



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY17MH010

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

About 2:12 p.m. (local time) on Tuesday, March 7, 2017, a 2016 Van Hool motorcoach, operated by Echo Transportation and occupied by a 60-year-old driver and 49 passengers was traveling northbound on Main Street in Biloxi, Harrison County, Mississippi. The motorcoach approached and stopped in advance of a high vertical profile (humped) highway-railroad grade crossing. As shown in figure 1, the crossing was marked with 1) a crossbuck sign, 2) warning lights, 3) a gate, and 4) a low ground clearance grade crossing warning sign with a low ground clearance plaque. As the motorcoach attempted to traverse the crossing, its frame became lodged on the tracks. The driver attempted to free the motorcoach by trying to move the vehicle backward and forward. At the same time, an eastbound freight train operated by CSX Transportation—composed of three locomotives, 27 loaded cars, and 25 empty cars—was approaching the crossing at a recorded speed of 26 mph. Upon seeing the approaching train the motorcoach driver opened the entry door and told the passengers to evacuate. The train engineer sounded the train horn and put the train into emergency braking about 510 feet west of the crossing. The train had decelerated to about 19 mph when it struck the left side of the motorcoach, pushing it about 203 feet before coming to a stop with the motorcoach still engaged to the lead locomotive (see figure 2).



Figure 1. Northbound view of the highway-rail grade crossing at the crash site.

As a result of the crash, four passengers died, 39 passengers sustained serious to minor injuries and six passengers were uninjured. The motorcoach driver suffered serious injuries and the train engineer was uninjured.

The passengers were on a multi-day casino tour that originated in Bastrop, Texas. They were staying at a casino in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, from which they planned visits to other casinos in the area including Biloxi and New Orleans, Louisiana. The crash occurred when the motorcoach was traveling from Bay St. Louis to a casino in Biloxi, MS. The tour's normal trip routing followed a route along Interstate 10. On the day of the crash, the tour operator changed to a more scenic route along the coast, an alternate route that had been used in previous trips.

The preliminary result from the motorcoach driver's toxicology test was negative for alcohol and other drugs. The train crew was not tested nor were they required to be tested.

NTSB investigators along with personnel from the Biloxi Police Department documented the mechanical condition of the motorcoach, the crash location, and the physical characteristics of the crossing. The track and operational characteristics of the crossing signals were also examined and documented. NTSB investigators continue to examine issues related to the railroad grade crossing signage and maintenance, as well as the crashworthiness of the motorcoach. Investigators are also following up with additional passenger and witness interviews, and gathering factual information related to motor carrier operations, driver and train crew experience, hours of service, and trip routing.



Figure 2. Motorcoach and train at final rest (Source: Biloxi PD)