and prevent it from impinging and extending
15 into the number 1 car. And then from there, I went back to the
16 portal, the door of number 1 car was on its side. It was no
17 longer vertical. It was horizontal, and so I went back there,
18 and that's where people were coming out. People were being
19 directed, if they could, to get out of the train, and those
20 that couldn't, we were beginning to take them out. All awhile,
21 there was a convergence of both people that looked like they
22 were from the train, they were injured, and people that -- I'm
23 not sure what their intentions were, but we were trying to keep
24 them back, citizens, good Samaritans, volunteers, what have
25 you, and then people that probably just wanted to

1 opportunistically get on that train, and it was about that
2 point that two things happened, actually three things. The CHP
3 came, CHP officer, and a LAPD officer showed up, and he had
4 three or four other officers with them, and they were running
5 around trying to assist patients and get involved in patient
6 care, which was good, but I really needed a hard set perimeter
7 so that we could discern from who was involved in this and
8 who's not, and there were some other fire issues going on from
9 a safety standpoint. I had citizens lighting cigarettes and
10 stuff like that, you know, regular stuff.

11 Q. Uh-huh.

12 A. And once we got PD to start to take a hard line on
13 the perimeter, that part of it was done, and then I got back on
14 the TAC channel, and I talked a little bit about what we had
15 there in terms of -- I gave this report. I kind of separated
16 it into a south end of the incident and a north end, and I
17 hadn't heard any radio traffic from Light Force 28 about
18 patients and number, magnitude and all that. So I felt that
19 might have been important for the IC to know, and so I gave him
20 a preliminary report on what I saw in terms of criticals,
21 minors, delayed.

22 Q. Of car 1 only or --

23 A. Both -- all three cars.

24 Q. All three cars.

25 A. Yeah. I separated them north and south.

1 Q. Uh-huh.

2 A. Because I wasn't really -- I didn't have the
3 logistics down on or the terminology down on what we were going
4 to number the cars at that point. So I said 10 critical, we're
5 extricating 3 currently, and then we had 6 deceased in the
6 north car, and then on the south car we had 2 deceased, 2
7 critical and 17 minors, and that was me counting them by hand.
8 And that's just what I saw. And so at that time I also flashed
9 in my mind that I need to contact my rescue and find out what's
10 the status of contacting the MAC (ph.) center, and I asked
11 Rescue 96 if they had completed their MCI portion, and we have
12 a single function paramedic that works here at this fire
13 station. Most of our paramedics are firefighter/paramedics.
14 They're dual function, but this gentleman just happens to be
15 single function, and so that's what he does. And he did it
16 like as best I think it's been done in a while. He stayed
17 inside the rescue and coordinated with the MAC and made sure
18 that his colleague went out and did an accurate triage, and
19 then he came to me shortly thereafter, after I made that
20 transmission, and brought me up to speed on a little bit more
21 definitive numbers. And he had a resource request, and I think
22 I asked for three additional task forces to help triage and
23 treat the patients in car number 3 and number 4. And I
24 think -- I'm pretty sure the IC acknowledged that because I
25 didn't revisit it. So from there, I basically just supervised

1 what was going on inside the train, inside number 1 car and
2 maintained knockdown status on the fire attack.

3 Q. I asked that question to the IC Mottram, if they had
4 a knockdown time written down. I was curious to see if they
5 knocked it down and all that. He didn't have any of that. To
6 the best of your ability --

7 A. I don't remember saying it on the radio.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I'm almost positive I didn't say we have a knockdown.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. But if you had to guess on the time, I know this
13 thing is really taking a life of its own and so forth, but when
14 you would you say you knocked down the fire?

15 A. I would say we probably had that fire knocked down
16 within 10 minutes after, after we arrived on scene. And I hit
17 my on-scene button twice --

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 A. -- to make sure. And that was my on-scene time, not
20 Engine 96's on-scene time.

21 Q. Right. So you concurrently with your engine, you
22 attacked the fire as well as trying to rescue people at the
23 same time?

24 A. Right. The Light Force went inside and started --

25 Q. Triaging or --

1 A. -- extracting people, and then the engine was pretty
2 much involved in fire attack with Engine 107.

3 Q. By the way, one of the compliments I heard after --
4 I'm not sure if Mottram said this, but I think it was after
5 that 3:30 meeting, that Captain Cooper was --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I need to interrupt.

7 (Off the record.)

8 (On the record.)

