



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, DC 20594

Highway Accident Brief

Fatal Pedestrian Collision with Sport Utility Vehicle Upper Marlboro, Maryland, June 24, 2016

Accident Number:	HWY16SH016
Accident Type:	Fatal pedestrian collision with sport utility vehicle
Location:	Watkins Park Drive (State Route 193) at Chesterton Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland
Date and Time:	June 24, 2016, about 12:30 p.m. eastern daylight time
Vehicle:	2010 Cadillac Escalade
Driver:	69-year-old male
Pedestrian:	76-year-old male
Fatalities:	1

Crash Description

About 12:30 p.m. on Friday, June 24, 2016, a 2010 Cadillac Escalade sport utility vehicle (SUV) operated by a 69-year-old male was stopped for a red traffic signal in the northeastbound travel lane of Chesterton Drive at Watkins Park Drive (State Route 193) in Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland. Meanwhile, a 76-year-old male pedestrian was standing on the opposite side of Chesterton Drive, near a pedestrian crosswalk, waiting to cross Watkins Park Drive. When the traffic signal on Chesterton Drive cycled to green and the pedestrian signal cycled to WALK, the driver entered the intersection and the pedestrian entered the crosswalk (figure 1). As the driver made a left turn into the left northwestbound lane of Watkins Park Drive and the pedestrian reached the same lane, the SUV struck the pedestrian while he was in the crosswalk, causing him to fall to the roadway. On colliding with the pedestrian, the driver sharply applied the brakes, stopping the SUV in the left northwestbound lane.

A Prince George's County police officer was exiting the parking lot to the right of the intersection and observed the collision. The collision was also captured by a forward-facing video camera on the police car. The officer rendered aid to the pedestrian and radioed for medical assistance. The pedestrian was transported by ambulance to the Prince George's Hospital Center, where he died of his injuries.

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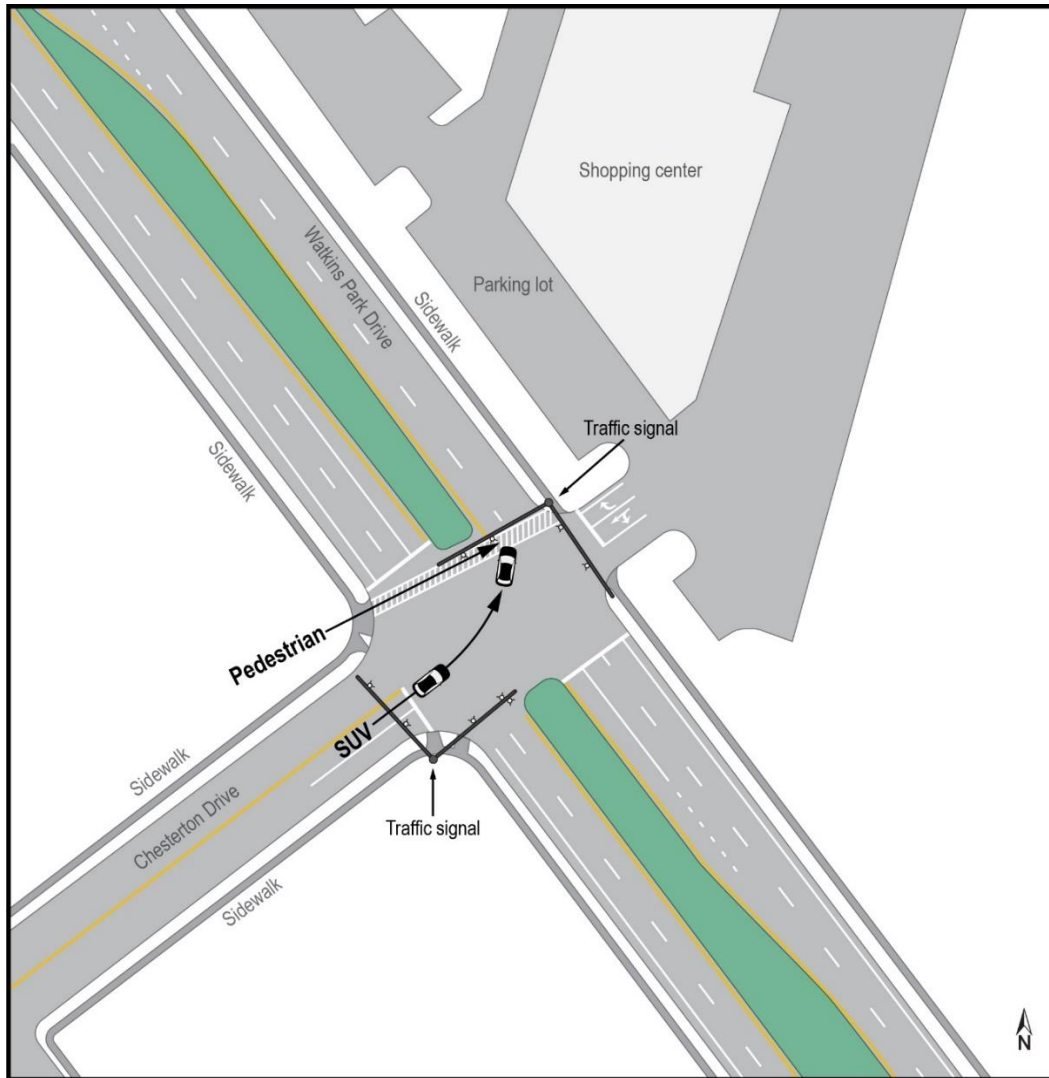


Figure 1. Diagram of crash scene showing path of SUV and pedestrian's path on crosswalk, with exit from parking lot near crash site.

The temperature at the time of the crash was 78.8°F, winds were from the northeast at 5.8 mph, and skies were mostly cloudy.¹

Crash Location

The crash occurred on Watkins Park Drive at its intersection with Chesterton Drive, near the exit from a parking lot (figure 2). Watkins Park Drive is a main traffic artery in the suburban unincorporated community of Upper Marlboro. The area near the crash is mostly residential. The roadway is asphalt and consists of two northwestbound and two southeastbound through lanes. Each through lane is about 11 feet wide. The through lanes in both directions have a left-turn lane

¹ Weather data from <https://www.wunderground.com/history/>.

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at the intersection. The lanes of opposing travel are separated by a 25-foot-wide grassy median. Each outer edge of the roadway is bordered by a raised concrete curb and a sidewalk.



Figure 2. Aerial view of intersection of Watkins Park Drive and Chesterton Drive in Upper Marlboro, also showing parking lot and exit (upper right) near crash site. (Base photo by Google Earth)

The intersection is controlled by traffic signals on Watkins Park Drive and Chesterton Drive and at the exit from the parking lot. The crosswalk where the crash occurred is equipped with pedestrian control signals. The posted speed limit on Watkins Park Drive is 35 mph.

Pedestrian

The pedestrian involved in the crash lived 0.4 mile from the crash site and according to family members, frequently walked to a nearby shopping center. When the crash occurred, the

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pedestrian was walking his dog.² Family members stated that the pedestrian was in good health and walked without assistance.

The pedestrian wore white shoes, tan pants, a white shirt, and a tan baseball cap. He held a pet leash in his right hand and his small dog walked beside him, to his right. A video of the crash shows that the pedestrian's head was straight ahead when he entered the crosswalk and that he sharply turned his head toward the SUV just before the crash. According to the video, the pedestrian was not using his cell phone.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for Maryland conducted a postmortem examination of the pedestrian. The examiner recorded the pedestrian's height as 5 feet 4 inches and his weight as 158 pounds.³ According to the autopsy report, the pedestrian sustained significant injuries, including left skull fractures, intraventricular hemorrhage, and multiple rib fractures, as well as lacerations, contusions, and abrasions. The cause of death was listed as multiple injuries. A toxicological blood analysis was negative for alcohol and other drugs.

