



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, DC 20594

## Highway Accident Brief

### Fatal Pedestrian Collision with Sport Utility Vehicle Falls Church, Virginia, May 18, 2016

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<b>Accident Number:</b>	HWY16SH012
<b>Accident Type:</b>	Fatal pedestrian collision with sport utility vehicle
<b>Location:</b>	Leesburg Pike (State Route 7) at Glen Carlyn Drive, Falls Church, Virginia
<b>Date and Time:</b>	May 18, 2016, about 3:40 p.m. eastern daylight time
<b>Vehicle:</b>	2012 Jeep Wrangler
<b>Driver:</b>	51-year-old male
<b>Pedestrian:</b>	71-year-old male
<b>Fatalities:</b>	1

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#### Crash Description

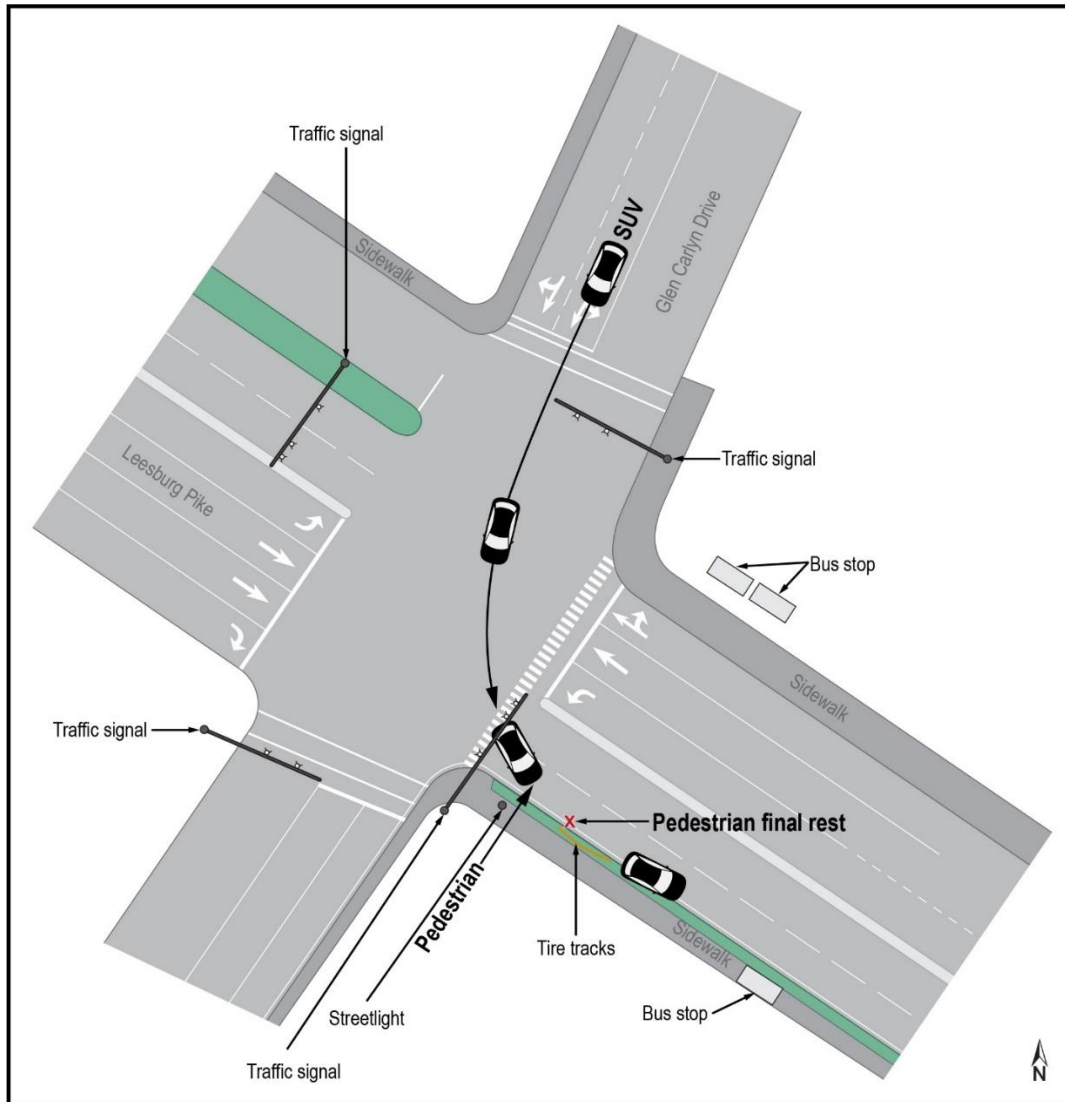
About 3:40 p.m. on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, a 2012 Jeep Wrangler sport utility vehicle (SUV) was making a left turn from the left-turn lane on southbound Glen Carlyn Drive onto eastbound Leesburg Pike (State Route 7) in Falls Church, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The SUV had a green left-turn arrow and was the first vehicle in a queue. As the 51-year-old male driver turned, a 71-year-old male pedestrian tried to cross Leesburg Pike from south to north, in front of the turning vehicle. According to a witness, the pedestrian was outside the crosswalk, the traffic signal facing him was red, and the pedestrian control signal indicated not to walk.

