



# PRELIMINARY REPORT

## HIGHWAY

### HWY20FH001

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

On Thursday, December 17, 2019, at 3:35 p.m. eastern standard time, a 2015 Chevrolet Equinox sport utility vehicle (SUV) occupied by a 53-year-old female driver was traveling east on US Highway 76 (US-76) in Belton, South Carolina. At the same time, a 14-passenger Goshen Coach medium-size bus body on a 2009 Ford E350 cutaway chassis, operated by the Anderson County Disabilities and Special Needs Board and occupied by a 27-year-old driver and 7 passengers, was traveling west on US-76.

As the SUV entered an approximately 3-degree righthand curve, it departed the eastbound travel lane and crossed into the westbound lane, colliding with the front left corner of the bus. In the area of the crash, US-76 is a two-lane road with the west and eastbound lanes divided by a double yellow centerline. The posted speed limit is 45 mph.



**Figure 1.** Westbound view of crash scene showing bus on grassy area and emergency vehicles and responders. (Source: Anderson County Coroner's Office)



**Figure 2.** Westbound view of crash scene showing damaged SUV on grassy embankment. (Source: Anderson County Coroner's Office)

Preliminary information suggests that the SUV driver had been swerving completely across both lanes from shoulder to shoulder before striking the bus. According to data from the SUV's airbag control module, the driver was not wearing a seat belt. She was ejected during the crash and fatally injured. The NTSB has subpoenaed the SUV driver's cell phone records from the service provider and will review them over the coming weeks. Results of toxicology tests are pending.

Preliminary evidence indicates that all the bus's occupants were wearing restraints. The driver was restrained with a lap/shoulder belt and a supplemental airbag. Four passengers seated in the rear were restrained with lap-only belts. Two wheelchair-bound passengers were restrained by lap/shoulder belts; the wheelchairs were secured at the rear of the bus. As a result of the crash, one lap-belted passenger seated behind the driver was partially ejected and fatally injured. The bus driver and the 6 remaining passengers sustained minor to serious injuries.

The weather was cloudy and dry. No mechanical defects were identified in the initial inspection of either vehicle. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators will continue to collect and analyze data, including pertinent information in the areas of human performance, survival, highway factors, vehicle, and crash reconstruction.

All aspects of the Belton, South Carolina, 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 South Carolina Highway Patrol, which is conducting a separate, parallel investigation.