In the Matter of the Investigation of Baker, Bus, Ski & Snowboard Club

Docket No. TE-240673 - Vol. I

October 21, 2024



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1	APPEARANCES:	1	October 21, 2024
2	2	2	-000-
3	FOR COMMISSION STAFF:	3	
4	Liam Weiland	4	JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. I think that's our
5	liam.weiland@atg.wa.gov	5	signal that we are on the record. One moment.
6	Office of the Attorney General	6	Okay. We have everyone. Okay. So good
7	P.O. Box 40128	7	afternoon. We are on the record. The time is 1:36 on
8		8	October 21, 2024. This is Docket TE-24673.
_	Olympia, Washington 98504	9	My name is Bijan Hughes. And I'm an
9 10	360.664.1186	10	administrative law judge with the Washington Utilities
	FOR THE COMPANY:	11	and Transportation Commission.
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11		1 2	
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Page 5 Page 7 1 Honor. Liam Weiland, assistant attorney general, on 1 **DIRECT EXAMINATION** 2 2 behalf of staff. With me are staff witnesses Jason Sharp BY ATTORNEY WEILAND: 3 3 and Sandra Yeomans. Q Good afternoon, Ms. Yeomans. 4 A Good afternoon. 4 JUDGE HUGHES: Thank you. And the 5 representative for Mr. Engel, could you please introduce 5 Q Would you please begin by stating your name and 6 yourself for the record and spell your name, please. 6 spelling your last name for the record? 7 7 PAUL ENGEL: Paul Engel, P-A-U-L, A My name is Sandra Yeomans; last name is spelled 8 E-N-G-E-L. And I am the president of the Baker Bus Ski 8 Y-E-O-M-A-N-S. 9 9 Q And by whom are you employed? and Snowboard Club. 10 A Utilities of -- Washington State Utilities and 10 JUDGE HUGHES: Very good. Okay. I don't 11 think that will be the case, but are there any motions 11 Transportation Commission. 12 before we jump into the witnesses? 12 Q And what is your position at the commission? 13 13 ATTORNEY WEILAND: No, your Honor. A I'm a Special Investigator 3. JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. So let's start off 14 Q And what are your duties in that position? 14 -- I don't know what you plan on presenting. But let's 15 A I perform compliance investigations, inspect 15 16 start off by getting some of the procedural facts down as 16 commercial motor vehicles, do training, and some 17 to service and then we can move on to the merits. Does 17 community events. 18 18 Q Have you received training that allows you to that sound good to you? 19 ATTORNEY WEILAND: Yes, it does. I'll 19 carry out those duties? 20 20 A Yes. probably raise some of these issues in my questioning of 21 21 Q Would you please describe that training for me? the witnesses. 22 22 A I have completed Part A, B, and ISA training But I can just say right now my 23 understanding is that the inspection was done on August 23 with CDSA. That enables you to become a -- certified to 24 24 complete investigations and inspections on vehicles. I also do quarterly training to continually be 25 The notice of intent to cancel was served 25 Page 6 Page 8 1 updated on any rules, regulations or changes that have 1 on September 25. 2 The penalty assessment, as you said, was 2 been made. 3 3 Q Great. And are you generally familiar with the served on October 8. 4 federal and state regulations that govern the state of 4 And then the actual notice of operation of passenger carriers? 5 unsatisfactory safety rating was sent to the company on 5 6 October 10. 6 7 That's my understanding. And we can 7 Q Are you familiar with the Washington passenger 8 8 carrier called Baker Bus Ski and Snowboard Club? confirm when we talk to the witnesses. JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Very good. Thanks 9 9 10 10 Q How did you become familiar with Baker Bus? for having that lined up. Okay. So staff, would you like to 11 A Baker Bus was assigned to me as one of my 11 12 introduce your first witness? 12 annual work schedules that we receive each December of 13 ATTORNEY WEILAND: Yes. Staff calls 13 every year. 14 Sandra Yeomans to testify. 14 And then I also was sent a complaint, forwarded JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. I will swear you in. a complaint, actually, on June 13th of 2024, expressing 15 15 concerns about the vehicle size the carrier was using. If you could please raise your right hand. 16 16 Do you swear or affirm that the testimony 17 17 Q Okay. Thank you. Now to back up for a second, could you please 18 you give today will be the truth, the whole truth, and 18 19 nothing but the truth? 19 describe your process for -- generally for carrying out a 20 THE WITNESS: I do. 20 safety inspection on a passenger carrier? 21 JUDGE HUGHES: Very good. All right. 21 A Yes. So part of an investigation, we are 22 22 required to evaluate all of the components of what the Please proceed, counselor. 23 23 compliance is for each carrier. So this is investigating 24 SANDRA YEOMANS, having been duly sworn, 24 their driver's license status, the authority, what level 25 25 testified as follows: of insurance they have, if they're required to have a

Page 9 Page 11 1 drug and alcohol program. If they are, we research the 1 operations? 2 2 testing that has been done. We have the driver A Yes. 3 3 qualification files, hours of service, maintenance, and ATTORNEY WEILAND: Judge Hughes, at this 4 4 point, staff would move to admit Exhibit SY-2. inspection. 5 5 And then we inspect the carrier's vehicles to JUDGE HUGHES: Does the company have any 6 6 make sure that -- and in general, we make sure that objection? 7 7 everything is in compliance and the vehicle is in safe PAUL ENGEL: Was that to me? 8 8 JUDGE HUGHES: Yes. Staff is moving to working order. 9 Q Do you physically inspect the company's 9 enter SY-2, which I believe would have been provided to 10 10 vehicles? you last week in the record. Do you have any objections 11 A Yes. Yes. we do. 11 to that being --12 Q And you mentioned something called a driver's 12 PAUL ENGEL: Do I have a copy of SY-2? qualification file. Could you please describe what that 13 13 ATTORNEY WEILAND: It was --14 14 (Overlapping speech) 15 A It's a collection of documents that provides 15 ATTORNEY WEILAND: -- week, yes. the driver is the -- that proves that the driver is 16 PAUL ENGEL: Is that the report that --16 17 the encrypted report that I got that is at the -- it's 17 qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle. So it 18 18 basically Sandi's findings? might be abstracts, medical cards, their application, 19 annual reviews, records. That would be a driver's file. 19 ATTORNEY WEILAND: Yes, it is. 20 Q Great. And in performing your inspection of 20 PAUL ENGEL: Okay. Yes, I have that. Baker Bus, did you follow all of the steps you just 21 21 JUDGE HUGHES: And we're moving it into mentioned? 22 22 evidence. So you don't object to its being --23 23 A Yes. PAUL ENGEL: No. 24 Q When you finish reviewing a carrier's 24 JUDGE HUGHES: -- in evidence. So we will 25 operations, do you produce a report of your findings? 2.5 enter that into evidence as SY-2. Page 10 Page 12 A Yes. 1 1 (Exhibit Number SY-2 admitted.) 2 Q And do you produce those reports in the 2 Q (By Paul Engel) So Ms. Yeomans, did you find ordinary course of business? 3 3 any violations of the relevant safety regulations during 4 your inspection of Baker Bus's operations? 4 Q And do you make those reports contemporaneously 5 5 A Yes, I did. 6 with the end of your safety review? 6 Q And are those violations accurately reflected 7 7 in your report? 8 Q Did you produce such a report of your findings 8 A Yes. 9 at the conclusion of your review of Baker Bus's 9 Q Could you please describe for me the three 10 operations? 10 levels of violations as set forth by the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Administration that are included in your 11 11 12 Q And did that report accurately reflect what you 12 report? 13 found during your inspection? 13 A Yeah. There are three levels of violation 14 A Yes. 14 severity. Q At this time I would like you to please turn to 15 15 And the first and most concerning is acute the exhibit marked SY-2. Do you have that in front of 16 16 violations, which require immediate action on the carrier 17 you? 17 to correct. Then there are critical violations, where there 18 A I do. 18 19 Q Would you please identify this document? 19 is a breakdown in the carrier's management controls. 20 A This is our findings report. It's called a 20 And then there's general violation that 21 Capri (phonetic) report that we put all the information 21 requires correction. 2.2 in, all the violations, and we write -- that we write up 22 Q Did you find any acute violations during your 23 after every review. 23 inspection? 24 Q Great. Is SY-2 a true and accurate copy of the 24 A Yes, we did. Q What were those? 25 report you produced after your review of Baker Bus's 25

2.5

Page 13

A There was an acute violation for not having a controlled substance and alcohol program.

There was one for not having the right financial responsibility.

And the third one was not in regards -- was in regards to making a fraudulent paper in a driver qualification file.

Q Thank you.

I'd like to just spend a minute talking about each of those three in a little bit more detail.

You said first that there was an acute violation for failure to employ a controlled substance and alcohol testing program and failure to have the appropriate amount of insurance coverage. How did you determine that Baker Bus committed these violations?

A The vehicle, one of the vehicles that they use for commerce is over 16 passengers. And that puts them in a position where they have to actually have a CDL versus a non-CDL. And any company that runs within a CDL requirement has to be enrolled in a drug and alcohol program. And they did not have a drug and alcohol program.

Q And is it the same requirement, the same standard applies to the \$5 million insurance requirement?

A Yes.

A Annually, it's required that you do an inspection on -- or not an inspection; excuse me. You do an annual review of drivers' records.

Page 15

And to do that, one of the requirements is that you have the abstract. And once you review the abstract, then you sign that you have reviewed that abstract and the driver is in good standing to continue to be able to drive.