Driver

The driver of the SUV held a Maryland class C (noncommercial) driver's license. The license had three restrictions: a corrective lens requirement, a hand control requirement, and a steering knob requirement. (The driver used a motorized wheelchair for mobility.) The driver first applied for a Maryland driver's license on August 7, 2014, after being licensed in Virginia. The Maryland medical advisory board reviewed the license application and approved it on August 22, 2014. The driver's license was issued on September 2, 2015, and was due to expire on September 2, 2022.

After the crash, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and police investigators observed the physical condition of the driver. He showed no sign of being under the influence of an intoxicant or any symptoms of a medical condition, and no intoxication evaluation or toxicological tests were done. The driver's cell phone record showed that he was not using his phone to text or talk when the crash occurred.

Vehicle

The 2010 Cadillac Escalade four-door SUV involved in the crash was equipped with air bags for the driver and the front-seat passenger, which did not deploy in the crash. The vehicle was also equipped with hand controls and a steering knob.

² The dog survived unharmed.

³ Pedestrian characteristics, such as height and weight, were documented to aid crash reconstruction and evaluate pedestrian injuries.

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The SUV was examined at the crash scene. It had contact damage on the left leading edge of the hood (figure 3). The grill was cracked, and ornamental trim around the wheel well on the front left fender was bent. No other crash-related damage was noted.



Figure 3. Photograph of front of SUV showing damage to hood (arrow).

Applicable Traffic Laws

The Transportation Article of the Code of Maryland regulates the movement of pedestrians and motor vehicles on public roadways. State law requires that pedestrians obey pedestrian control signals when present (Title 21, section 501). Pedestrians may not enter a roadway when facing a steady red traffic signal (section 21-202[1]). At intersections with traffic control signals, pedestrians may cross the roadway only in a marked crosswalk (section 21-503[c]).

Maryland law requires that when turning on a green signal, a driver must yield to a pedestrian in a marked crosswalk (section 21-202[e]). In addition to that specific requirement, state law requires drivers to “exercise due care to avoid colliding with any pedestrian,” including sounding a horn as a warning (section 21-504).

Video of Crash Sequence

In the moments leading to the crash, a Prince George’s County police car was exiting the parking lot on the northeast side of the intersection. The police car was equipped with a forward-facing video camera that continuously recorded on a looped storage system. The video recording

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captured the movements of the SUV and the pedestrian seconds before the collision as well as the crash sequence itself.

When the recording begins, two cars are stopped ahead of the police vehicle. The SUV is seen on the opposite side of the intersection, stopped at the stop line. When the traffic signal cycles to green, the two vehicles ahead of the police car enter the intersection and make left turns onto the southeastbound lanes of Watkins Park Drive. Simultaneously, the SUV makes a left turn onto the northwestbound left lane of Watkins Park Drive, while the pedestrian enters Watkins Park Drive at the edge of the crosswalk on the northwest corner of the intersection.

The SUV driver accelerates constantly from the stopped position and does not apply his brakes until after his vehicle has entered the crosswalk and hit the pedestrian. The brakes are applied while the vehicle is in contact with the pedestrian (indicated by the lowering of the vehicle's front bumper on the video recording). The pedestrian has reached the edge of the leftmost lane of Watkins Park Road northwestbound when the collision occurs. The force of the impact causes the pedestrian to be thrown forward of the SUV, fall to the roadway, and slide on the pavement. The Prince George's County police officer is then seen moving toward the pedestrian.

Driver Statement

NTSB investigators interviewed the SUV driver after the crash. The driver stated that when the crash occurred, he was coming from a friend's house. The driver stated that just before the crash he was stopped at the intersection of Chesterton Drive and Watkins Park Drive. When he entered the intersection, he did not see the pedestrian until he was about 2 feet away and could not stop before striking him. The driver stated that he had been using hand controls to drive for several years and was very familiar with the controls. The driver also stated that he was not experiencing any medical issues when the crash occurred.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the crash in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, was the driver's failure, while making a left turn, to yield to the pedestrian in the crosswalk.

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2016**

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 HWY16SH011. 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).
