



Survival Factors Factual Attachment:

Interview with Director of Student Transportation IDOE

Rochester, Indiana

HWY19MH003

(30 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

BUS STOP CRASH

* Accident No.: HWY19MH003

ROCHESTER, INDIANA

*

*

* * * * *

Interview of: MICHAEL LAROCCO

Director of School Transportation

Indiana Department of Education

Via Telephone

Tuesday,

July 16, 2019

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E XITEMPAGE

Interview of Michael LaRocco:

By Ms. Harley

5

I N T E R V I E W

(2:18 p.m.)

MS. HARLEY: Today is Tuesday, July 16th, 2019. It's 2:18 p.m. I am calling Mr. Michael LaRocco. He is the Director of School Transportation for the Indiana Department of Education. His number is [REDACTED].

(Dialing phone, ringing.)

MR. LAROCCO: Office of Transportation, Michael LaRocco speaking.

MS. HARLEY: Yes, sir. It's Sheryl Harley from the NTSB. How are you?

MR. LAROCCO: Yes, ma'am. Well timed because I was just getting ready to leave for a soda, so --

MS. HARLEY: Okay. I'm sorry. I'm a little behind, got out of my meeting late.

MR. LAROCCO: No, that's okay, no.

MS. HARLEY: So I've got some actual follow-up questions for you --

MR. LAROCCO: Okay.

MS. HARLEY: -- and I'd like to kind of get some things down for the record. Do you have any problem with my taping this --

MR. LAROCCO: No.

MS. HARLEY: -- or you'd rather not?

MR. LAROCCO: No. I have zero problem with that.

MS. HARLEY: No? Okay. Okay, great. Okay.

INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL LAROCCO

BY MS. HARLEY:

Q. So one of the things that, as you know during the investigation in Rochester, one of the issues that we've come across is the problem with the students standing in the dark, and we've talked -- we've actually interviewed several of the drivers from Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation about this.

We've also -- by the way, this isn't just in Indiana. We've noticed it all around the country and specifically on the two investigations that we did, one in Hartsfield, Georgia, and the other one in Baldwin, Mississippi.

So I guess what I wanted to do is to kind of speak to you towards that issue and I guess what I want to do is start from the beginning. Number one, was IDOE, the Indiana Department of Education, ever aware or concerned about lighting and where the students were standing waiting a school bus?

A. Well, we're always concerned about that everywhere across the state, not that one specific spot. I mean, that's a problem everywhere.

Q. Okay.

A. Because we're picking up in the dark.

Q. Right. So, and I guess my question is then, what has IDOE been doing to address that issue?

A. Well, there's nothing we can do specifically to address lighting. I mean, we're not allowed to -- because it's a local

1 control issue, we're not allowed to say, hey, you need to start
2 school at this time or that time or whatever, as much as I'd like
3 to do that.

4 The way we handle that, at least from our perspective, is we
5 train our drivers to how to do proper crossing procedures even in
6 the dark, so that the drivers and the students are well trained.
7 You know, we train the drivers; drivers are responsible for
8 training the students so that they're well trained to make that
9 crossing as safe as possible.

10 Q. And I certainly do understand that and clearly from my
11 understanding from the drivers from Tippecanoe Valley that's being
12 done. But one of the things that the drivers have said is that
13 they actually can't see the students that they're crossing, that
14 the only thing they do is turn the light -- the interior light on
15 the bus so that the student sees them.

16 They certainly give the required standard hand signal but
17 they can't see the student until the student's out in the roadway.
18 And I guess my question is --

19 A. I'm not buying that story because they've got headlights.

20 Q. Well --

21 A. And I've driven enough buses that, yeah, if they're -- you
22 know, if they're 40 or 50 yards back, yes, you're not going to be
23 able to see them, but if they're within a reasonable distance to
24 the road, 10, 15, 20 feet, they should be able to see them.

25 So when they say that I would ask a whole bunch of different

1 questions about that, where are the kids standing at in the
2 driveway or are they at the intersections or whatever, and has
3 that been discussed with the children and/or the parents because
4 they should be able to see them with their headlights.

