



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

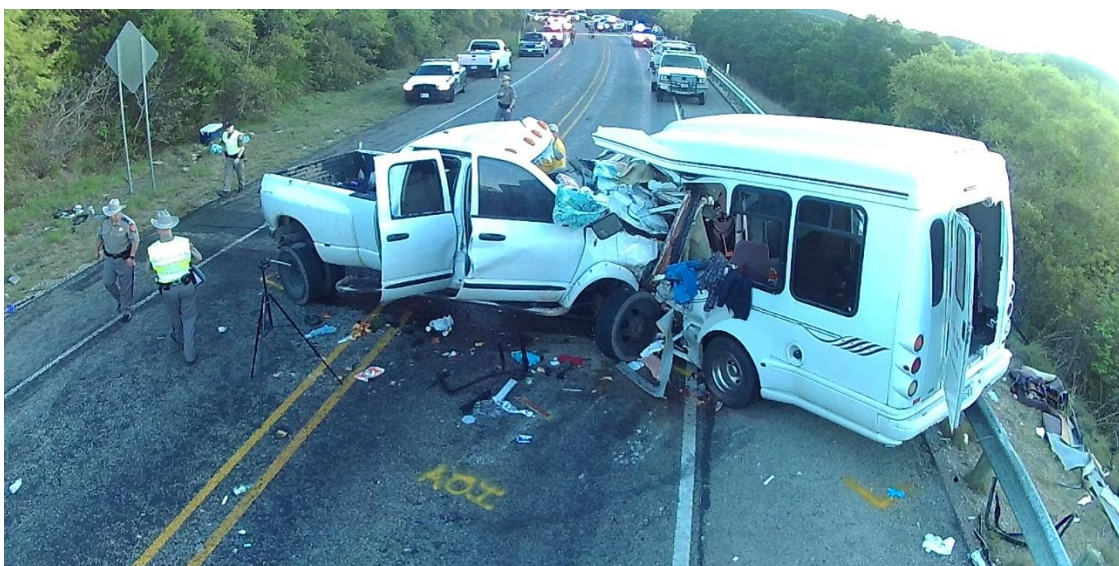
HWY17MH011

The information in this report is preliminary and will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.

About 12:20 p.m. (local time) on Wednesday, March 29, 2017, a 2007 Dodge Ram 3500 pickup truck, occupied by a 20-year-old male driver, was traveling north on U.S. Highway 83 (US-83) in Uvalde County, near Concan, Texas. Meanwhile a 2004 Ford E350 cutaway chassis with a 13-passenger Turtle Top Vanterra medium-size bus body, occupied by a 67-year-old driver and 13 passengers, and being operated by the First Baptist Church of New Braunfels, was traveling southbound on US-83.

As the pickup truck approached the end of an approximate 4-degree righthand curve near milepost 553.4, it departed the northbound travel lane and crossed into the southbound travel lane, colliding with the front left corner of the medium-size bus. In the area of the crash, US-83 is a two-lane roadway with the north and southbound travel lanes divided by a double yellow centerline. There is an approximate 4% upgrade in the northbound direction, and the posted speed limit is 70 mph. The accident occurred in a posted work zone, but no active work was being performed and there was no construction equipment in the immediate area on the day of the crash.

As a result of the crash the bus driver and 12 passengers on the bus were fatally injured. The driver of the pickup truck and one bus passenger sustained serious injuries. The weather conditions were clear and dry.



Southbound view of accident vehicles at final rest. (Source: Texas Department of Public Safety)

Prior to the crash, two witnesses in a vehicle following behind the pickup truck recorded a 14-minute-long video of the motion of the pickup truck. The video ended just prior to the truck entering the curve where the crash occurred. The video shows the pickup departing the northbound travel lane to the east, crossing over the solid white edge line 37 times, and entering the grass roadside at least five times. The video also shows the pickup truck also departing the northbound travel lane to the west, crossing over the double yellow centerline into the opposite lane of travel 19 times, and at one point traveling completely onto the wrong side of the road prior to the crash. NTSB's initial review of the video indicates that the speed of the pickup truck remained relatively constant throughout the 14 minutes, at about 67 to 71 mph. The witnesses called the local Sherriff to report the pickup truck, and law enforcement was in route at the time of the crash.

After the crash the pickup driver told the witnesses and the police that he had been texting. He also provided a statement during an NTSB interview that he was checking his phone for a text when the accident occurred. The NTSB has subpoenaed the driver's cell phone records from his service provider and will review them over the coming weeks. The driver also told NTSB investigators he had been taking prescription medications prior to the crash. Several of those medications, as well as marijuana, were found in the pickup truck at the scene of the crash. Toxicology test results are pending.

Preliminary evidence indicates that all the occupants on the church bus were wearing their available restraints. The driver and front seat passenger were restrained with a lap/shoulder belt and a supplemental air bag system. The rear seated bus passengers were restrained with lap-only belts.

No mechanical defects were identified in the initial inspection of either vehicle. No vehicle-based devices capable of recording and transmitting event-related data have been successfully downloaded at this time. NTSB investigators will continue to collect and analyze data including all pertinent information in the areas of human performance, survival, highway, vehicle, and accident reconstruction.

All aspects of the crash remain under investigation as the NTSB determines the probable cause with the intent of issuing safety recommendations to prevent similar crashes. The NTSB is working alongside the Texas Department of Public Safety which is conducting a separate, parallel investigation.