The driver steered right in an effort to go behind the pedestrian, but the left front corner of the vehicle struck him. The pedestrian was thrown to the ground and run over by the SUV's left tires. After the collision, the driver steered off the roadway, over the curb, and onto the grass next to the curb. (No skid marks were found, but the SUV's tire tracks went from the curb onto the grass.) The pedestrian came to rest in the right eastbound lane of Leesburg Pike near the curb, approximately 15 feet from the point of impact (figure 1). The temperature at the time of the accident was 66°F, winds were variable at 5.8 mph, and skies were overcast.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Falls Church is an independent city, separate from surrounding Fairfax County.

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



**Figure 1.** Diagram of crash site showing path of SUV as it traveled through intersection to collide with pedestrian, final rest positions of pedestrian and SUV, and location of crosswalks, bus stops, traffic signals, and streetlight near collision point.

## Crash Location

Leesburg Pike is classified as an urban principal arterial roadway. The roadway in the area of the crash consists of six lanes on the west side of the intersection and five lanes on the east side. The road runs northwest to southeast, with the opposing lanes divided by a raised concrete median. The three northwestbound lanes in the accident area include a left-turn-only lane, a through lane, and a lane designated for either right turns or through traffic. The two southeastbound lanes are designated for through traffic only. The speed limit on Leesburg Pike is 30 mph.

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Glen Carlyn Drive is classified as an urban collector route and in the area of the crash consists of three lanes both north and south of the intersection. The roadway runs northeast to southwest, with the opposing lanes divided only by solid yellow lines. Glen Carlyn Drive in the direction of travel for the crash SUV consists of two southwestbound lanes of travel, one designated for either through traffic or right turns and the other a left-turn-only lane. Traffic in the left-turn-only lane is controlled by a left-turn arrow on the traffic signal.

The area around the intersection includes sidewalks for pedestrians as well as marked pedestrian crosswalks (figure 2). Pedestrian-walk phases are incorporated in the timing sequence for the traffic lights at the intersection. A shopping center is located on the south side of Leesburg Pike. Metrobus stops and shelters are found on both sides of the highway—two shelters near the northeast corner of the intersection, and a smaller shelter in the middle of the block on the south side of Leesburg Pike (refer to figure 1). Local residents and law enforcement officers told investigators that pedestrian and bus traffic in the area is heavy.



**Figure 2.** Aerial view of crash location showing intersecting roadways, crosswalk, and surrounding businesses. (Base map by Google Earth)

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The crash occurred during daylight hours. The roadway was dry, and the sky was overcast. Possible sight obstructions included a streetlight post on the southeast corner of the intersection near where the pedestrian would have stepped off the curb. The large post would have been between the driver and the pedestrian and might have momentarily obstructed their views of each other as the pedestrian walked behind it.

### Crash Scene

The Fairfax County Police Department dispatched officers to the crash scene about 3:40 p.m. When they arrived, officers observed a male pedestrian lying in the right lane of southeastbound Leesburg Pike. Also in the right lane, leading to the pedestrian's body, officers observed eyeglasses, a hat, and a shoe.

The SUV was parked just east of the pedestrian. The vehicle's right tires were on the grass next to the curb, and the left tires were on the pavement. No tire marks were visible on the roadway, but tire tracks were visible in the grass, indicating the path of the SUV's right tires once they left the road. The pedestrian's body was removed from the scene and taken to the morgue pending an autopsy.

### Pedestrian

The pedestrian lived in the area and worked as a vehicle mechanic. He was widowed, and family members were not available for interviews. At the time of the collision, he was wearing dark gray pants and a blue plaid shirt.

A copy of the pedestrian's autopsy and toxicology report was obtained from the Virginia Department of Forensic Science. The pedestrian's height was recorded as 5 feet 7 inches and his weight as 200 pounds.<sup>3</sup> The cause of death was listed as blunt force trauma to the head and torso. The pedestrian also sustained abrasions to his knees, right thigh, and midsection, consistent with sliding on the pavement. A toxicological blood analysis was negative for alcohol and other drugs.