5 Q. So I guess then my question is were you aware that the
6 parents of the students at the mobile home park in Rochester,
7 Indiana, had the children stand farther back from the roadway due
8 to incidents involving people either driving past the school bus
9 or in one instance the school bus was actually rear-ended while it
10 was stopped to pick up the students? So the kids are now further
11 back from the roadway which --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- again brings you back to the lighting issue. And --

14 A. Right.

15 Q. -- my question is, at that particular point, number one, were
16 you made aware of this problem in a lot of the bus stops in
17 Tippecanoe Valley, specifically that school district?

18 A. No.

19 Q. And the other thing would be, do you know of any action that
20 was being taken in order to correct the issue with the lighting?
21 For example, has anybody talked to the Indiana Department of
22 Transportation as far as helping with lighting?

23 A. I know they've talked to the Indiana Department of
24 Transportation overall and not that specific stop, but at various
25 stops around the state, that has been brought up on occasion.

1 It's rare. I'm not and we were not aware of that specific bus
2 stop location being a particular issue with lighting. It's not
3 surprising though because anytime you have kids crossing in the
4 dark it's problematic. No matter where it's at, even in a
5 neighborhood they're going 10 mile an hour.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. It's problematic.

8 Q. So you were unaware that a school bus driver actually made a
9 complaint to the transportation director at TVSC in regards to --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- that specific location? Okay.

12 A. Yeah, and generally they don't. It's pretty rare for a
13 driver to make contact with us about any kind of issue because
14 most of this is local control and all we can do is make
15 recommendations.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. We can't mandate they do anything. Now, I will tell you
18 we've gotten calls and we've gone out and looked at many a bus
19 stop out there in various places around saying we will make
20 recommendations but they're not obligated to follow our
21 recommendations.

22 Q. Okay. So I guess my next question is you've heard of the
23 guardian angel lighting system, is that correct?

24 A. That's correct, yes.

25 Q. Okay. So I guess then speak to me as far as what the state

1 of Indiana as far as that system to assist the lighting issue with
2 buses?

3 A. Right. It's been presented to the state school bus committee
4 but at that particular time the committee had decided not to take
5 any action on approving those lights for use in Indiana and the
6 biggest reason was implementation as to whether that was going to
7 automatic with the stop arm coming out or whether that's going to
8 be manual or whatever, so there was no consensus on how that
9 should be deployed. So the committee at this point in time has
10 not approved that for use in the state.

11 Q. Okay. So then my question is that understanding the issues
12 that occurred in Rochester where the driver of the pickup truck
13 has said and it's on public record, yeah, I saw the school bus, I
14 can see all the lights, whether or not it's true that she
15 recognized it as a school bus, but she absolutely said that the
16 kids were in the dark, she did not see the kids at first.

17 And then, of course, we've seen this time and again
18 nationwide. Is Indiana planning to do anything about that? I
19 know that 22 states have implemented either the guardian angel
20 lighting system or some kind of system like that. What --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- is Indiana planning to do?

23 A. Why I would tell you that the legislature put into law as
24 effective July 1st of this year that on a U.S. or state highway
25 outside of city limits no one is allowed to cross at the bus stop.

1 Q. So but the legislation actually says that they can, in fact,
2 present an argument if for some unknown reason the kids have to
3 cross the road. So again my question is what is Indiana's
4 response to that and if you --

5 A. Yeah. Well, the law says that they cannot cross on that
6 state or U.S. highway unless there's no safe alternative. I can't
7 imagine any circumstance where it would be a safe alternative to
8 allow a child to cross.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So that -- so only in that very specific instance and it
11 would have to be an elementary student. So it would have to be an
12 elementary student on a state or U.S. highway outside of city
13 limits at a bus stop where it was -- would be considered a safer
14 alternative to cross than not cross, then the school board would
15 have to approve that directly. I can't think of a single
16 circumstance where that would be -- make sense.

