

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 15, 1974

Forwarded to:

Honorable Norbert T. Tiemann
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
400 Seventh Street, S. W.
Washington, D. C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-74-22 through 24

On August 21, 1973, a passenger car and a truck, both westbound, collided on a portion of the Chattahoochee River Bridge on I-20 in Cobb County, Georgia. Traffic was congested and moving slowly in the right westbound lane from the Six Flags Road off-ramp eastward to the vicinity of the Chattahoochee River Bridge. The driver of the car, apparently attempting to avoid the traffic ahead, veered from the right lane into the left westbound lane, where the car was struck by the overtaking truck. Four of the five occupants of the car were killed, and the other severely injured.

The National Transportation Safety Board investigated the accident, with the assistance of the Federal Highway Administration's Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety. The investigation has revealed the following:

- * During late morning in the summer, the westbound "through" lanes from the exit of the off-ramp eastward toward the Chattahoochee Bridge are periodically congested, because the off-ramp serves the private "Six Flags Over Georgia" recreation area.
- * Accidents have occurred in the past as a result of the traffic congestion.
- * As land served by the exit is further developed, traffic demand can be expected to increase.
- * When traffic backs onto I-20 from the exit ramp, a hazardous condition is created. As the traffic congestion in the westbound lanes extends to the Chattahoochee Bridge, the hazard is increased to westbound traffic for the following reasons:

- (a) The crest near the bridge limits visibility of traffic conditions ahead and decreases the time available for driver response to slow-moving or stopped vehicles.
 - (b) Traffic barriers at the bridge restrict drivers from evading obstructions ahead by steering to the left or right.
 - (c) No traffic-control devices warn "through" traffic of stopped or slow-moving traffic ahead.
- * Traffic counts for the off-ramp are not available.
 - * The State of Georgia is considering improving an interchange 1 mile west of the Six Flags Road off-ramp at Six Flags Drive as an alternate exit for the recreational area. At least 3 years will be needed to plan, design, and construct such an improvement.
 - * After the accident, signs were installed over the exit lanes to encourage traffic to use both lanes of the off-ramp. The signs are supported by a cable attached to wooden poles--one in the median and the other to the right of the ramp. The pole in the median is protected by a guardrail that creates a hazard to errant vehicles using the median from both directions. The pole to the right of the lanes is unprotected.

The National Transportation Safety Board recommends that pending its full report of the accident, the Federal Highway Administration:

1. Request the State of Georgia to perform the following:
 - (a) In cooperation with Cobb County, study the traffic operations at the intersection of the off-ramp with Six Flags Road and along Six Flags Road to determine if traffic flow into "Six Flags Over Georgia" can be improved by changes in operational procedures.
 - (b) Study traffic demands and capacity on the ramp in the summer to determine if the geometrics of the ramp and the Six Flags Road can be modified to increase traffic flow volumes or increase storage on the ramp sufficiently to eliminate or substantially decrease the periods of congestion on the I-20 through lanes.

- (c) If mainline congestion cannot be eliminated by operational and geometric changes, install traffic control devices over the westbound lanes of I-20, at or before the roadway crest near the Chattahoochee Bridge. The devices should operate in response to traffic speeds and warn approaching drivers of slow-moving or stopped traffic at or beyond the crest. (Recommendation H-74-22)
2. Assure that future I-20 interchange improvements at the Six Flags Road and Six Flags Drive:
- (a) Meet the demand expected as a result of future land development. These demands should be determined by a traffic study.
 - (b) Provide interchange designs that will not impede smooth traffic flow on the approach lanes of I-20 as a result of the projected demand for exiting traffic.
 - (c) Include configuration, message, and location of traffic-control devices as an integral part of the planning and design of both interchanges so they will function as an integrated system. (Recommendation H-74-23)
3. Request that the State of Georgia determine if the signing of the off-ramp lanes at the Six Flags Road can be performed without the use of the wooden pole and guardrail that have been placed in the median. (Recommendation H-74-24)

McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concur in the above recommendations. REED, Chairman, was absent, not voting.

*Isabel A. Burgess -
acting*

By: John H. Reed
Chairman

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