

Appendix H

Interview Transcript, Deputy Bill Lynch and Deputy Brad Johnson

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

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Investigation of: *
*
HEAD-ON COLLISION OF A METROLINK *
COMMUTER TRAIN WITH A UNION *
PACIFIC FREIGHT TRAIN, *
September 12, 2008 *
Los Angeles, California *
*
* * * * *

Docket No.: DCA-08-MR-009

Interview of: DEPUTY WILLIAM LYNCH
DEPUTY BRAD JOHNSON

Los Angeles, California

Tuesday,
September 16, 2008

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: DANA SANZO

APPEARANCES:

DANA SANZO, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C.
(202) 314-6534

JOHN QUINTANAR, Battalion Chief
Los Angeles Fire Department
Liaison with Metro Rail

JESUS OJEDA, Security Coordinator
Metrolink Safety and Security Division

CARLOS TAPIA, Mechanical Equipment Inspector
California Public Utilities Commission
Railroad Operations Safety Branch

SGT. NINA SUTTER
Sheriff's Department
County of Los Angeles

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MS. SANZO: My name is Dana Sanzo. I am an
3 Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, and
4 today we're conducting interviews for Accident Number DCA-08-
5 MR-009, the collision of Metrolink passenger train with UP
6 freight train in Los Angeles, California.

7 We can start by going around the table, and if
8 everyone can state their name and what organization they're
9 with.

10 DEP. LYNCH: I'm Deputy William Lynch, L Y N C H,
11 with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

12 DEP. JOHNSON: Deputy Brad Johnson with the Los
13 Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

14 MR. TAPIA: My name is Carlos Tapia. I'm a Motor
15 Power and Equipment Inspector in the Railroad Operations Safety
16 Branch of the California Public Utilities Commission.

17 CHIEF QUINTANAR: My name is John Quintanar,
18 Battalion Chief, LA Fire, assigned to Metro Rail, and I've been
19 asked to participate in the investigation of the train crash
20 with NTSB.

21 MR. OJEDA: My name is Jesus Ojeda. I'm the Security
22 Coordinator for Metrolink Safety and Security Division, and I
23 have also been asked to participate.

24 SGT. SUTTER: Nina Sutter, Sergeant with the LA
25 County Sheriff's Department, assigned to the Metrolink Bureau.

1 I've been asked to assist with the investigation for NTSB.

2 MS. SANZO: Okay.

3 INTERVIEW OF DEPUTY WILLIAM LYNCH and DEPUTY BRAD JOHNSON

4 MS. SANZO: If we can just start, I think maybe for
5 the ease of transcription, maybe Deputy Lynch, if we can start
6 with you. If you could just tell us about when you first
7 learned of the accident and take us through that afternoon.

8 DEP. LYNCH: I was on routine patrol. I was in the
9 Hollywood area, and I heard an initial broadcast from a deputy
10 who said he was on a Metrolink and that it had been involved in
11 an accident. Initially I thought that it was our, I don't want
12 to say typical, a vehicle versus train at an intersection, at a
13 (indiscernible) crossing is what I initially thought. He
14 seemed like he was out of breath. I thought that was natural.
15 He, he seemed like he was stressed. So I got on my bike,
16 started to head up towards the area. He didn't give a clear
17 picture of where he was. He didn't say -- I think I remember
18 around the Chatsworth area. So I started to head northbound.
19 Deputy Ryan, I believe was the first deputy on scene aside from
20 the deputy that was on the train, and he mentioned a major
21 collision with derailment. Obviously I picked up my pace, and
22 I got there I want to say 20 to 30 minutes after the initial
23 broadcast by Deputy Ebbert (ph.), who was on the train.
24 Followed the smoke in, I came northbound on Owensmouth. It
25 went into a cul-de-sac. I parked right in front of a

1 residential house, a residence there, went through the backyard
2 or the side yard, hopped over a chain link fence, and saw the
3 devastation. I went right towards the train that was on or the
4 car that was on its side, the Metrolink passenger car that was
5 on its side, and contacted Deputy Ryan. He was the first one
6 that I saw as far as Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
7 and just asked him what he needed.

8 MS. SANZO: And, Deputy Johnson, if I could ask the
9 same of you?

10 DEP. JOHNSON: Sure. I was at -- I was on patrol,
11 the Orange line. I work in 670 Henry, routine patrol. I heard
12 the call go out approximately 1625 hours, just before 4:30. I
13 was at Canoga and the Busway (ph.). I initially heard the call
14 go out as a train versus vehicle at Devonshire signal and
15 Chatsworth. Got my car and I heard dispatch asking units for
16 Code 3 and 5. I was approximately 10 out. I waited for my
17 turn to put that radio traffic out and the information was
18 updated. It was a derailment. I assumed, not knowing what had
19 happened, he had more than likely got off the train and saw it
20 derailed. Approximately two minutes after that, I heard Deputy
21 Ryan who was actually on scene, and he put it out as a train
22 versus train -- freight train versus Metrolink and derailment,
23 and at that time, I was going northbound on Canoga, and I
24 arrived probably within 10 minutes. I had taken Topanga up to
25 Chatsworth, turned right, and made the first left coming

1 through the (indiscernible) property areas, saw approximately
2 two or three fire trucks with hose going. I basically went in
3 the direction of the smoke. I could still see smoke, black
4 smoke and white smoke. Same as with Deputy Lynch. I ran
5 through a couple of -- I ran through a yard, jumped over a
6 fence, and then fire had put a ladder across a ditch, ran
7 across that, and the first thing I saw was two cars that were
8 still on the track, passenger cars. I saw locomotives engulfed
9 in flames, fire in the process of putting it out, and my
10 attention first was I saw numerous people, maybe a dozen,
11 walking in various means, I don't know, delusioned, like they
12 were zombies waking with various type of injuries with their
13 hands out and saying help, and the first thing I did was run to
14 their direction, to ease them, try to determine their injuries,
15 assured them that, you know, paramedics would be coming. I
16 boarded the first train and started helping people clear off
17 the train that were injured. I ran across a gentleman that
18 tugged on me and said he was on Coumadin and on blood thinners,
19 and I had just recovered from that approximately two years ago.
20 So I knew the condition he was in, and I immediately told the
21 paramedics, I directed them to this guy, he's on blood
22 thinners. I went to the second train, and there was people
23 laid out trying to, you know, help the ones that could get off
24 the train, and at that time, as I exited the back train, I ran
25 across Deputy Ebbert who was leaning against a radio car. He

1 was the one who put out the radio traffic. He said he was
2 okay. I says is there anything I can get you, anything we can
3 do, and I'll get the paramedics, no, no, help everybody.
4 There's people a lot worse off than I am, in a lot worse
5 condition. And at that point, I walked along the rest of the
6 other two trains to the locomotive side, and I saw Deputy Ryan
7 inside there with maybe a half dozen firemen, and they're
8 taking bodies, both survived and deceased, and I started
9 assisting using the boards and taking them over to the
10 triage -- starting a triage area. Going back and forth on
11 that. I did that about two or three trips. Coming back from
12 one of them, as I was running back to assist, a fireman had
13 pulled me aside and said there was onlookers taking pictures.
14 People had come down from either the houses or I'm not sure who
15 they were, but they were standing there taking pictures, got
16 them out of the way, and they made an attempt to tape up the
17 line, to put some yellow tape up, to cordon off the area, and
18 that was useless because there was just -- there was too much
19 going on to try to do that, and then went back to the train
20 again, and I'm not sure how much longer it was after that but
21 saw Deputy Ryan in there, Deputy Lynch in there, assisting fire
22 inside the cabin of the engine which was off to the side. I
23 entered there, entered inside there and assisted them with
24 taking bodies out. I can't remember personally how many we
25 took out. We brought stacks of boards, and then we were at