17 Q. So and you just said something that's very interesting to me
18 that the law specifically singles out only elementary school
19 students?

20 A. If for that one area for crossing but, again, no one is
21 supposed to be crossing at that. So if there was some kind of
22 safe alternative and again I can't imagine a single circumstance
23 where that would be applicable. So I'm not sure where that
24 language -- why it even got put into law. I did ask that
25 question; no one could seem to answer it.

1 But that, yes, in that one case if you could find for somehow
2 or another find a safe way, safer than not crossing, then, yes,
3 they would single out if it was an elementary student then the
4 board would do that. But, as I said, you're not talking about
5 literally thousands of stops. I can't think of a certain -- any
6 circumstance where it would be safer to cross on a state or U.S.
7 highway.

8 Q. So suppose I am a high school student, are you saying that
9 the school district could say I can't find a better way of dealing
10 with this so this student has to cross the highway and that would
11 actually be okay as far as the law is concerned?

12 A. Yeah, it could be but, as I said, I can't think of a certain
13 -- any circumstance where that would be allowed.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I mean, it's certainly possible. I mean, anything's possible
16 but there's -- I can't think of a certain circumstance anywhere
17 where they would go that route.

18 Q. Okay. So I guess then I'm going to go back to the -- this
19 lighting system. So and correct me if I'm wrong, there were
20 school systems in the state of Indiana that actually did field
21 testing of this lighting system?

22 A. I don't believe that -- I take that back we may have gotten
23 one. No, I take that back, I don't think we even piloted. I'd
24 have to look back at my notes to be able to tell that for sure.

25 Q. Okay, all right.

1 A. Yeah, that I couldn't tell you.

2 Q. Okay, all right. So then and I'm trying to -- I've got some
3 information here so what I --

4 A. Hang on a second here. Marion Schools did do a pilot
5 program.

6 Q. I actually have Marion doing a pilot program July 12th,
7 September 12th, and March the 13th, is that correct?

8 A. Uh-huh, because I'm showing that. I don't have the exact
9 dates but I'm showing that the pilot program would start from
10 March 5th, of 2013, for one year. I do show that, yes.

11 Q. March 5th, of 2013, for one year?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. And I also have Tippecanoe Valley Schools, is that correct?

14 A. I don't show anything allowing that.

15 Q. I have here Tippecanoe Valley, August 12th.

16 A. And I can't -- I don't have anything; it's possible, I don't
17 see that at least in my search right this second.

18 Q. Okay, all right.

19 A. Let me look here. Yeah, the only thing I see for Tippecanoe
20 doesn't involve anything to do with that.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So is this a letter from myself or the state school bus
23 committee?

24 Q. So let me ask you a question do you keep documentation on the
25 final outcome of all of these pilot programs?

1 A. We do.

2 Q. Is it possible for me to get a copy of whatever documentation
3 the school district was required to present to you in regards to
4 these?

5 A. Sure.

6 Q. Okay, great awesome. So I would actually like to see what
7 the comments were from the school district. So at this particular
8 point you did the pilot program and as you said that -- let me go
9 back to make sure I got this correct. It was presented to the
10 state school -- I guess what is this the school board?

11 A. State school bus committee.

12 Q. School bus committee.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. And who presented it to the school bus committee?

15 A. As I read it here it would be the director of transportation
16 for Marion Community Schools.

17 Q. Okay. Director of Marion actually presented it, okay. All
18 right, and was the director of Marion favorable to this system,
19 I'm assuming the answer would be, yes?

20 A. You know what I couldn't tell you that for sure. I would
21 have --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- I would assume so because, I mean, like why would you want
24 to bother with it if you weren't, you know, favorable for whatever
25 comes out of that.

1 Q. Okay, and that and I'm just trying to make sure I understand
2 this in that the consensus or rather the lack of consensus dealt
3 with implementation as far as whether or not the system was --
4 would be basically connected to the other warning system or
5 whether it was a separate -- on a separate switch and --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. -- activated separately?