9 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

10 Q. We were discussing the transition where you were fire
11 attack and then -- but your truck was doing more extrication
12 and rescue, and the knockdown time was roughly 10 minutes after
13 your arrival.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Roughly. Because no one has the exact time, you
16 know, you had more things to do than to say, hey, we've got a
17 knockdown which we normally do.

18 A. Right.

19 Q. So, so take it away. So you were now extricating
20 people and so forth.

21 A. We were removing patients and systematically
22 funneling them to a patient holding area which was on the north
23 side of the train, and about then, we saw them accumulating in
24 large numbers, and we felt that it was appropriate at that time
25 to start shuffling them off to the patient collection, the

1 casualty collection zone, which was that grassy play area at
2 the academy.

3 Q. Was that established already?

4 A. No, no, but it was underway and they were beginning
5 to open a gate, and it was about that time that I saw the first
6 air unit come on scene.

7 Q. Uh-huh.

8 A. And the officer that I was working with, I forget his
9 name, but about that time, about 10 or 15 officers showed up.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And we recruited them to assist with carrying the
12 backboards and litter baskets and other methods to get the
13 patients from Point A to the casualty collection area. And at
14 that point, I just pretty much monitored and supervised the
15 rest of the operation until that decision was made about, you
16 know, building the morgue and doing that operation. I was
17 assisted at the morgue by a volunteer chaplain and the LAPD
18 chaplain, and there were several CHP officers that I recruited
19 to gather backboards and sheets so that we could cover the
20 people, and there weren't enough firefighters there at that
21 time for me to acquire some salvage covers from the police
22 officers because they don't know what salvage covers are, and
23 so finally I corralled a couple of firefighters and gave them
24 that task, to go and get some salvage covers, and we covered
25 the deceased more substantial than a sheet. And from there, I

1 gravitated over to the north side of the train, car number 1,
2 and just supervised logistical efforts going up and down the
3 ladders, and on occasion I would gravitate back to the south
4 side of the train, just to check up on the diesel spill and
5 make sure that the fire control effort was still being put in
6 check, and both of the firefighting lines were never unmanned
7 or unstaffed. There was always someone there with high
8 situational awareness about the fire. I probably passed a
9 couple of times the one engineer that was partially covered by
10 the train, and I didn't see him the first couple of times, but
11 then, you know, I got a visual on him and so we decided to
12 cover him with a sheet as well. The diesel spill was probably
13 about maybe an inch to an inch and a half saturation, and over
14 time, the earth started absorbing it, and it started leaching
15 into the earth. And so that part of it became a little less
16 slippery. Engine 107 has foam, what we call foam capability,
17 and so we were able to introduce foam into the firefighting
18 lines, so that we did get a blanket and assure that, you know,
19 there was not a second ignition. That's about it for me for
20 the first hour, 45 minutes to an hour.

21 BY MS. SANZO:

22 Q. Okay. I'd like to ask about the freight train
23 actually and the two locomotives of the freight train. You had
24 worked on those extrication efforts; if you can tell us about
25 that or direct us to the person that can tell us about that?

1 A. I didn't -- we didn't -- I didn't work on the freight
2 train portion.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I only worked on the Metrolink --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- car and locomotive.

7 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

8 Q. Do you know who did?

9 A. You know, I don't have a clue of who was actually
10 there on the freight train. I do understand that that took
11 place early, and I think that took place before I actually came
12 across the (indiscernible) and was able to witness who took
13 them out. We do have pictures. My engineer took 500 pictures,
14 actually 250 pictures of the early on of the incident. They're
15 still pictures, but he's got --

16 Q. Digital.

17 A. -- a pretty good view.

18 Q. Digital.

19 A. Yeah, digital. So it's all raw footage and, you
20 know, it's just pretty much been kept sequestered to the fire
21 station. It shows the firefighting effort underway and the
22 development of the firefighting line, the supply line,
23 placement of the rig, placement of the ladders, going up the
24 (indiscernible). So there may be some peripheral shot of what
25 was happening (indiscernible).

1 BY MS. SANZO:

2 Q. And I'd like to ask about, you mentioned a couple of
3 times task force. Can you tell us the composition of the task
4 force?

