



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, DC 20594

Highway Accident Brief

Fatal Pedestrian Collision with Pickup Truck Falls Church, Virginia, June 4, 2016

Accident Number:	HWY16SH013
Accident Type:	Fatal pedestrian collision with pickup truck
Location:	Graham Road (State Route 1720), Falls Church, Virginia
Date and Time:	June 4, 2016, about 10:18 p.m. eastern daylight time
Vehicle:	2006 Ford F250 super cab
Driver:	46-year-old male
Pedestrian:	53-year-old male
Fatalities:	1

Crash Description

About 10:18 p.m. on Saturday, June 4, 2016, a 2006 Ford F-250 super-duty cab pickup truck occupied by a 46-year-old male driver and a female passenger was southbound on Graham Road (State Route 1720) in Falls Church, Virginia, south of the intersection of Graham Road and Arlington Boulevard (State Route 50).¹ The pickup was in the left lane nearest Graham Road's median divider. As the pickup approached the midblock pedestrian crosswalk, which had no traffic signal, two male pedestrians in the crosswalk ran across Graham Road (from east to west) in front of the oncoming vehicle (figure 1). Although the driver braked hard, the pickup struck one of the pedestrians, throwing him forward of the vehicle. The 53-year-old pedestrian slid along the pavement about 20 feet before coming to final rest. The vehicle came to a controlled stop straddling the crosswalk. The pedestrian was transported by ambulance to Fairfax Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

The temperature at the time of the crash was 75°F, winds were from the south-southeast at about 6 mph, and skies were overcast. Civil twilight was at 9:01 p.m. The moon was a waning crescent, zero percent illuminated.²

¹ Falls Church is an independent city, separate from surrounding Fairfax County.

² Weather data from <https://www.wunderground.com/history/>.

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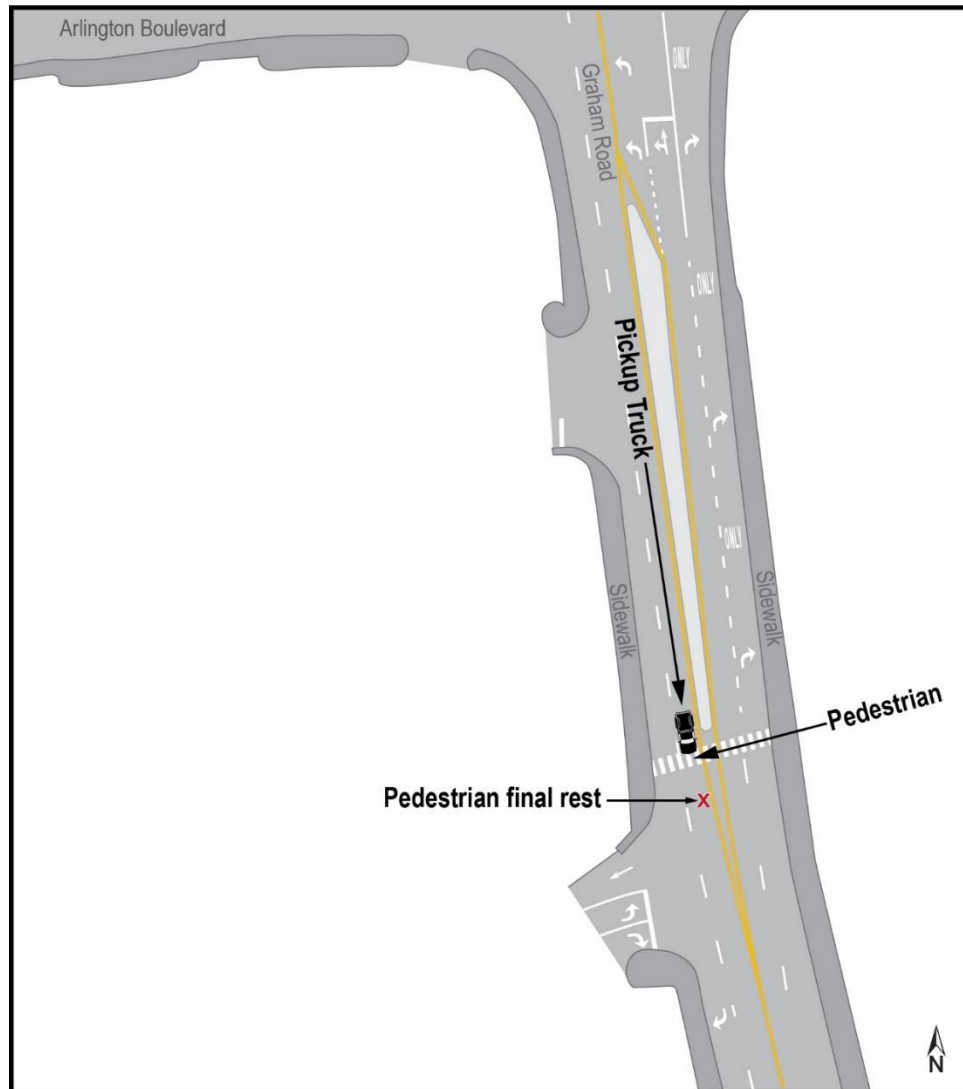


Figure 1. Diagram of collision site showing crosswalk, direction pickup truck traveled, direction pedestrian traveled, and where pedestrian came to final rest.

Crash Location

Graham Road is a divided four-lane roadway consisting of two northbound and two southbound lanes separated in places by a raised concrete median (figure 2). It is classified as an urban minor arterial roadway. In the area of the crash, the road has a posted speed limit of 35 mph and is bordered on each side by large parking lots for retail shops. The area is lit at night by streetlights as well as by ambient light from the parking lots. The unsignaled midblock pedestrian crosswalk is immediately south of the end of the median.

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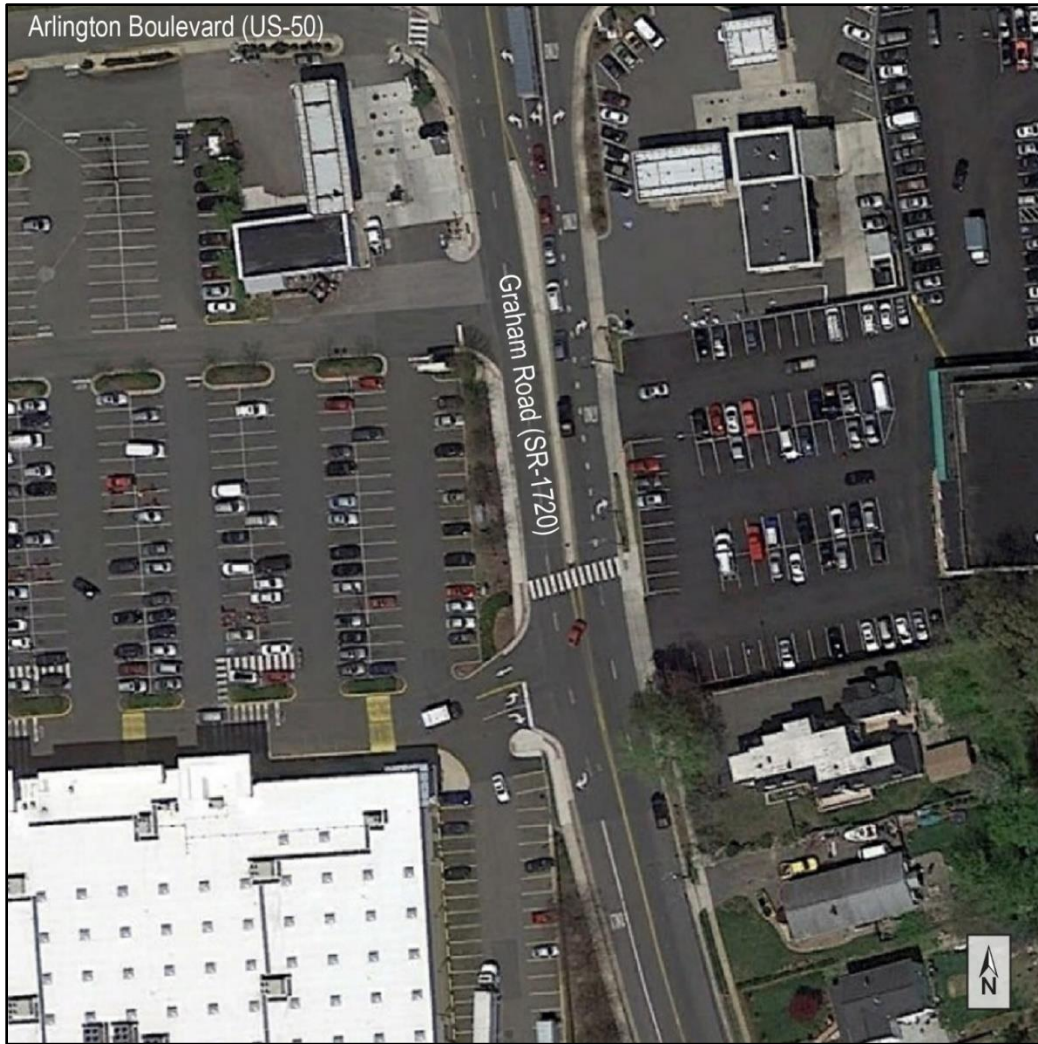