### Driver

The driver of the striking vehicle held a standard (noncommercial) Virginia driver's license.<sup>4</sup> He had possessed a Virginia driver's license for 12 years, with no restrictions on his driving privilege. Investigators at the scene found no signs of intoxication or impairment, and no toxicological tests were performed. The driver stated that he had not been using his cell phone.

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

<sup>4</sup> Standard (noncommercial) driver's licenses issued in Virginia before July 1, 2016, did not carry a class designation.

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National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators later interviewed the driver, who stated that he followed a regular schedule, waking at 6 a.m. and going to sleep about 9 p.m. The driver stated that he was in good health and did not have any health conditions requiring medication. He wore glasses for reading, but they were not required for driving. He stated that he did not drink alcohol or take recreational drugs. He worked trimming trees away from utility lines and was required to climb trees when equipment could not be used. He had lived in the same community for 17 years.

The driver stated that he had left work about 3 p.m. the day of the crash and was on his way home but planned to make a stop at a store near his house. He was making a left turn directly into the right lane of Leesburg Pike (the lane nearest the curb) because he intended to make an immediate right turn into the store's parking lot. He stated that after he struck the pedestrian, he drove onto the curb because he felt the person under his vehicle. Once he stopped, he turned on his hazard lights and stayed in the vehicle. He did not call 911 because the police arrived immediately.

### Vehicle

The crash vehicle was a 2012 Jeep Wrangler SUV. The owner purchased the vehicle in 2012 and was familiar with its operation. He stated that the SUV had no mechanical problems and had been in only one other collision, a minor one in 2012. The SUV was examined on the scene by law enforcement officers and NTSB investigators, who observed minor damage to the area of the left front bumper (figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Photograph showing minor contact damage (arrow) to left front bumper of SUV.

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### Applicable Traffic Laws

Virginia regulates the movement of pedestrians walking on or along public roadways. According to the Code of Virginia, section 46.2-923,

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.

At section 46.2-925, the Virginia code states,

Whenever special pedestrian control signals exhibiting the words, numbers, or symbols meaning “Walk” or “Don’t Walk” are in place such signals shall indicate and apply to pedestrians as follows:

*Walk.* Pedestrians facing such signal may proceed across the highway in the direction of the signal and shall be given the right-of-way by the drivers of all vehicles.

*Don’t Walk.* No pedestrian shall start to cross the highway in the direction of such signal, but any pedestrian who has partially completed his crossing on the Walk signal shall proceed to a sidewalk or safety island and remain there while the Don’t Walk signal is showing.

For drivers, section 46.2-846(A)(3) of the Virginia code stipulates the position and method of turning left on other than two-way roadways:

At any intersection where traffic is restricted to one direction on one or more of the roadways, and at any crossover from one roadway of a divided highway to another roadway thereof on which traffic moves in the opposite direction, the driver intending to turn left at any such intersection or crossover shall approach the intersection or crossover in the extreme left lane lawfully available to traffic moving in the direction of travel of such vehicle and after entering the intersection or crossover the left turn shall be made so as to leave the intersection or crossover, as nearly as practicable, in the left lane lawfully available to traffic moving in such direction upon the roadway being entered.

Drivers are required by section 46.2-924 of the code to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians crossing a highway in a clearly marked crosswalk (46.2-924[A][1]). The code gives pedestrians “at all times the right-of-way over vehicles making turns into the highways being crossed by the pedestrians,” but also stipulates that “no pedestrian shall enter or cross an intersection in disregard of approaching traffic” (46.2-924[B]).

### Crash History

Data on collisions at the intersection in the 3 years preceding the crash were obtained from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles. Between May 18, 2013, and May 18, 2016, a total of 16 collisions were reported, not counting the crash described here. Eleven collisions were reported

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as injury crashes, and five were classified as property damage only. One involved injury to a pedestrian.

### Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the crash in Falls Church, Virginia, was a combination of the pedestrian's attempt to cross a busy multilane arterial roadway outside the crosswalk, while the pedestrian control signal indicated not to walk, and the driver's failure, while executing a left turn, to enter the leftmost lane of the roadway being entered.

## BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

**ROBERT L. SUMWALT, III**

Chairman

**EARL F. WEENER**

Member

**T. BELLA DINH-ZARR**

Member

**Adopted:** July 13, 2018

For more details about this accident, visit the [NTSB public docket](#) and search for NTSB accident ID HWY16SH012. 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.

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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).

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