5 A. Our fire department is composed of companies, and we
6 have an engine company, and we have truck companies also known
7 as Light Forces, and when we combine a Light Force and an
8 engine, we house them in what we call a task force fire
9 station, and that's what this station's comprised of. It's
10 heart, the best advantage of the task force concept is the
11 equipment, and then the most important and most paramount is
12 the people. We get 10 people with excellent command and
13 control of those 10. Each position is specific to a certain
14 job or a certain task, and this system works because each
15 person takes care of their specific task. So that's pretty
16 much the task force concept. It's also interchangeable. We
17 can bring, for instance, if our Light Force, which is composed
18 of an aerial truck and pumping apparatus, a triple combination,
19 those two make up the Light Force. We can take another engine
20 from another fire station, combine it with our Light Force, and
21 then that becomes a task force. So we train that way.
22 Sometimes our engine is out and so we'll have to rely on
23 another outside engine to comprise a task force so that we can
24 function as a task force.

25 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Also I would say 95, 90 percent of

1 the time, the truck will respond with a pumper with it as the
2 Captain mentioned, a Light Force, so you're always going to get
3 a source of water, a pumper with hose and 500 gallons and so
4 forth, along with all the equipment that the truck carries.
5 They're married together. They go off. So if you had a car
6 fire, these individuals get on the engine and will extinguish
7 the car fire or will have the ability to attack a house fire or
8 any fire because they have the ability because of the pumper
9 with them.

10 BY MS. SANZO:

11 Q. And the second paramedic RAs.

12 A. In our city we have two different kinds of rescue
13 ambulances. There's a basic life support ambulance that's
14 staffed by emergency medical technicians, and then we have what
15 we call the advanced life support, and those are staffed by two
16 firefighter/paramedics, and they are EMT paramedics, and they
17 provide the more (indiscernible) care in terms of intravenous
18 lines, they interpret EKGs. They give more sophisticated
19 drugs. Basic life support is just that. It's everything
20 except the ALS portion. And that's how our department is
21 comprised. We have a paramedic ambulance. We have an
22 ambulance in every fire station, and we have paramedic
23 capability in every fire station. So 90 percent of our fire
24 stations are equipped with paramedic, the ability to transport
25 paramedic or ALS. So we were augmented on this incident by

1 private ambulances. Those are ambulance companies that have a
2 contract for a certain area to provide the same level of
3 services that we provide here within the jurisdiction of Los
4 Angeles.

5 Q. And a little bit, we had talked about training with
6 Metrolink. Could you tell us just a little bit about that?

7 A. Well, our -- each fire station has its own unique
8 signature. This particular fire station's signature is the
9 train, and then the Metro (indiscernible) Stony Point
10 prominence, that big rock up there, and then we also have
11 brush. So those are our areas that we're going to train on and
12 be highly skilled at as opposed to someone that's in the harbor
13 or a fire station that's at the airport. They would be more
14 concerned with the air. So in seeing that, I got a call from
15 the Metrolink training coordinator, this gentleman right here,
16 and he offered the training, and I saw value in it, and it was
17 my intention to do it, to provide the training for our entire
18 battalion, but I couldn't get the logistics together in time to
19 do the entire battalion. So I concerned myself with the four
20 walls of Fire Station 96, and all three shifts and made sure
21 that we got that valuable training. At the time, I had
22 (indiscernible) in this fire station because I was the only
23 captain assigned here, and so I could sort of show leadership
24 on the other two shifts of how we were going to format our
25 training for that particular small amount of time. I was the

1 only station commander here, and they came out. They provided
2 this excellent training. It was five hours long, and they
3 covered everything from response to different types of
4 configurations of a train, private trains versus public trains,
5 covered everything from hazmat (indiscernible), notification,
6 who to notify is something happens, past histories, best
7 practices around a train, you know, the (indiscernible) window
8 and a lot of the safety measures that are involved with the
9 train, the kinetic energy that's involved around it when
10 there's a derailment, confined space we talked about. It was
11 very comprehensive, multimedia, utilize the LCD protector. We
12 utilized PowerPoint on the software, and we had excellent
13 handouts and one of my members, in fact, came to me after the
14 incident and said, you know, I was just going over that book
15 that they gave us two or three shifts ago. He kept it in his
16 locker that we all do and just happened to revisit it, and so
17 that was the Metrolink train. The trainer was also accompanied
18 by the Amtrak train, and so we got a perspective from both
19 side.

20 MS. SANZO: I'll stop right now and ask if anyone has
21 any questions they'd like to ask.

22 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

23 Q. Hey, Chris, I know you were under pressure with all
24 the stuff and all of that. Who would you -- we're looking at
25 interviewing a few more people and I want to, you know,

1 interview Rescue 70, you know, but who in your opinion is
2 somebody that we should, we should try to interview?

3 A. I would say Rescue 96, and I've got one of the
4 firefighters here today.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And then the other one is Balonyos (ph.),
7 Firefighter/Paramedic Balonyos. I think he's coming in --

8 Q. They were both on Rescue 96?

9 A. Right. They were both first in rescue.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And then also I would interview EMS 15, Eric Larkson
12 (ph.).

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And Balonyos will be here tomorrow on the 16th. I'll
15 be working as well. And so who else would I interview? I have
16 a list of all the people that were here.

17 Q. How about more captains and above? I know you
18 mentioned Scott Cooper.

19 A. Right, I would definitely interview Scott Cooper.

20 Q. Okay. The problem with him is he doesn't come back
21 until Friday, right?

22 A. Right.

23 Q. Okay. Who else would you --

24 A. The captains of USAR 88.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I called for them early on.

2 Q. Uh-huh.

3 A. Attach USAR 88, which is per my normal
4 (indiscernible) with any physical rescue in the Valley. I
5 always attach USAR 88 --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- because they're closer than 8856.

8 Q. That was White.

9 A. That was Wade White, and he was instrumental in
10 bringing order to the extrication group.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. They got in just right before Engine 107 laid its
13 line and started committing four-inch line on the ground. USAR
14 88 was able to get in there before all that happened.
15 Otherwise, they would have been a little bit more distant from
16 where they were. They were almost in the ideal spot.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. It lights up at night and proximity to the heavy
19 tools that they carry on the USAR unit.

20 MR. OJEDA: And Captain White was a tractor operator
21 at one time for our department, and he's now the USAR captain.
22 So he's real familiar with heavy equipment and so forth. It
23 will be interesting to hear his comment on, you know, the
24 company that you guys hire.

25 MR. OJEDA: Right, and if I'm not mistaken, I think

1 he was the same gentleman that came up to us during our little
2 briefing, our little huddle, and pointed out that access
3 road --

4 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Yes.

5 MR. OJEDA: -- and says if we get some heavy
6 equipment through there, we could get in easily. So --

7 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Yeah.

8 MR. OJEDA: -- good point.

9 THE WITNESS: Have you talked to Captain
10 (indiscernible) from 107?

11 CHIEF QUINTANAR: No.

12 THE WITNESS: He was the -- he was one of the major
13 propellers on the -- he was one of the major pushers on the
14 fire attack line --

15 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Okay.

16 THE WITNESS: -- the 107. In fact, I understand he
17 hand laid the 2 1/2 and another firefighter from his crew.
18 That would be Engine 96.

19 BY CHIEF QUINTANAR:

20 Q. He's a C shift?

21 A. I'm not sure. I think he is.

22 Q. Okay. I'll call. Thank you.

23 CHIEF QUINTANAR: How about you, Jes?

24 MR. OJEDA: Yes, I do.

25 BY MR. OJEDA:

1 Q. From a railroad perspective, do you think -- now I
2 can relate a little bit more because we actually did the
3 training here, do you feel that there was something, something
4 else that we should have covered in the training class? Do you
5 think that the information we shared with you folks was good
6 enough and the guys were able to retain it? Do you think we
7 should have changed anything? I know there's a lot of
8 questions but --

9 A. Well, I think the training was worthwhile. I think
10 it should be higher on the priority list for the fire
11 department in areas where the train goes through in challenged
12 areas like this year that has a tunnel. You know, if it's out
13 in the open and it's just a standard train crossing, you know,
14 it's probably -- if you could prioritize them level 1, level 2,
15 level 3, level 1 being the highest, that would be us with this
16 tunnel. We're really blessed that this didn't happen inside
17 that tunnel. Had this happened inside that tunnel, we'd still
18 be there today, you know, Monday, and the staff here at Fire
19 Station 96, they all said that, and they all said that in terms
20 of the training, they all came to me and said, you know, Cap,
21 how did you know? And it's a great thing that, you know, we
22 were all paying attention and, you know, they used the methods
23 that they used to train us the way they did on the Metro line.

24 Q. Well, one of the things, and I know NTSB is doing the
25 interview, but on the Metrolink side, I do want to thank you

1 for taking that proactive approach. We were all very busy.
2 I'm doing my thing. You're doing your own thing, and everyone
3 was busy, but you actually took the time and accepted to do the
4 training, and I think that was very valuable, and so I want to
5 thank you for doing that. So --

6 A. I think this is going to be an annual thing here
7 now --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- definitely.

