

H-213

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: January 25, 1980

Forwarded to:

Honorable Hugh L. Carey  
Governor of New York  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-79-50

About 11:05 p.m., June 8, 1979, a Buick sedan, with eight occupants, was westbound on the Grand Central Parkway in New York City. The Buick, while in the acceleration lane of the 188th Street westbound, parkway entrance ramp, passed another westbound vehicle at a high rate of speed. Upon re-entering the parkway through lanes, the Buick veered out of control to the left, vaulted the median guardrail, and collided with three eastbound passenger cars. Two passengers in the Buick and the drivers of two eastbound cars were killed; 10 persons were injured. 1/

During the investigation of this accident, the Safety Board contacted the New York State and New York City Departments of Transportation (DOT), the division office of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the New York City Police Department (NYCPD) to determine the number of crossover accidents in the vicinity of the crash.

Officials of the New York State and City DOT indicated that computerized accident data were not available for any location within New York City subsequent to 1976. New York City DOT did supply a computer printout of accidents that occurred on the parkway from 1973 through 1976 from data obtained from computer tapes supplied by the Aided and Accident Section of the NYCPD.

The division office of the FHWA supplied a computer printout of accidents that occurred from 1975 to June 1979, on a 4-mile segment of the parkway that includes the crash site. FHWA obtained the printout from New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (NYSDMV), but it was incomplete because it did not include any property damage accidents.

1/ For more detailed information read, "Multiple Vehicle Median Barrier Crossover and Collision, Grand Central Parkway, New York, New York, June 8, 1979." (NTSB-HAR-79-8)

Currently, the sole source of New York City accident data is the Aided and Accident Section of the NYCPD which processes between 150,000 and 160,000 accident reports annually. Data from these reports are stored on computer tapes which are distributed to New York State and City DOT. Inquiries made at the Aided and Accident Section in August 1979 revealed that the latest tapes available were 1976 and at that time the section was processing 1978 and 1979 accident reports. Processing of 1977 accident reports was being deferred until such time as the section "caught up" with current 1979 cases.

There are two National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Highway Safety Program Standards that are relevant to this situation: Highway Safety Program Standard (HSPS) No. 9 — Identification and Surveillance of Accident Locations, and Highway Safety Program Standard (HSPS) No. 10 — Traffic Records. HSPS No. 9 requires that each State, in cooperation with county and local governments, shall have a program for identifying accident locations and for maintaining surveillance of those locations having high accident rates or losses. HSPS No. 10 states that each State, in cooperation with its political subdivisions, shall maintain a statewide traffic records system which shall include data regarding drivers, vehicles, accidents, and highways and which shall be compatible for the purposes of analysis and correlation. Systems maintained by local governments shall be compatible with and capable of furnishing data to the State system.

Both Standards call for a periodic evaluation by the State with an evaluation summary to the FHWA (HSPS No. 9) and NHTSA (HSPS No. 10). In compliance with HSPS No. 10, the NYS DOT issued a 1978 Annual Evaluation Report — Highway Safety Improvement Program which stated:

"It (the report) documents New York's most recent efforts to minimizing the part the highway facility plays in accident causation and severity...Problem identification is one of the best developed aspects of New York's HSIP (highway safety improvement program). Our accident surveillance system pinpoints suspect locations according to recorded accident histories."

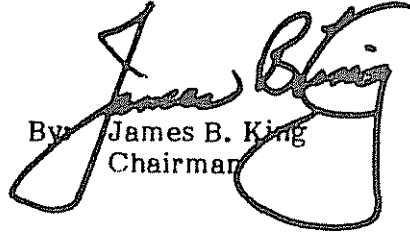
From fiscal year 1967 to May 1979, New York State received \$13,426,000 in Federal funding from the NHTSA to support HSPS No. 10.

Although this report suggests that identification and surveillance of accident locations is a Statewide operational system, the Safety Board's investigation indicates that it is not operational in New York City. The lack of a local adequate accident record system to supply essential, accurate, and timely information in a usable format to identify hazardous locations precluded effective action by responsible officials.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that New York State:

Expand the New York State traffic records system so that it complies with Highway Safety Program Standard 10 (Traffic Records) and provides managers of the motor vehicle transportation system of New York City with essential information that is accurate, timely, and in a usable format. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-79-50)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman

