



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY18MH008

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

About 5:30 a.m. central daylight time on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, a 2018 Prevost 56-passenger motorcoach operated by First Class Tours of Houston, Texas, was traveling westbound on Interstate 10 (I-10) in Baldwin County near Loxley, Alabama. In that area, I-10 is a four-lane highway with two lanes in each direction separated by a 42-foot-wide grass median. The posted speed limit is 70 mph. The motorcoach was occupied by the 65-year-old driver and 46 passengers. It was transporting a high school marching band from Disney World in Orlando, Florida, where the band had performed, to Channelview, Texas. This was the final leg of a 4-day charter. The motorcoach had left Orlando at 10:00 p.m. the day before and was scheduled to make a driver change near Mobile, Alabama.

The motorcoach was traveling about 59 mph according to preliminary GPS data. A witness reported that as it approached milepost 57, the motorcoach suddenly left the right westbound lane, crossed the left westbound lane, and continued across the median into the eastbound lanes. The motorcoach continued across both eastbound lanes, almost colliding with a passenger vehicle and a truck-tractor semitrailer, then continued onto the shoulder and struck a W-beam guardrail. The motorcoach traveled back across both eastbound lanes onto the median, where it continued west into a ravine between the twin bridge structures that support the eastbound and westbound roadways (figure 1.) The motorcoach came to rest in the ravine on its right side against a bridge pier, 38 feet below the roadway (figure 2.) As a result of the crash, the driver of the motorcoach died and all 46 passengers sustained injuries ranging from minor to serious.



Figure 1. Overhead photo of scene postcrash, showing path and final rest position of motorcoach (yellow arrows).



Figure 2. Motorcoach at final rest. (Source, Alabama Department of Transportation)

Preliminary evidence showed no signs of braking. A passenger reported that as the motorcoach departed the travel lanes, the driver appeared unresponsive. The passenger attempted to revive the driver in the time before the crash.

An inspection found no vehicle defects that might have contributed to the crash. The motorcoach was equipped with lap/shoulder belts for all seats, and the extent of belt use by passengers is being examined. The NTSB is also evaluating motor carrier operations and driver performance as it relates to the crash.

All aspects of the crash remain under investigation while the NTSB determines the probable cause, with the intent of issuing safety recommendations to prevent similar crashes. The NTSB continues to work with the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency Highway Patrol, the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, the Alabama Department of Transportation, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to produce a complete and accurate account of the crash.