For Baker Bus, he had the paperwork dated prior to any abstract. So therefore, he was signing off that he had read the abstract and all was good, when really, he had not even had the abstract to review.

Q Can you just tell me what an abstract is in more detail?

A It is a commercial motor vehicle that is requested from the Department of Licensing that gives all information as to the driver, their date of birth, what type of license that they have, any infractions that they may have on it, if they have a medical. So it's everything in regards to your driver's license obtained through the Department of Licensing.

Q All right. Thank you.

And in your inspection, did you also record any critical violations?

A Yes.

Page 14

Q Thank you.

And how did you determine that, that Baker operates a vehicle that's designed to carry more than 16 passengers?

A There was pictures and information that was given to me on the vehicles that Baker Bus owned that are parked at a hotel. And when I went and -- pictures of it being used in commerce, and the name of the person that hired them.

And so I went to where the bus was. When I originally did the inspections, it was not there. But I was back in town later and went to the same location where the bus was parked, and counted the seats and took pictures. It has 19 seats, so anything over 16 is a CDL vehicle.

And then I contacted the person that hired them, and they confirmed that they did hire them and had hired him many times, but I just focused on the one time that I had proof on the one time it was in service.

Q Okay. Thank you.

So let's go to the third acute violation you described, which is making a false entry on a driver qualification file. Can you discuss that in more detail and tell me how you determined that that violation was committed?

Page 16

Q And which were those?

A There was three of those as well.

The first one was using a driver not medically examined and certified.

The second one was not having -- to maintain initial driving record in the driver qualification file.

And the last one was using a commercial motor vehicle that hadn't been periodically inspected.

Q And can you please just briefly run through how you determined each of those three violations were committed as well?

A The first one, using a driver not medically examined and certified, in order to drive a commercial vehicle, it is required that each driver get a DOT medical. And that produces the -- the doctor produces a certificate, and that is to be presented at the time that we ask for it. And there was no medical certification for Paul Engel or Shea McLaran.

On the next one, failing to maintain the abstracts in the driver record qualification file, at the time you hire a driver, you need to obtain an abstract either 30 days prior to or 30 days after in order to make sure that they are fit to be driving. And I was told that he had them and was going to get them to them. He was unable to do that since he said that he had obtained

Page 17 Page 19 1 the abstracts and did not have them; therefore, it was a Q Did you send your report later to the company? 1 2 2 failure to maintain them. That was actually sent in by Jason. Then the last one is using a commercial motor Q Okay. I'll hold that question for Jason. 3 3 vehicle not periodically inspected. That's required 4 4 A Yeah. 5 annually, that they do a complete inspection on every 5 ATTORNEY WEILAND: I have no more questions for Ms. Yeomans. 6 vehicle that the company operates on the public roads. 6 7 7 And that is put on a piece of paper that specifically JUDGE HUGHES: I have just two quick 8 marks down that they have checked every component, who 8 followups. You mentioned the report being satisfactory. 9 9 the mechanic was, what vehicle, what date; and that is The word satisfactory, like, by saying that, you're not 10 certified, signed by the mechanic that does that. They 10 saying it's a satisfactory safety rating; you're saying 11 are required to maintain those for an entire -- for 14 11 satisfactory in that staff approves of it? 12 months from the time that they are done. And Baker Bus 12 THE WITNESS: Correct. 13 was unable to produce those inspections for their 13 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. When you said that 14 vehicles. 14 you thought you sent him a copy, would that have been Q All right. Thank you. 15 through e-mail, or you physically delivered it to him. 15 16 So just to sum up, you recorded three acute and 16 THE WITNESS: It would have been through 17 three critical violations, correct? 17 e-mail. A Yes. 18 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Would the company 18 19 Q And did you record any additional violations? 19 like to ask any questions? 20 A Yeah. There was multiple general regulations. 20 This is your opportunity to do so. You're Q Okay. Great. I won't make you go through 21 21 on mute, sir. those one by one. 22 PAUL ENGEL: Can you hear me now? 22 23 A Okay. 23 JUDGE HUGHES: Yes. 24 Q When you complete a report that yields an 24 PAUL ENGEL: No, I don't have any unsatisfactory safety rating, what are your next steps? 25 25 questions. Page 18 Page 20 1 A Once I've done the report, it goes to my JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. 1 2 2 supervisor to verify. Then it comes back to me for my Well, thank you for your time. 3 3 corrections. And that process continues until it's a Another witness, then? 4 satisfactory report. 4 ATTORNEY WEILAND: Yes. Thank you. 5 5 And at that point, my supervisor informs me At this time, staff calls Jason Sharp to 6 that I can contact the carrier to have a closing 6 testify. 7 interview with them. I try to contact the carrier to set 7 JUDGE HUGHES: Hi, Mr. Sharp. Please 8 8 up a date and time to have that conversation. Usually, raise your right hand. then, they would give me a date and time that works for 9 Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the 9 10 them. I would call them up. We'd go over the report. 10 testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the 11 And then at that point, I'm done. It goes to 11 whole truth, and nothing but the truth? 12 other departments to handle penalties or any other 12 THE WITNESS: Yes, I do. 13 13 further actions. JUDGE HUGHES: Thank you. Please proceed. Q Did you follow those steps in this case? 14 14 15 15 A Yes but I did not get any reply from Paul. JASON SHARP having been duly sworn, testified as Q Just to clarify, when you -- you reached out to 16 16 follows: do a closing interview with the company, and you didn't 17 17 DIRECT EXAMINATION 18 get a reply? 18 19 A I did not get any reply. I made multiple 19 BY ATTORNEY WEILAND: 20 attempts to through e-mail and phone calls. I am pretty 2.0 Q Good afternoon, Mr. Sharp. 21 sure that I also sent him a copy of the report, but I was 21 Good afternoon. 22 unable to locate that --22 Q Would you please begin by stating your name and 23 Q Great. 23 spelling your last name for the record? 24 24 A -- once he didn't respond to me through the A Yes. My name is Jason Sharp; S-H-A-R-P. 25 25 Q And by whom are you employed? multiple attempts.

Page 21 Page 23 1 A The Washington Utilities and Transportation 1 the proposed rating and issue a notice of intent to 2 2 Commission. cancel. Q What is your position at the commission? 3 3 If there are violations that are identified 4 4 A I am the motor vehicle carrier safety that per our enforcement policy would mandate a financial 5 supervisor in the transportation safety division. 5 penalty be administered, then we will recommend that to 6 Q Would you please briefly describe your duties 6 the commission as well. I think I answered. 7 7 in that position? Q That sounds good. 8 A Yes. I have many duties as they pertain to 8 Yeah. Α 9 9 Q Could you briefly describe for me how staff today's case. 10 I oversee the safety investigators team. I 10 calculates an unsatisfactory rating? 11 assign their work, so their investigations. I review 11 A Yes. The UTC adopts the Federal Motor Carrier 12 their safety reports. And I provide recommendations that 12 Safety Administration's safety rating methodology, Part 13 are based on the commission's enforcement policy. 13 14 Q And have you received training that allows you 14 And I'm going to turn to the Exhibit SY-2. 15 15 Starting on page 21 of that document, there is a to carry out these duties? 16 A Yes. I've been in my position for nearly seven 16 breakdown of the safety fitness rating explanation. So a 17 17 company will receive points during a safety vears now. 18 investigation. In this case, points are not a positive 18 Prior to being in my current role, I was also a 19 safety investigator here at the commission, receiving 19 thing. They're a tally that negatively impacts the 20 20 training through the Federal Motor Carrier Safety overall safety rating. 21 21 Administration to conduct compliance reviews, as well as There's three potential ratings during a 22 vehicle inspection and driver inspection certification 22 comprehensive review. 23 23 through the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance. The best a carrier can do is receive a 24 Q Great. Thank you. 24 satisfactory rating. 25 Are you generally familiar with the federal and 25 If the company has some areas where critical or Page 22 Page 24 1 state regulations that govern the safe operation of 1 acute regulations are impacted, they may receive a 2 passenger carriers? 2 proposed conditional rating, which is kind of your next 3 3 A Yes. step down, but it doesn't necessarily impact the Q Are you familiar with the Washington passenger 4 4 carrier's ability to operate per the regulations. carrier called Baker Bus Ski and Snowboard Club? 5 5 In the event that a company receives a proposed 6 A Yes, I am. 6 unsatisfactory rating as a passenger carrier, they would 7 Q How did you become familiar with Baker Bus? 7 have 45 days from the notice of that proposed rating to 8 A Baker Bus is a regulated charter and excursion 8 request an upgrade to that proposed rating via a safety carrier. They have a certificate with the commission to 9 9 management plan. 10 provide those services. And they were in need of a 10 So I just got to page 21 here, and we look at 11 11 safety rating. So I assigned a routine compliance six factors related to a company's overall safety 12 investigation on the company. 12 posture. You see them listed, Factor 1, Factor 2 through 13 Q Great. And did you review Ms. Yeomans' 13 6. inspection report in this case? 14 14 The first factor here -- I should slow down 15 15 here. Each factor, depending on the violations that are A Yes, I did. Q After an investigator completes a review and 16 16 identified, may result in a satisfactory, a conditional, 17 submits their report, what are typically the next steps 17 or an unsatisfactory rating. (Inaudible) just broke down 18 in the compliance review process? 18 the overall proposal. A So after they submit their report, and when we 19 19 In this case, the categories are grouped into 20 are done with any, let's say corrections, then I approve 20 similar qualification requirements. 21 the investigator to close the report. 21 So Factor 1, this is where the violation is for

insurance, as well as the fraudulent documents went. The

shows you zero points is satisfactory all the way down to

carrier received two negative points for this factor.

And if you see in the right top corner of that box, it

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Once I'm notified that the process has

occurred, depending on the outcome, if the, in this case,

carrier received a proposed unsatisfactory safety rating,

we start the process to cancel the certificate based on

Page 25

greater than one is unsatisfactory. So this particular factor received two points, meaning it was unsatisfactory.

As we go down to the next factor, that's related to controlled substance and alcohol testing, as well as driver qualifications. So Investigator Yeomans just went over the results of that, which were an acute and two critical violations, which resulted in another unsatisfactory factor.

Factor 3 was focused on hours of service, as well as operations and local laws which would fall under Part 329. The company did not receive any negative scores in this factor. So they received a satisfactory for Factor 3.

Factor 4, they did get a point. And that was in relation to the annual inspections. So one point equated to a conditional factor for Factor 4.

Factor 5 is related to hazardous materials. And the company does not transport hazardous materials, and so that was not applicable.

And then Factor 6 is related to accidents and the reportable accident rate of the company. The company did not have any DOT reportable accidents during the previous year. And so that factor was satisfactory.

Okay. So then if we move on to the next page

documentation of actual corrective action, as well as identifying the management controls that the company has put in place to prevent those violations from reoccurring in the future.

Additionally, once the entirety of the violations are identified, the company would certify in a certification statement that their operations currently meet state and federal regulations and that they will continue to operate within those guidelines.

Q Great. Thank you.

And in this case, on what date did staff send its notice of a proposed unsatisfactory safety rating to the company?

A Most recently, Mr. Engel reached out to me -- I believe on October 10 -- and stated that he had not received a copy of the investigation report, which would have identified the individual violations and which he could then respond.

I sent him the report via e-mail.

He contacted me again last week on Friday, which would have been the 18th, to state that he wasn't able to access that report.

So we got on a call together, and I was able to verify, as Mr. Engel mentioned, the encrypted report. When we send reports through our e-mail system, they're

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number, 22, it has the overall safety fitness rating, where it identifies that there were two unsatisfactory factors and there was one conditional.

So that equates to an overall safety or proposed rating of unsatisfactory. And then there's the calculated table below that that shows why that is the case.

So this is all factored in due to the FMCSRs, and we follow that same process.

Q Great. Thank you.

And you mentioned briefly that when a company gets the unsatisfactory rating, it can address that and come into compliance without having its certificate canceled by submitting what's called a safety management plan.

Can you explain what a safety management plan is?

A Yeah, a safety management plan is a company's opportunity to show a corrective action.

What we look for in that is that a company addresses the safety regulations that were identified in the safety investigation report. That response would be a detailed account of why the violation was allowed to occur, what the company has done to correct the violation. That would also entail the company providing

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Page 27

flagged as having potential personal identifiable information. So they become a little bit tricky to get to the end user, as I know I've had issues sending them to you. So we were able to work through it, and I was able to verify that Mr. Engel was able to receive the report with each of the violations on the 17th.

Q Okay. Thank you.

And since the company has received the report, are you aware of any actions the company has taken to correct these violations?

A I haven't received any -- I haven't received a safety management plan from the company.

The company did send me some initial responses looking to address the violations.

I provided them some feedback on what we were going to need to have more in alignment with the standards that I just identified that are required in the safety management plan. We had that conversation on Friday the 17th.

So we have discussed what the expectation of the safety management plan is.

ATTORNEY WEILAND: Okay. Thank you. I have no further questions for Witness

Sharp.

JUDGE HUGHES: I will -- Company, do you

Page 29 Page 31 1 1 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. And then I have to do a have any questions for the witness first? I see you 2 2 shaking your head, indicating no. compliance statement. I'm just making sure that that's 3 Okay. Mr. Sharp, thank you. Please stick 3 what I need to do. around. I may have some questions following the 4 4 JUDGE HUGHES: That's the -- that would be 5 company's presentation. But thank you. 5 the request. I can't say whether it would be granted or Okay. Does staff have anything further? 6 6 not granted. I can't (inaudible) not having seen your 7 7 ATTORNEY WEILAND: No, nothing further corrective actions. 8 from staff. 8 Does staff -- if the company does file a 9 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Thank you. Would 9 safety management plan, staff thinks you can continue Baker Bus Ski and Snowboard like to present any evidence 10 10 working with them, or would they be pursuing cancellation regardless? 11 or testimony? 11 12 You can proceed by testifying in a 12 ATTORNEY WEILAND: It depends on the narrative form if you would like. But if you would like 13 13 contents of the plan. If the plan adequately addresses to, I'll have to swear you in, so please let me know. 14 all the violations, yes, staff would no longer pursue 14 PAUL ENGEL: Can you hear me? 15 15 cancellation. 16 JUDGE HUGHES: Yes. 16 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Okay. I suppose we 17 PAUL ENGEL: Okay. Thank you. 17 can proceed on that. I did -- let me just make sure I 18 All I would like to do as far as, like, 18 don't have any followup questions. Okay. 19 the only testimony that I have is I would like to have 19 Actually, I do have a few questions for 20 the chance to resubmit my safety plan, now that I have 20 you. So I'm going to go ahead and swear you in, okay? 21 the report and know exactly -- I've talked with Jason and 21 PAUL ENGEL: Okay. 22 I know exactly what I need to do. I would like to have 22 JUDGE HUGHES: Raise your right hand. 23 time to be able to submit that plan to come into 23 Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole 24 compliance with what the UTC is asking for. 24 truth, and nothing but the truth? 2.5 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Well, you have 45 25 PAUL ENGEL: I do. Page 30 Page 32 1 days from the receipt of the rating to request an 1 QUESTIONS BY JUDGE HUGHES 2 improvement. So we can keep that in mind. 2 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. You received a 3 3 I suppose I don't need to swear you in, number of acute violations in August. Have those been 4 4 But can you -cured? PAUL ENGEL: Does that mean I have 45 days 5 5 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. 6 from October 17: is that correct? 6 JUDGE HUGHES: Can you talk to me about 7 JUDGE HUGHES: I don't think I can answer 7 the actions you took to cure them? 8 that question at this time with the facts that I have. 8 PAUL ENGEL: Well, the basic thing is the 9 9 But I think that's the way we want to proceed. I don't cease of operations. I mean, let me go back to the --10 know if it's -- I might have to grant a variance or 10 JUDGE HUGHES: I guess let me rephrase. Let me ask more specifically. Do you have adequate 11 something to that effect. But I think we can move -- if 11 12 staff is comfortable with that, 45 days from that date of 12 insurance right now? 13 actual receipt. 13 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. ATTORNEY WEILAND: Staff is comfortable 14 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Does your vehicle 14 15 15 currently have the markings or your charter number? with that. 16 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. 16 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. PAUL ENGEL: So that means I have 45 days JUDGE HUGHES: And let's see. What was 17 17 to address everything in Sandi's report, bring that into 18 18 the third acute? And you now have a drug program? compliance; and show my safety management plan, show 19 19 PAUL ENGEL: We have not implemented a 20 compliance, detail all of why the occurrences happened, 20 drug program, but we will not -- we will not use vehicles 21 how I corrected them, and then how management will keep 21 over 15 passengers. 22 them corrected or control that, those corrections. 22 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. 23 JUDGE HUGHES: You have the opportunity to 23 PAUL ENGEL: It was my understanding that 24 request a safety rating improvement. And you do that 24 if we don't use vehicles over 15 passengers, we don't 25 25 through showing those corrections. have to have a drug and alcohol plan or CDL's. The

Page 33 Page 35 1 1 drivers don't have to have CDL's. So we couldn't operate, so the UTC said 2 2 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. So your intent is to they won't -- I won't get -- it won't be frowned upon or 3 simply get rid of the big bus and not have CDL's? 3 anything. We're just going to close. And then once COVID is over, we're going to reopen. And it will be 4 PAUL ENGEL: Correct. 4 5 5 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. okay. So that's what I did. I took that advice. 6 PAUL ENGEL: That's what I meant by cease, 6 And then during that time, during COVID 7 7 yeah. No more big bus favors. and all that, I figured out how to go nonprofit. I 8 JUDGE HUGHES: I gotcha. 8 figured out a way to be able to do it. And then when I 9 9 opened back up again, I opened back up as a nonprofit. I did want to ask, because I saw it in the 10 10 NOIC, and I think it is relevant to our enforcement And then -- but I did pay the fine, my previous fine and 11 policy. The staff included information that you had a 11 all of that. You know what I mean? I paid all that. I 12 previous company which had received a fairly substantial 12 closed --13 fine or it wound down operations? 13 JUDGE HUGHES: I believe it --14 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. 14 (Overlapping speech) JUDGE HUGHES: Was there 9,000 suspended 15 JUDGE HUGHES: Can you speak at all to 15 16 that? 16 though, that --17 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. Yes. So when I very 17 (Overlapping speech) 18 first started, and this has been a ton of years ago now, 18 PAUL ENGEL: No, but I wasn't required to 19 I wanted to be nonprofit. That was my original goal. 19 pay that as long as I came -- as long as I, like, came 20 And the lawyer that -- we couldn't figure out how to do 20 into compliance and paid the \$1,000. 21 that with the UTC to be, like, for hire, but then not be 21 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. 22 -- but be nonprofit. So we just started as just a 22 PAUL ENGEL: The 9,000 was like 23 regular for hire company, not a nonprofit. 23 probationary. 24 I went through all the stuff with the UTC 24 But then I canceled that permit because I 25 and got my permit and all of that, and I didn't -- I 25 changed it into the nonprofit, basically. I changed --Page 34 Page 36 1 didn't know -- I don't -- I was just stupid. I didn't 1 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. know that -- I thought it was like when you build a 2 PAUL ENGEL: -- the company to where we 2 3 3 house; you get a permit and then you're done. You're could accept donations, all of that stuff. 4 4 JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. I appreciate that good to go. 5 And so -- sorry about that. So anyway, I 5 background. I was a little thrown off by the revenue on 6 6 ended up operating -- I operated that for a long time, the first page. That all makes more sense now. 7 not knowing that I was not in compliance, basically. 7 PAUL ENGEL: Yeah, I -- yeah. Yeah. The 8 And then I went in and -- went in, went to 8 whole -- what happened before was just incompetence on my 9 9 court, and told them that; and said, like, look, I mean. part. Like, I literally just didn't know. 10 all I did -- I had all the insurance. I had all the 10 And they were really cool at the hearing 11 11 paperwork. I was doing all the stuff. I just didn't when I brought the paperwork and I said, Here's my 12 know that I had to -- I guess it's like -- it's like \$40 12 paperwork. I'm doing it. I just didn't know that I had 13 a vehicle or something like that every year. Basically 13 to show you or whatever. Anyway. 14 14 there's like an annual report thing that you do. JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. 15 Anyway, so they showed mercy on me and 15 PAUL ENGEL: They were cool about it. said, okay, if you -- you know, obviously do these 16 They went from 10,000 to 1,000 which is doable, at least, 16 reports, and all of that. Then they waived a bunch of 17 17 on our budget. 18 the fines. And I was like probation, I think, and I paid 18 JUDGE HUGHES: It's not a small 19 it off, and we're all good. And then I did the reports, 19 difference, no. 20 so then it was all good. 2.0 Okay. I have one more question for you. 21 Then COVID happened. And they contacted 21 PAUL ENGEL: Yes. 22 me and said the best thing to do is to just close. Like 22 JUDGE HUGHES: The false certification, 23 to cancel the permit and not -- because obviously, we 23 I'll just say is concerning. 24 can't operate. We weren't whatever it's called, 24 PAUL ENGEL: The what? 25 25 critical, or -- anyway, we couldn't operate. ATTORNEY WEILAND: False certification.

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So signing off on the abstracts prior to looking at the abstracts. So is there anything you'd like to say relating to that?

PAUL ENGEL: The main basis for all of my drivers -- and this is what I'm going to submit. All the stuff that went through the drivers, I didn't realize, because they didn't have -- that's the whole reason why I got out of the CDL thing. I didn't want to -- I didn't realize that we had to address all of that stuff.

And so now I know that no matter what, even if they're volunteers -- like, our drivers, like -our bus, what we do is we take people up to Mount Baker Ski Area to go skiing. So when you drive the bus, you get a lift ticket. So it's like that's your inventory to drive the bus. All the drivers are volunteers. They're not employees, you know. It's a really small -- anyway.

So now that I know that we have to have the -- all of that, we have to have the medical forms and all of that for this upcoming season, I'm going to have it all dialed in.

And I mean, right now, we're getting ready, you know. We're probably a month out from starting operations. And so this is like perfect timing. I'm just going to get it all completely dialed in and have it like -- and --

I want to clarify that even though the

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company is registered as a nonprofit, they do not qualify for a nonprofit certificate through the commission. They are offering more club-based transportation, and not providing transportation to people who otherwise could

not transport themselves.

So I think that was something that I just wanted to make sure was clear, as Mr. Engel was talking about the \$10,000 penalty with the \$1,000 suspended penalty. That was due to a settlement that we reached amongst the parties prior to that hearing with the understanding of the operations as they fall under charter excursion.

Mr. Engel also had previously, as he mentioned, owned and operated Cascade Adventures and Baker Bus. So there's a lot of prior technical assistance that's been involved with Mr. Engel and his operations as they exist with the commission.

So the company, is my understanding, it's a club where people will pay to join it and then have access to a seat on the bus to go up to the mountain and

Mr. Engel is aware that his drivers that he calls volunteers are part of a compensation method where they are operating on behalf of the company,

JUDGE HUGHES: Okay.

PAUL ENGEL: And now that I have this, I

have all the tools to be able to do it too.

JUDGE HUGHES: Thank you. That sounds good.

I would note for your edification that knowing the rules is actually a requirement of the rules.