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. Okay, all right. And did Indiana ever decide they were going
10 to go back and reevaluate the system or their decision?

11 A. Yes. We're looking at that as right now we're in the middle
12 of -- we're sort of in the middle of a comprehensive spec review
13 and that will be one of the things that's considered.

14 Q. Okay, because I was wondering because I'd just saw in the --
15 how this all come up, I just saw in the news that, I think,
16 Illinois became the 22nd state to approve it and that was what
17 actually made me to go look for the system, because I hadn't heard
18 of it, and I was just wondering that I noticed that Indiana had
19 not approved the system. Okay.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. All right. So do you have some sense of as far as time as
22 when this comprehensive review would be completed and some
23 evaluations would be done?

24 A. Evaluations as into what?

25 Q. Once you do the comprehensive review, you're looking at

1 you're whole entire system I realize that, so whatever internal
2 recommendations you're making to yourself --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- for the state of Indiana. Do you have some sense of when
5 that would come out?

6 A. Yeah, this calendar year probably no later than and then the
7 problem is it's a year to do a full role make, well, then because
8 you have to go through the whole role making process --

9 Q. Got it.

10 A. -- that we love to do.

11 Q. Yes, sir.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Your role making. Okay.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. All right. So I guess one of the -- one of the situations is
16 that I actually rode that school bus route in Tippecanoe Valley
17 and it is fairly dark and, again, one of the things that we are
18 looking at is what we can do to provide lighting to the kids.

19 Now back in 2008 NHTSA had provided guidance and one of the
20 guidance was in regards to some type of lighting for the kids
21 sitting on the side of the road or wherever they are waiting for a
22 school bus. And one of the things that we're looking at is
23 whether or not this is something we need the state to look at or
24 whether or not this is something that's possible the school
25 district can look at.

1 So with that in mind my question to you is kind of sort of
2 give me your impression of it, what do you think needs to be done
3 in order to ensure that kids waiting for a bus, whatever age and
4 whether they cross a roadway or not have lighting? I think it's
5 dangerous to have a child standing in the dark anywhere, so I
6 guess my question to you is give me some suggestions, what are you
7 saying?

8 A. Well, first off don't let cars on the road.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. This is part of the issue here and I understand where you're
11 coming from and I've talked to legislators about this and in all
12 the laws that they wrote they still have not addressed the driver,
13 the car driver. My first suggestion is put a jammer on every
14 single car in this car where you cannot use your cellphone. Stop
15 that first and foremost. Right.

16 Q. Well, you know, I absolutely positively agree with that but
17 let's kind of go back to reasonable. What else do you think we
18 can do in order --

19 A. How is that not reasonable?

20 Q. Well, the truth is, sir, we do have legislation, we do have
21 laws that say you're not supposed to be drinking, drugging,
22 driving, talking, texting, you're not supposed to be distracted
23 and we do have those laws. Whether or not they're working,
24 whether or not we have to do something about it, that is something
25 that's being addressed.

1 So my question is since we are -- since we recognize that is
2 a problem and it is being addressed whether or not we can actually
3 up with a solution what else can we do, we have to something --

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. -- else in the meantime?

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Give me what else we can do?

8 A. Change school hours so they don't start until it's light out.

9 Q. So then that's your suggestion?

10 A. Simple solution.

11 Q. So then like what --

12 A. No. There's a multitude of different things they could do.

13 Q. So then I'm asking you is it feasible, is it actually
14 reasonable for us to look at and evaluate the ability of schools
15 to change their school hours honestly?

16 A. Sure, sure.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. One would simple change would be to change Indiana to a
19 Central Time Zone. That would eliminate most of the students that
20 are standing in the dark.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I don't know which -- that's a simple thing that can be done,
23 easy.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah, there's a lot of other things that might, you know, you

1 can say, okay, we could put lights out at every single bus stop in
2 the state but that's not feasible, you know. You could say put
3 the guardian system on every single school bus in the state that's
4 16,000 plus school buses, is that feasible? It's doable, is it
5 feasible?

6 Q. And the answer is that we're -- we don't -- we're not
7 recommending to anybody that they should use one system or the
8 other. What we're trying --

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. -- to figure is that, okay, if this system doesn't work for
11 you and if you say it doesn't work for you it doesn't work for you
12 then tell me what the alternative is?

13 A. Okay. Well and they've already taken one thing they don't
14 allow kids to cross.

15 Q. I, that will -- that does part of the issue, the other issue
16 is you still have kids standing in the dark. What do we do about
17 the kids standing on the side of a roadway in the dark?

18 A. Okay. As I said, I mean, you're talking about you'd put
19 lights at every single bus stop in the state or you'd have kids
20 with their own personal lights or you're using a guardian system
21 but the guardian system only works once the bus has stopped and
22 you put stop arm out.

23 Q. And I agree that only helps for when the bus arrives on the
24 scene.

25 A. Correct, right.

1 Q. And I understand that. The other question is how do we make
2 school bus stops more visible even before the bus gets there?
3 Let's say you have a kid waiting for a bus even if the bus is
4 going to do a nearside boarding, okay, but you have a kid on the
5 side of an interstate.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. What can we do to make that kid more visible?

8 A. You could do -- as you've said you've talked about lighting
9 but you could have -- mandate the kids wear more reflective gear,
10 you could put reflective reflectors themselves up, signage up. I
11 mean, I don't know if you're aware of the program or the device
12 that the kids in North Carolina created where they had a sign that
13 would flash at the bus stop that, hey, you know, when the bus is
14 arriving then the sign would flash showing there was a bus.

15 But now you'd have to put that at every single bus stop in
16 the area so I think I need a little more clarification what you
17 want as far as feasible? Everything's doable.

18 Q. Well, you know what I guess what I'm looking for is
19 reasonable solutions for what we have.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. For what we're looking at right now I am looking for what is
22 reasonable to suggest as some kind of mitigation to safety. Again
23 I'm not suggesting one thing or the other, I'm trying to figure
24 out, one, we don't want kids to cross an interstate or any roadway
25 that has a highway speed and I agree with that and that clearly is

1 being addressed and we recognize that.

2 The other thing that we have is we have a lot of kids that
3 are being struck by vehicles because they're standing on the side
4 of the road in the dark and my question then is what do you see as
5 a reasonable possibility, something that we can suggest or
6 something that Indiana on its own can work towards to deal with
7 the question about lighting and kids being out in the dark?

8 A. Okay. Then your only options really come to two things.
9 Students and what kind of gear they're wearing. Whether they have
10 their personal light system with them because I've seen those
11 proposed hanging off backpacks or reflective clothing or parents
12 are out there at the stop and they have some kind of lighting with
13 them.

14 Because up to prior to the bus stop, the bus getting there,
15 other than having lights out at every single place where there's a
16 bus stop, your only real option would be in the reflective
17 capacity of the clothing they wear or own personal lighting
18 systems that they're carrying.

19 Q. So you're saying that the school would provide each student
20 that uses student transportation --

21 A. No.

22 Q. -- some kind of reflective gear?

23 A. No. That would be the responsibility I would think of the
24 parents to handle that.

25 Q. Wouldn't it be the responsibility of the school system for

1 safe transportation of the kids?

2 A. Well, that would be the same thing as changing the school
3 times and/or all of those things. At what point do we say you're
4 asking for feasible. Having the school district provide that
5 that's probably not feasible because even if you provide it
6 there's nothing that says the kid will use it.

7 Q. Well, that absolutely, positively is true. Okay, all right.
8 So again, like I said, it's -- this is Rochester as you're
9 absolutely, positively aware, I'm not telling you anything you
10 don't know is a very complicated issue and they are a lot of
11 things that we're looking at.

12 The one thing that I think that we can all agree is that
13 we've done a great job of lighting the school bus. It's not a
14 matter of we can't see the school bus, we don't see the lights.
15 The issues that we're looking at is why people are not recognizing
16 school buses as school buses and that certainly is nothing to do
17 with you.

18 But one of things that we can't say and certainly Rochester
19 is an example there was nothing wrong with the school bus and
20 there was nothing -- certainly we're not -- we have no argument
21 about that. I think the question that we have at this particular
22 point is, okay, there are a lot of other things that seem to be
23 broken how can we fix them? And --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. -- at this particular point we're looking at a lot of things.

1 So the question about visibility, because of the prior incidents
2 with that bus on that bus route the parents keep the kids way back
3 off the road out of fear.

4 A. Right.

5 Q. And unfortunately what that does is that puts the kids out of
6 view of their drivers.

7 A. Yep.

8 Q. And the driver did everything he was supposed to do. There
9 is no issue about the driver the day of the crash. We, I don't
10 think I have a problem with what the driver did or how the driver
11 was trained or any of that. My question is okay we have parents
12 that are terrified to keep their kids close to the road which
13 means they're further back and the drivers can't see them.

14 We need to figure out a way of making the kids visible before
15 they enter the roadway and we need a way of making kids visible
16 who are standing on the roadway. I'm sure you're aware that in
17 Pennsylvania we had a seven year old that was actually killed
18 standing on the side of the road waiting for his school bus
19 because the delivery truck backing out of his parents' driveway
20 backed over him and didn't even know the kid was there and the
21 driver passed him on the way into the home.

22 So, again, it's an issue about darkness and I understand you
23 can't light up every single school bus stop because school bus
24 stops will change year to year. So we're just looking at any
25 other possibility so --

1 A. Right.

2 Q. And the truth is I don't have any answers so --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. That's it. All right, well like I said, the question about
5 the guardian angel lighting system came up when I saw the
6 information from Illinois that they had approved it. I actually
7 didn't what the system was and I was doing some research on it and
8 that was one of the things I wanted to talk to you about.

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. In addition to bus stop lighting. And I guess this is
11 something that all the directors were actually looking at anyway,
12 would that be fair to say?

13 A. Well, we've looked at it before, yes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And we're -- and we -- I mean, we continuously look at
16 various things related to specification so and I -- it's on my
17 list of things that need to be looked at this time as well. Again
18 no guarantees that that will be allowed or not allowed it's just
19 something that needs to be addressed.

20 Q. Okay. So then I guess my question is is that so
21 Congresswoman Walorski from the state of Indiana has been -- well,
22 she's been very kind of hands-on and keeping track of this and I
23 was wondering is there -- if there was something that the school
24 district or the state could do as far as suggestions?

25 At this particular point they've got a pretty comprehensive

1 bill going through both the House and the Senate about this.

2 Whether or not it will actually pass the full body I don't know
3 but I think its --

4 A. I don't know that I would call it a comprehensive bill
5 because all it talks about is having missed a study.

6 Q. Well actually it says that the Secretary of the Department of
7 Transportation has the overall authority so that's a little bit
8 different when you're putting it on the Secretary of
9 Transportation. Up until --

10 A. Right.

11 Q. -- this particular point we basically say, okay, study and
12 come back, this time they're actually putting the onus on the
13 Secretary of Transportation which is, well, unheard of in
14 Washington and again I'm not quite sure it's going to succeed.

15 But I think one of the things that she is willing to do is to
16 take suggestions from anybody and at this particular point that's
17 what we're looking at.

18 A. Right.

19 Q. Okay, well you know what, I promised you 15 minutes and it's
20 been over 30 so I'll --

21 A. That's okay not a problem.

22 Q. -- let you go and get your soda. So I appreciate you
23 answering my questions.

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. So do you have any questions for me? I need -- I guess I

1 need to be fair do you have any questions for me?

2 A. Well, my question would be based on the questions you asked
3 me it doesn't seem like there's going to be a whole lot of
4 emphasis on the real problem which is the motorist.