1 various levels, approximately three levels inside the cabin,
2 assisting fire trying to extricate the deceased. They were
3 using the jaws and hand saws, not hand saws, sawzalls and other
4 power tools. I assisted them with -- just set up kind of a
5 condo line, Deputy Lynch, Ryan, Giddons (ph.), Guerrero, and we
6 were just taking debris out and handing it off to people
7 outside the train with occasional bodies on the boards that we
8 were bringing out. At one point, I recall Deputy Lynch saying
9 he thought he heard somebody making some noise, and at that
10 point, we stopped working, and we were listening, you know,
11 could hear groans and obviously somebody was, you know, still
12 alive, and Deputy Lynch, we -- he asked for a pry bar, crowbar,
13 whatever we had, and gave that to them and started prying out
14 debris and seats and everything else that was on top of this
15 guy and got that out of the way and were able to get him out.
16 We brought him out, and I'm not sure where the other officers
17 were that were originally outside the cab, but I went and took
18 him all the way, along with three or four other guys, took him
19 to the triage area, dropped him off and then ran back and got
20 back inside the train. And at some point, I'm not sure how
21 long we were in there, but we were relieved by fire personnel
22 who -- I believe it was a captain ordered us out of there
23 because we were -- I thought we were taking care of business,
24 doing a good job, but he says, no, you guys are ordered to get
25 out. So we left there and then assumed another kind of role

1 with fire just outside the train, helping them once again take
2 bodies out and debris that had accumulated outside the train
3 that was taking up space. During that point, one of the
4 firemen either went unconscious or collapsed, just heat
5 exhaustion I believe. He fell out, and all the rescue went to
6 him at that point. After a short time, got him revived, took
7 care of him, and then went back to assisting fire, and then I'm
8 not sure how much longer after that, we were relieved by
9 Sergeant Sutter who said they wanted us to return to the
10 command post.

11 MS. SANZO: Okay. We're going to pause.

12 (Off the record.)

13 (On the record.)

14 MS. SANZO: Okay. We're back on.

15 You were to the point of at least stepping away from
16 it a while, but I don't see anything where we were at.

17 DEP. JOHNSON: At that point, we met with our captain
18 and Lieutenant Captain Jordan, Lieutenant Ballis (ph.) who said
19 you've been relieved of this scene. This is approximately 2300
20 hours I believe, close to 11:00. He said why don't you go home
21 to your families and you guys are done, and returned the car to
22 the station.

23 MS. SANZO: Okay. We'll start asking any follow-up
24 questions if you'd like to, Sergeant, if you'd like to.

25 SGT. SUTTER: Okay. When you guys arrived, did you

1 see any of the walking wounded leaving the area, people who
2 were uninjured leaving?

3 DEP. LYNCH: No.

4 DEP. JOHNSON: I didn't see anybody with any kind of
5 wounds or any kind of injuries leaving, walking away or just
6 walking near the train. They were walking just parallel to the
7 train and the gravel area, just kind of wandering around.

8 SGT. SUTTER: Did you guys ever add yourself to the
9 call? Did you create any calls?

10 DEP. JOHNSON: I did not.

11 SGT. SUTTER: Okay. When you guys were out there,
12 any other law enforcement you saw there? Was LAPD there?

13 DEP. JOHNSON: LAPD.

14 SGT. SUTTER: Any other deputies besides the two of
15 you?

16 DEP. JOHNSON: Oh, yeah, there was numerous deputies
17 there, lots of deputy personnel.

18 CHIEF QUINTANAR: This was, this was after you
19 arrived?

20 SGT. SUTTER: Upon arrival.

21 DEP. JOHNSON: Oh, upon arrival?

22 SGT. SUTTER: Yeah.

23 DEP. JOHNSON: No. My focus was right at those
24 people who were the victims who were walking around the tracks,
25 and I went right to that first car along side with Deputy

1 Thomas. He was right behind me. Him and I worked in tandem
2 for the first part of the incident, clearing cars and helping
3 people.

4 SGT. SUTTER: Upon your arrival, you contacted Thomas
5 or you were with Thomas.

6 DEP. JOHNSON: With Thomas.

7 SGT. SUTTER: Do you know where he went after you
8 went to the first car?

9 DEP. JOHNSON: We saw each other a couple of times on
10 and off clearing cars. He helped me set up some tape, and I
11 can't remember if he helped me with the -- taking the bodies
12 back to the triage area. We were running into fire personnel,
13 who was saying go to the rig, get me sheets, I need the triage
14 boards, and just assisting them with requests.

15 SGT. SUTTER: How about LAPD officers? Were they on
16 scene?

17 DEP. JOHNSON: Yes, LAPD was on scene. Two CHP was
18 in the cabin with us. I forgot to mention them. They were
19 there right alongside us.