10 Q. And we'll be more than happy to facilitate any
11 training that you guys want.

12 A. Invitation accepted.

13 Q. Okay. Very good. I have one more question. Do you
14 feel that you needed any other resources from the railroad when
15 you were at the scene that you could have obtained? Do you
16 think the railroad helped out enough?

17 A. Well, one of the areas I covered in the size of this
18 thing, I said notify the (indiscernible) and close down traffic
19 (indiscernible). In terms of the railroad, I think -- well,
20 you know, the people that are inside the train, the conductor
21 and the engineer, they were out of it.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. You know, so the normal contact people that would be
24 there, they couldn't be there.

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. You know, it was unfortunate. They probably could
2 have been a great resource for us. They could have given us
3 some numbers on how many people were inside and what their
4 status is. We've got a wheelchair guy here or, you know, some
5 physical issues here, you know, that probably could have been
6 very helpful. But in terms of what Metrolink could have
7 brought to the scene, I'm still up in the air. I mean I'm --

8 Q. In normal incidents, you're absolutely right. The
9 conductor will approach because they're trained to approach
10 first responders and give you all that information, and they're
11 also trained to say (indiscernible). (Indiscernible) until the
12 incident is over and you release them of their
13 responsibilities, but in this case, as we know, the conductor
14 was not available, neither was the engineer. Just for your
15 information, I know we talked about it in the class that when
16 incidents like this happen, the whole barn empties out.

17 A. Right, you gave us all kind, and we actually did
18 liaison with several Metrolink people. Mr. Ryan was there.

19 Q. Uh-huh.

20 A. And he introduced himself, and I took him directly to
21 the Division Supervisor there on scene and, you know, I made
22 sure that there was face-to-face communication with those two,
23 and I checked in on -- I checked in with him periodically --

24 Q. Good.

25 A. -- from time to time to make sure that, you know, his

1 needs were being met, and anytime I saw something that I
2 thought Metrolink would be concerned about, such as equipment
3 or valuables that we found all over, I would point them out to
4 Mr. Ryan, and I made sure he was fed at the end --

5 Q. That was good.

6 A. -- and met his needs. So, no, in terms of -- I was
7 thinking more in terms of hardware, but in terms of personnel
8 and response from the Metrolink, yeah, it was (indiscernible).
9 There were two times in this incident when I felt my anxiety
10 level ease, and one was when Chief Castro came. When I saw him
11 running into the work area between car number 2 and car number
12 1, there was a pretty good space there, my anxiety level eased,
13 and then when I saw the Metrolink representative equally, and I
14 felt a lot more at ease.

15 Q. Good. Thank you.

16 CHIEF QUINTANAR: One of the things I'm going to take
17 a lead on, I asked the Department if I could teach a class in
18 train awareness, and I didn't include you guys for some reason,
19 you know, I just -- because I'm involved with Metro Rail, but I
20 teach, you know, through rail and (indiscernible), you know,
21 and cover very, very little on, you know, commuter rail, which
22 I will change and add a couple of slides to my program,
23 something that I'll cover now, but it's interesting, you know,
24 when you bring a commuter from all parts of the county and
25 outside the county, and they all end up at Union Station, where

1 I work and you work, where it's, you know, Metro. So it's
2 interesting.

3 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I'm a big advocate of trains.
4 I've ridden on trains all over the world, Asia, Europe, South
5 America, North America, I love trains and, you know, I think
6 it's a great way to travel. You know, I've been on the Euro.
7 I've never been in China, but I'm going to do that probably
8 next year. So -- but, yeah, we have a good system and, you
9 know, I'm really confident with it, and it's a great way to
10 travel around and experience the country.

11 MS. SANZO: All right. Well, I guess we'll conclude,
12 and thank you very much for taking time to visit with us. It's
13 going to be very helpful in us learning about this
14 (indiscernible) thanks everyone for their time today.

15 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
16 matter was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: HEAD-ON COLLISION OF A METROLINK
 COMMUTER TRAIN WITH A UNION
 PACIFIC FREIGHT TRAIN
 September 12, 2008,
 Los Angeles, California
 Interview of Capt. Christopher Cooper

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-08-MR-009

PLACE: Los Angeles, California

DATE: September 15, 2008

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber