



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Lights illuminate cars from an Amtrak train that derailed above Interstate 5 Monday in DuPont, Wash.

DeSart: 'It felt like an eternity' Train: 10 seriously injured

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DeSart was pinned under a luggage rack as the car was upside down in the dirt. The passenger behind him was dead. Emergency crews eventually pried him free and took him to a local hospital to be treated for internal injuries.

DeSart, 38, of Astoria, was one of more than 100 people injured Monday morning when the train careened off a track over Interstate 5 near Tacoma, killing 3 people so far. Still in the hospital in stable condition, DeSart was able to speak to his wife, Meagan, about his story.

Del, Meagan and their young children moved to Astoria a couple of years ago from Seattle, where he grew up. Del is a buyer at Columbia Memorial Hospital, and Meagan — who is from Astoria — runs a wine business from home.

A 20-year Seattle Seahawks season ticket holder, Del made the regular trip north to watch his favorite team play. He typically drives to the games but recently decided on an alternative.

"He said, 'I think the train is the way to go,'" Meagan said. "It's cheap. It's stress-free."

Del was staying with his brother outside Seattle and planned to take the train to Longview, Washington, get in his car and drive back to Astoria. He texted Meagan about 6 a.m. to alert her that he had made the train and would be back in a few hours.

After driving her kids to school, Meagan returned home and began her typical morning workout before receiving a curious phone call from her father-in-law. "He never calls me," she said with a laugh.

He asked her about the derailment and whether Del was on the train. Confused, Meagan turned on the television before



Meagan DeSart

Meagan and Del DeSart of Astoria.

spending about 45 minutes trying to call Del and area hospitals.

"It felt like an eternity," Meagan said. She checked Del's email and confirmed he was on board the train.

"My heart sank," she said. "We have young children and I was just not ready to be a widow yet."

She was able to find out which hospital her husband was located. A nurse handed a cellphone over to Del so Meagan could speak to him before hopping in her car and heading north about 9:30 a.m.

Del is still at the hospital. A lawyer advised her not to disclose his exact medical condition.

"We're not sure the extent of it all because they're still doing tests," Meagan said.

Meanwhile, people have been reaching out to Meagan and Del via Facebook to offer their support, a testament to Del's generosity and kindness, Meagan said. She posted a hopeful message last night.

"He's alive," she wrote. "Anything else we will overcome."

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investigators looked at whether the engineer was distracted or disoriented.

The engineer, whose name was not released, was bleeding from the head after the wreck, and both eyes were swollen shut, according to dispatch audio.

The train, with 85 passengers and crew members, was making the inaugural run along a fast new bypass route that was created by refurbishing freight tracks alongside Interstate 5. The \$180.7 million project was aimed at speeding up service by bypassing a route that had a number of curves, single-track tunnels and freight traffic.

Positive train control — technology that can automatically slow or stop a speeding train — wasn't in use on this stretch of track, according to Amtrak President Richard Anderson.

Regulators have pressing railroads for years to install such technology, but the deadline has been extended repeatedly at the industry's request and is now the end of 2018.

The 7:34 a.m. accident left mangled train cars up on top of each other, with one hanging precariously over the freeway. The screech and clang of metal were followed by silence, then screams, as the injured cried out to rescuers and motorists pulled over and rushed to help.

More than 70 people were injured, 10 of them seriously. A U.S. official said earlier that six people were killed, but authorities said Monday night that three people died.

Train passenger Emma Shafer found herself at a 45-degree angle, staring at the seats in front of her that had come loose and swung around.

"It felt oddly silent after the actual

crashing," she said. "Then there was people screaming because their leg was messed up. ... I don't know if I actually heard the sirens, but they were there. A guy was like, 'Hey, I'm Robert. We'll get you out of here.'"

In 2015, an Amtrak train traveling at twice the 50 mph speed limit ran off the rails along a sharp curve in Philadelphia, killing eight people. Investigators concluded the engineer was distracted by reports over the radio of another train getting hit by a rock.

In September, a judge threw out charges of involuntary manslaughter and reckless endangerment against the engineer, saying the wreck did not appear to rise to a crime. Prosecutors are trying to get the case reinstated.

In the Washington state wreck, speed signs were posted 2 miles before the speed zone changed, according to Kimberly Reason of Sound Transit, the Seattle-area transit agency that owns the tracks.

Eric Corp, a councilman for the small city of DuPont near the derailment site, said he rode the train with about 30 or so dignitaries and others on a special trip Friday before the service opened to the public Monday.

"Once we were coming up on that curve, the train slowed down considerably," he said.

After the Philadelphia wreck, Amtrak agreed to pay \$265 million to settle claims filed by victims and their families. It has also installed positive train control on all its track between Boston and Washington.

Flaccus reported from Portland and Sisak reported from Philadelphia. Associated Press staffers Manuel Valdes in Dupont, Sally Ho and Phuong Le in Seattle and Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Parks: Small parks can be a challenge to maintain

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Even a site this small can be a challenge for the barebones staff of the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department, said Angela Cosby, the department's director. The agreement with the Armstrongs was one of several park adoptions the City Council considered at a meeting Monday night, and represents a groundswell of interest in parks that encourages Cosby.

Parks like Astor Park at the Astoria Column or McClure Park have "friends of" groups attached to them that advocate for the sites and help maintain the grounds. The parks department also has an agreement with Holiday Inn for maintenance of the Maritime Memorial Park under the Astoria Bridge.

"Those have slowly evolved over the past 10 years or so," Cosby said. Park adoptions are not a frequent occurrence, "so having four (park adoptions) come forward all at once is wonderful."

Changing parks

Each of the adoptions is slightly different. The one for Post Office Park or another still under discussion for the long-neglected Tidal Rock Park down the hill are more typical, Cosby said. Others have been in the works for years.

The creation of a Scandinavian Heritage Park at the site of the Peoples Park off Marine Drive, for instance, had long been discussed and dissected. Like a park adoption in Alderbrook by the Clatsop County



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Artists Agnes Field and Jessica Schlieff hope to restore Tidal Rock Park.

Master Gardeners, the Scandinavian Heritage Park is not a straightforward agreement focused around maintenance. Instead, these are more complex, long-term agreements between entities that will change the appearance and use of the sites in the coming years.

The Clatsop County Master Gardeners hope to expand their educational offerings by creating a garden in Alderbrook Park at 45th Street and Lief Erikson Drive where members can learn how to grow a variety of plants for food. The group has outgrown a garden space at the Clatsop County fairgrounds. Alderbrook Park would provide important visibility and accessibility, said Debbie Haugsten, the group's president. Food grown in the garden will be donated to food banks. The garden itself will be open to the public as a demonstration garden.

"Our mission is outreach to the community and we didn't really have a space to do any

outreach or education about growing produce in our area," said Linda Jones, assistant to the master gardeners program, adding, "The possibilities are endless when you have a space like that."

While the Armstrongs plan to maintain Post Office Park and make it more attractive, North Coast artists Jessica Schlieff, Agnes Field and Brenda Harper have even bigger plans for Tidal Rock Park.

Located below street level off Marine Drive and 15th Street, Tidal Rock is a park hiding in plain sight. Trash clings to blackberry brambles like ornaments. The rock that gives the park its name is barely visible in the northwest corner. Historians believe mariners used the rock to judge the depth of the water when the Columbia River still flowed in the area that became downtown.

"I would love to be able to put artists' hands in this park," Schlieff said.

The artists' hopes include a massive cleanup and a temporary mixed-media art installation that will draw inspiration from natural and historic sources and in which community collaboration will be key. Their plans jump-started a discussion on how the city endorses art and what it should and shouldn't allow. The council will weigh an agreement at a future meeting.

Ownership

There are downsides to park adoptions. Putting together agreements and working with groups interested in park adoption can eat up staff time, Cosby said. If the park adoptions don't end up working out, the city will have to redirect and pick up the pieces.

"That's a risk you take with any project," Cosby said. In her opinion, the pros far outweigh the cons.

Even small parks can be a challenge to maintain. To have volunteers step up and take over maintenance needs frees up park staff for other tasks.

"It lightens the burden on our department," Cosby said. "It allows us to focus energies on other parks as well."

Park adoptions also allow city residents to get their hands dirty in a park for a year and really take ownership of an area.

"Just that sense of community and people rallying together to achieve something," Cosby said.

She hopes to set a goal in the future of several park adoptions each year.

Council: Price was the sole 'no' vote

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Commission and the City Council. The park, off Marine Drive between 15th and 16th streets, will be renamed Scandinavian Heritage Park.

"I say give the Scandinavians the park," City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill said to cheers from Scandinavians who filled City Hall.

Many in the audience wore traditional sweaters and garb — a few sported viking helmets — and waved small flags from Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

Scandinavians had initially wanted to make progress on the monument by the 50th anniversary of the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival last June. Some were disappointed, given

their rich history in Astoria, that the project was held up over maintenance.

The heritage association will be responsible for design and construction, as well as maintenance.

"I'm glad we got this far," said Loran Mathews, the president of the heritage association.

The City Council voted 4-1 for the agreement with the heritage association. City Councilor Cindy Price was the sole "no" vote, citing persistent complaints from the public about the lack of maintenance at city parks and the city-owned Ocean View Cemetery in Warrenton.

"Until we have full funding for the parks department, it's just not something that in good conscience I can vote for," Price said.

Hotel: Partners looking for another structure to restore

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Hotel Building, the Shark Rock Building where the Astoria Co-Op Grocery is located and the Norblad Building.

The partners are looking for another structure to restore and are fine if the building doesn't sell,

Caruana said.

"It's usually a love affair," he said in 2014 about why he and his business partners enter a building. "It would probably be smarter to do them all based on the return on investment, but most of the buildings, a large amount of it is an emotional appeal."