20 SGT. SUTTER: Deputy Lynch, you said --

21 DEP. LYNCH: I got there. Initially saw fire. I
22 saw -- Deputy Ryan was the first one I saw, then Guerrero and
23 Deputy Giddons and then Brad Johnson, Deputy Brad Johnson. I
24 don't remember seeing any LAPD. That's not to say that they
25 weren't there. I did have tunnel vision admittedly. I do

1 remember two or three CHP officers. I know one was a female,
2 and she helped us tremendously, supporting us. She was outside
3 of the train, and we were inside doing what we were doing. She
4 was making sure that we had water, and she was a huge help.
5 I'd actually like to see her again. But that's what I recall
6 when I initially got there.

7 DEP. JOHNSON: I saw Sergeant Springer. I saw both
8 Deputy Lisneck (ph.) and I was working also with Deputy
9 Wheeler.

10 SGT. SUTTER: And at that time, were you still doing
11 evacuations?

12 DEP. JOHNSON: Yeah, in between times going back and
13 forth, I would see various personnel.

14 SGT. SUTTER: Mr. Ojeda.

15 MR. OJEDA: At the time of arrival, did any of you
16 notice the crew members, whether Metrolink or freight?

17 DEP. LYNCH: No.

18 DEP. JOHNSON: No.

19 MR. OJEDA: Did you by any chance notice anyone --
20 okay. At any point you didn't see the crew members?

21 DEP. LYNCH: Well, after we -- I don't know how long
22 we were in that train, the first passenger car clearing it out
23 with debris and bodies, I probably want to say an hour an half,
24 but I mean my timeframe, you know, we've been talking about it
25 ever since it happened, and our estimations of time we feel are

1 probably pretty inaccurate, but after we assumed a support
2 role, we were relieved by fire personnel from the train, we
3 then went to the north side, I guess it would be the top of the
4 train, and we got together with fire personnel and we said,
5 look, because I think the first -- after we got out, they took
6 another body out and it was fire guys in their full turnouts.
7 They were taking the bodies on boards, and I got together, I
8 want to say he was a chief or a captain, and I said, look,
9 that's a waste of personnel. It's a waste of your guys'
10 efforts. You guys are the pros here, you know, extricating the
11 bodies. Let us, once you get them out of the train, let us
12 take the boards to where the bodies need to go, either to where
13 they were obviously deceased or to the triage. So LAPD formed
14 a team of guys that were doing that, and then we formed a team
15 of deputies that were doing that as well as when they weren't
16 bringing out bodies and they were bringing out debris and
17 chairs and metal and all that, then we were just forming a
18 single file congo line with LAPD to get all that stuff out to a
19 separate area that wasn't in fire's way. So that worked out
20 really well because fire could do what they do best. And
21 then -- but during -- the reason why I bring up that portion of
22 the story is because that's when we noticed some bodies that
23 were hanging out I believe from the locomotive, and we just --
24 it was a sheer guess that that was, you know, an operator, I
25 guess one that we saw was I believe LADOT employee because we

1 could see his patch, but they were crushed on the ground. They
2 were between the ground and the locomotive is what I remember,
3 and least one or two and I surmised that those were the
4 conductor or operator or whatever, but I can't say that with
5 any, you know, concrete fact, of course. So it could have been
6 just somebody, somebody else.

7 MR. OJEDA: Thank you. As a follow-up, did you --
8 either one of you, did you work your way up to the other two
9 cars that were upright?

10 DEP. JOHNSON: Yeah, originally, that's where I first
11 went was that first car.

12 MR. OJEDA: Okay. Any difficulties you getting in
13 there, whether windows, doors?

14 DEP. JOHNSON: No. No, I walked where I guess the
15 platform would -- it's probably about a four foot step from the
16 track I guess, I just pulled myself up, didn't think it was a
17 problem, probably the adrenaline was going and --

18 MR. OJEDA: At that point, the door was already open?

19 DEP. JOHNSON: Yeah, the door was open.

20 MR. OJEDA: Thank you.

21 CHIEF QUINTANAR: With that question in mind, did you
22 see, when you got there, we referred to the third car, you're
23 referring to it as the first car, were there victims still in
24 there?