5 Q. Well, no, that's not true. We know the motorist is a
6 problem, we -- that's the easy part --

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. -- we certainly do know the motorist is a problem. We know
9 that there is a problem with drivers and we see it all the time.
10 We also know that there is an enforcement issue because if drivers
11 think they can get away with passing a school bus, guess what,
12 they're going to keep on getting away with it because they're
13 going to keep on doing it, because there are no penalties for the
14 drives.

15 We get that part, we certainly understand that part but we
16 also have to look at everything and everything --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- includes what I'm talking to you about. There's no point
19 in me talking --

20 A. Sure.

21 Q. -- you about the driver because the driver part is going to
22 deal with a totally different agency and certainly a totally
23 different set of laws and rules. So absolutely, I don't want you
24 to think that we are giving the driver an excuse, there is no
25 excuse for what happened and we're certainly not saying that there

1 aren't any issues that we need to address with the driver.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. All I'm saying -- what I'm saying is, okay, we do that but
4 the truth is the stupid human trick is there are going to be
5 stupid drivers out there, what can we do to mitigate the damage --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. -- they're going to do?

8 A. Well, and I should point that one other thing they did put
9 into law and I'm not saying this will make a difference, is that
10 all districts by September 1st of this year and every year after
11 has to review their routes and policies and procedures to ensure
12 the safety of the kids and all that stuff.

13 I was out at that bus stop, I saw the issues that were out
14 there and I also saw some of the stuff that were in place like the
15 sign saying school bus stop ahead both directions. So there were
16 a lot of things that could have been done, maybe should have been
17 done like I mean, basic fact, when you have three kids killed,
18 yes, they should have been done, but there were a lot of things
19 that could have been done to mitigate that -- pull the stop off
20 the road.

21 Lot of other things that could be done and maybe should have
22 been done and that's maybe a good portion or a good suggestion is
23 to say evaluate your routes and pull them off the roadways and
24 (indiscernible).

25 Q. And, again, I think that's being done and we applaud Indiana

1 for doing that. And what we're asking the industry and other
2 directors in other states to do is to look at this and consider
3 doing the same thing and certainly we're trying to do it
4 nationally where we're saying to people you need to pull the kids
5 off the interstate.

6 And, again, there's not one thing that causes something like
7 this to happen. It's a whole bunch of failures on a whole bunch
8 of levels and we're looking at the highway, we're looking at the
9 Department of Transportation as well since they are fairly aware
10 of the fact that that's a school bus route.

11 And one of the things that we're looking at also is the local
12 government because the unincorporated I guess it's community, it's
13 not even a city of Talma, was able to petition the Department of
14 Transportation to lower the speed limit through their town but
15 Rochester which is right next door still has a 55 mile an hour
16 speed limit --

17 A. Right.

18 Q. -- and my question was why didn't Rochester do what Talma
19 did? You're basically neighboring jurisdictions.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. So I mean there a lot of things that could have been done.
22 We're just looking at everything so --

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. All righty. So thank you again for taking the time, I
25 certainly do appreciate it. We're, at this particular point we

1 are trying to finish up the -- all the investigative --

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. -- portions of this and then we're going to kind of move
4 forward looking at what we have and we're certainly looking for
5 anybody and everybody who has a suggestion. I'm not proud, I
6 don't know, I'll take any suggestion as to what we can do.

7 A. Yeah, no I hear that.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, sir. Thank you.

9 MR. LAROCCO: Anytime.

10 MS. HARLEY: All right, have a good evening -- have a good
11 day I guess evening, day.

12 MR. LAROCCO: You too.

13 MS. HARLEY: Thank you.

14 MR. LAROCCO: Yes. All right, bye.

15 MS. HARLEY: Bye.

16 Interview terminated 2:54 p.m.

17 (Whereupon, at 2:54 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: BUS STOP CRASH
ROCHESTER, FULTON COUNTY, INDIANA
Interview of Michael LaRocco

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY9MH003

LOCATION: Via Telephone

DATE: July 16, 2019

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Wade Donovan
Transcriber