PAUL ENGEL: I know.

JUDGE HUGHES: In any event, I think I have one question for Mr. Sharp, but thank you for answering my questions there. Thank you.

PAUL ENGEL: Thanks.

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QUESTIONS OF MR. SHARP BY JUDGE HUGHES

JUDGE HUGHES: All right. My only question is related to the size of the club and the revenue, and what impact, if any staff thinks that has on the enforcement policy of -- in terms of the harshness of the penalty that should be imposed here.

JASON SHARP: Yeah. So the company hasn't responded to the penalty, the penalty assessment yet.

If I may, I could provide a little bit more background into my understanding of how the club operations work and -- because Mr. Engel supplied information on that they're nonprofit.

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driving their vehicles on the public roadways. They are being compensated by the lift ticket, is my

understanding, as part of being a club member as well. Regardless, whether they are paid or not, they're

operating for the club, which is a for-hire entity.

And that was all established during our previous case, or classification, I should say, and which was referenced with the suspended penalties of \$1,000.

So the overall penalty, staff would be open, in the right circumstances, meaning an approved safety management plan, to entertain mitigation of that penalty.

Since that request hasn't been made to this point, staff doesn't really have a position to change what's been assessed as of now, as we believe that the overall penalty is fair in what has been issued, based on the history and involvement of the operator.

However, with a commitment to the safety management controls of the company, staff would entertain, should the company request, a mitigation plan.

JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. Very good. I appreciate that. Sorry for asking that, but I figured better than sending a request later. Good context.

That's all the questions I have.

10 (Pages 37 to 40)

	Page 41		Page 43
1	Mr. Weiland, is there anything further	1	legal question we could explore, but it's perhaps not
2	from staff?	2	worth it.
3	ATTORNEY WEILAND: I would just like to	3	JASON SHARP: Yeah, staff doesn't contest
4	clarify to your last question, I'm not sure if you were	4	that. I think that it's you know, Mr. Engel has the
5	specifically talking about the penalty or the penalty and	5	report now with the violations. So I just wanted to
6	cancellation.	6	verify that. Thank you.
7	But I agree that the commission has, you	7	JUDGE HUGHES: No, thank you for doing
8	know, broad discretion in considering the size of the	8	that.
9	company and deciding the appropriate penalty to impose.	9	Okay. I don't have anything else. In an
10	I'm not sure the same can be said about	10	abundance of caution, does anyone else have anything?
11	the decision whether cancellation is appropriate. You	11	ATTORNEY WEILAND: One more clarification.
12	know, the regulation doesn't give us a lot of wiggle room	12	By my count, that is December 1, just so everyone is
13	there, right? It says if there's still an unsatisfactory	13	aware. I might be off by
14	rating on the 46th day, they can no longer operate. So	14	JUDGE HUGHES: Oh, there's a so yeah,
15	the size of the company is irrelevant there.	15	I'd shoot for the end of November, Mr. Engel.
16	But for the penalties, I will concede it	16	ATTORNEY WEILAND: And the more
17	is relevant.	17	communication with staff, the better. (Inaudible).
18	JUDGE HUGHES: I see. Absolutely. Very	18	JUDGE HUGHES: Yeah. Go ahead, sorry.
19	good. I wasn't trying to imply we'd let them keep going	19	PAUL ENGEL: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to
20	if they hadn't fixed anything. Good clarification.	20	interrupt.
21	Okay. So I guess I'm going to ask the	21	I'll be sending this to Jason, correct?
22	parties usually after a BAP, the rules say I have ten	22	JUDGE HUGHES: Yes.
23	days to issue a decision. I'm going to assume the	23	PAUL ENGEL: Okay. I'm on it. I'll get
24	parties will be waiving that since there's still quite a	24	it done as fast as I can.
25	few days left on the clock for the SMP.	25	JUDGE HUGHES: Okay. All right.
			3
	Page 42		
	Page 42		Page 44
1	ATTORNEY WEILAND: That's fine.	1	Page 44 PAUL ENGEL: We're getting ready to start.
1 2		1 2	
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1	CERTIFICATE	
2		
3	STATE OF WASHINGTON)	
4) ss	
5	COUNTY OF KING)	
6		
7	I, Elizabeth Patterson Harvey, a Certified	
8	Court Reporter and Registered Professional Reporter	
9	within and for the State of Washington, do hereby	
10	certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing legal	
11	recordings were transcribed under my direction; that I	
12	received the electronic recording in the proprietary	
13	format; that I am not a relative or employee of any	
14	attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor	
15	financially interested in its outcome.	
16	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my	
17	hand this 4th day of November, 2024.	
18	1000	
19		
20	El modelle State Company	
21	Cligate Hadresaltaria	
22	Elizabeth Patterson Harvey, CCR 2731	
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24		
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