Figure 2. Aerial view of crash location on Graham Road showing crosswalk where pickup struck pedestrian and surrounding parking lots and buildings. (Base photo by Google Earth)

The area of the crosswalk includes pedestrian sidewalks, the raised roadway median, overhead streetlights, and pavement markings on the crosswalk. Both directions of vehicle travel have pedestrian warning signs, including CROSSWALK AHEAD plaques and diagonal arrow plaques at the crosswalk location.

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Pedestrian

The pedestrian lived 0.5 mile west of the crash site.³ The family preferred not to be interviewed for this investigation of pedestrian safety. On the night of the crash, the pedestrian was wearing dark clothes and was reported to have been walking home from a local bar.

The pedestrian's body was released by the hospital to the Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, which performed an autopsy and toxicological screening. The toxicology results showed that the pedestrian had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.216.⁴ Results also showed 0.066 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of cocaine, 0.34 mg/L of benzoylecgonine, and 0.050 mg/L of cocaethylene.⁵ The cause of death was determined to be blunt force trauma to the head. The pedestrian's height and weight were not recorded.

Driver

The driver of the striking vehicle held a standard driver's license issued by Virginia, with no restrictions on his driving privilege.⁶ He was interviewed by an officer of the Fairfax County Police Department, who found no signs of impairment. No tests for alcohol or other drugs were conducted.

A National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator spoke to the driver at the scene. The driver stated that he was returning home from shopping and traveling 30 to 35 mph when suddenly the pedestrian ran in front of his vehicle. He stated that he applied his brakes but could not avoid striking the pedestrian.

Vehicle

The vehicle involved in the crash was a 2006 Ford F250 super-duty cab pickup truck (figure 3 shows an example of that make and model).⁷ The pickup was equipped with air bags for the driver and the front-seat occupant. The air bags did not deploy in the crash, and the pickup had no visible collision damage. The driver reported that the pickup was in working order before the crash. Both headlights were illuminated at the time of the crash, and the driver's view of the roadway was not obstructed. NTSB investigators drove the route at night to confirm the absence of obstructions.

³ The second pedestrian was interviewed by the Fairfax County Police Department and released.

⁴ Research has shown that even low levels of alcohol can affect cognitive performance. At blood alcohol levels above 0.10, individuals suffer impaired motor coordination, vision, hearing, and balance. Their reaction times are slower, and judgment and perception are impaired (Linda Dultz and Spiros Frangos, "The Impact of Alcohol in Pedestrian Trauma," *Journal of Injury, Infection, Trauma and Critical Care* [2012]: 1252–1257).

⁵ Benzoylecgonine is an inactive metabolite of cocaine. Cocaethylene is an active and impairing substance formed in the body when cocaine and alcohol are consumed together.

⁶ Standard (noncommercial) driver's licenses issued in Virginia before July 1, 2016, did not carry a class designation.

⁷ The crash vehicle was released to the owner, who denied access for photographs.



Figure 3. Photograph of pickup truck of same make and model as vehicle involved in crash.

Applicable Traffic Laws

Virginia regulates the movement of pedestrians on a public roadway, as follows (Code of Virginia, section 42.2-923):

When crossing highways, pedestrians shall not carelessly or maliciously interfere with the orderly passage of vehicles. They shall cross, wherever possible, only at intersections or marked crosswalks.

Section 46.2-924 of the code requires drivers to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians crossing a highway in a clearly marked crosswalk (46.2-924[A.1]). The code also stipulates that “no pedestrian shall enter or cross an intersection in disregard of approaching traffic” (46.2-924[B]).

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the crash in Falls Church, Virginia, was the pedestrian’s decision to run across the multilane roadway in front of the oncoming car. Contributing to his poor decision-making was impairment from the effects of alcohol intoxication and recent use of cocaine.

BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

ROBERT L. SUMWALT, III
Chairman

EARL F. WEENER
Member

T. BELLA DINH-ZARR
Member

Adopted: July 2, 2018

For more details about this accident visit the [NTSB public docket](#) and search for NTSB accident ID HWY16SH013. The accident dockets include such information as police reports, photographs, driver and witness statements, data on previous crashes, highway engineering reports, and timing of traffic signals.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties . . . and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person.” 49 *Code of Federal Regulations*, Section 831.4. Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. 49 *United States Code*, Section 1154(b).