25 DEP. JOHNSON: Yes.

1 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Okay.

2 DEP. JOHNSON: There were people with -- one guy was
3 complaining of a broken leg. Other ones were laid out with
4 various broken bones.

5 CHIEF QUINTANAR: And you went to the -- which would
6 be the second car?

7 DEP. JOHNSON: Yes.

8 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Okay. And same thing?

9 DEP. JOHNSON: Same conditions, yeah.

10 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Okay. Did you happen to see the
11 LAPD that died at the scene?

12 DEP. JOHNSON: No. During the extrication process,
13 we heard -- we started getting rumors about the possible LAPD
14 officer on board. By the time we were relieved, I think it was
15 confirmed at about 9:30, 2130, that there was one, and we
16 weren't there at the time when she was pulled out.

17 CHIEF QUINTANAR: I want to commend you guys. We
18 interviewed a chief prior to interviewing you gentlemen, and
19 he commended you for your work and really appreciated your
20 help.

21 DEP. JOHNSON: Thank you.

22 DEP. LYNCH: Thank you.

23 MR. TAPIA: I have no questions, but I want to thank
24 you guys very much.

25 MS. SANZO: Okay. Thank you very much and any last

1 thoughts that you'd like to add?

2 DEP. LYNCH: No, the -- I guess you'd call it the
3 mutual aid, working with fire and CHP and LAPD, there was no --
4 in the initial chaos, and even through the duration of the
5 incident, there was no jurisdictional stuff that sometimes we
6 run into as agencies. I mean we were rubbing shoulders with
7 everybody, and in 20 years on the department, it was by far
8 the -- I don't know how to characterize it, but it was just
9 unbelievable how well each department worked together. It was
10 just unbelievable.

11 DEP. JOHNSON: The teamwork was outstanding.

12 DEP. LYNCH: Yeah.

13 DEP. JOHNSON: It was like fire telling me go to the
14 rig and, you know, I need this or that or any CHP or whoever it
15 was, everybody was just more than helpful and --

16 DEP. LYNCH: We all have our own policies. We all
17 have our own codes. We all have our own language, you know,
18 and it -- it's just the way everybody came together was
19 incredible, and if you can communicate that to the captain that
20 you were talking to, I'd appreciate it.

21 CHIEF QUINTANAR: Yeah, he mentioned that, too. He
22 teaches unified command, NIMS and ICS.

23 DEP. LYNCH: Excellent.

24 CHIEF QUINTANAR: He said that this was the best ever
25 he's seen the groups working together and so forth.

1 DEP. JOHNSON: Yeah, it was outstanding.

2 SGT. SUTTER: Anything that could have been done
3 better as multi-agencies?

4 DEP. JOHNSON: I can't think of anything.

5 DEP. LYNCH: Parking. Parking.

6 DEP. JOHNSON: The area was such a terrible area.

7 DEP. LYNCH: It was a horrible, horrible area, but if
8 anything that could be put into training during this type of
9 incident, and even smaller incidents, we run into it with, you
10 know, just good solid traffic crashes, traffic collisions, at
11 intersections, first responders and just by our nature, we want
12 to get our hands dirty. We want to get in there and do what we
13 do best, and sometimes we forget, a lot of times we forget,
14 hey, I've got a fire truck coming in after me, and I'll park my
15 bike or patrol car in an area that's just, you know, bad
16 judgment, knowing that somebody's coming in after me, whether
17 it's a paramedic, an ambulance or, you know, hook and ladder.
18 We've got to remember that, you know, there's a whole bunch of
19 people coming in after us and we need to be cognizant of our,
20 you know, if it takes parking in a driveway, you've got to do
21 it, but I mean there were cars parked everywhere. I was on a
22 motor, you know, and I had trouble. So that's just one thing
23 that I can say, yeah, first responders need to concentrate on
24 that.

25 MS. SANZO: Okay. Thank you very much.

1 DEP. JOHNSON: You're very welcome.

2 MS. SANZO: That concludes this interview.

3 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
4 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 Deputy William Lynch and
 Deputy Brad Johnson

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-08-MR-009

PLACE: Los Angeles, California

DATE: September 16, 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