

Rochester, Indiana: Vehicle Collision with Student Pedestrians Crossing High-Speed Roadway to Board School Bus

**Students crossing road hit by
pickup truck.**



What happened

Ten students and a parent were by a roadside behind a fence waiting for the morning school bus. The school bus stopped at the designated location, which was on the opposite (northbound) side of a two-way road with a speed limit of 55 mph. The bus's red warning lights were flashing, and its stop arm was extended. Four students had begun to cross the roadway to board the bus when the driver of a southbound pickup truck failed to stop for the school bus and struck the four students.

What we found

Requiring students to cross a roadway presents a risk of pedestrian death or injury because motorists do not always stop, even when a bus is at a bus stop with its lights flashing and stop arm extended. Educating motorists about the dangers of passing stopped school buses and improving enforcement of no-passing laws may reduce the incidence of illegal passings. School systems need additional information about which technologies are most effective in reducing illegal school bus passings and protecting students.

Probable cause

The probable cause of the Rochester, Indiana, crash was the pickup truck driver's failure to stop for the school bus for unknown reasons, despite its clearly visible warning lights and stop arm, as well as a roadway warning sign indicating an upcoming school bus stop. Contributing to the cause of the crash was the Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation's (1) inadequate safety assessment of school bus routes, resulting in the prevalence of bus stops that required student pedestrians to cross a 55 mph roadway to board a bus, increasing the risk of injury during a collision, and (2) failure to establish a clear policy regarding surrounding traffic for school bus drivers to follow in determining when it was safe to signal students to cross a roadway to board a school bus.

More information at <http://www.nts.gov/schoolbuses>

REPORT NUMBER

HAR-20-02

DATE / TIME

October 30, 2018 / 7:12 a.m. ET

VEHICLES

2017 Toyota Tacoma pickup truck
2015 Thomas Built school bus

FATALITIES / INJURIES / EJECTIONS

3 Fatal / 1 Serious / 0 Ejections

You should know:

- Look for and stop for school buses that have activated warning lights and an extended stop arm. Students may be boarding or unloading from the bus.
- It is illegal to pass a stopped school bus with its warning lights flashing and stop arm extended.
- The use of stop arm cameras can deter drivers from illegally passing stopped school buses.
- Requiring students to cross a roadway to board a school bus raises the risk of injury.
- School bus routes should be evaluated to eliminate or minimize the number of stops requiring students to cross a roadway to board a school bus.
- Automated and connected vehicle technologies must respond appropriately to school buses.