

Log H-530D



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Safety Recommendation

Date: June 5, 1989

In reply refer to: H-89-7

Honorable Robert E. Farris
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Washington, D.C. 20590

About 10:55 p.m. eastern daylight time on May 14, 1988, a pickup truck traveling northbound in the southbound lanes of Interstate 71 struck head-on a church activity bus traveling southbound in the left lane of the highway near Carrollton, Kentucky. As the pickup truck rotated during impact, it struck a passenger car traveling southbound in the right lane near the church bus. The church bus fuel tank was punctured during the collision sequence, and a fire ensued, engulfing the entire bus. The busdriver and 26 bus passengers were fatally injured. Thirty-four bus passengers sustained minor to critical injuries, and six bus passengers were not injured. The pickup truck driver sustained serious injuries, but neither occupant of the passenger car was injured.¹

There was no previous history of wrong-way accidents on the accident segment of I-71. Further, it is highly unlikely that the placement of appropriate highway signs and pavement markings at the accident site would have substantially altered the outcome of this accident. However, approximately 272 fatalities per year do occur as a result of wrong-way driving accidents.

As a result of its investigation of a head-on collision near Baker, California on March 7, 1968, the Safety Board recommended that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):

H-68-24

Continue its support of State Highway Department research and application of remedial measures to avert or redirect wrong-way traffic movements at expressway, freeway, and multilane divided highway ingress and egress points. This research effort should be expanded and consideration

¹For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Pickup Truck/Church Activity Bus Head-on Collision and Fire near Carrollton, Kentucky, May 14, 1988" (NTSB/HAR-89/01)

given to the development and application of measures to avert or redirect wrong-way traffic movements which occur on a roadway at points other than those used for ingress and egress. Directional arrows applied at regular intervals, rumble strips, signs, and other signal systems might be considered. The Safety Board further recommends that the FHWA advise the National Joint Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices of the effective measures developed to redirect wrong-way traffic movements which occur on a roadway at points other than those used for ingress and egress; and, urges the National Joint Committee to implement these measures on a national basis in the most expedient manner at its command.

On January 17, 1969, the FHWA responded that:

The support of State research work to develop remedial measures to avert or redirect wrong way movements at points of ingress and egress on divided highways will be continued as a regular part of FHWA program . . . will explore expansion of the program as recommended. The National Joint Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Division will be kept informed as recommended.

On July 17, 1975, the Safety Board classified Safety Recommendation H-68-24 as "Closed--Acceptable Action." In the past, efforts have been made to reduce wrong-way driving at entrances and exits near interchanges. However, because the loss of life from wrong-way accidents continues to be substantial, it is reasonable to conclude that wrong-way accidents on the main line between interchanges may now be a problem. A nationwide effort on the interstates should be initiated to post "Wrong-Way" and "One-Way" signs and place pavement arrows at each crossover or at periodic intervals (such as 1 mile). Although there are about 43,000 miles of interstate highway, the cost may not be great relative to the benefits of reducing these severe types of accidents. However, the Board recognizes that it may be necessary to establish, through a demonstration program, the feasibility of such a program. Because wrong-way accidents do not occur frequently on a particular interstate route within a State, the Board believes the FHWA should conduct a demonstration project to determine the feasibility of reducing wrong-way accidents on the main lines of interstates by the installation of additional signs and markings at all crossovers and at periodic intervals. Based on a preliminary assessment of the data collected during its investigation of the Carrollton accident, the Board believes that North Carolina, Georgia, and Indiana may be candidates for the demonstration projects.

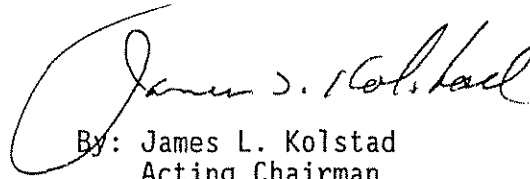
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Highway Administration:

Conduct a demonstration project to determine the effectiveness of installing additional signs and markings at all crossovers and periodic intervals to reduce

wrong-way accidents on interstates. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-89-7)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-89-1 to the 50 States and the District of Columbia; H-89-2 to the 49 States, except Kentucky, and the District of Columbia; H-89-3 to various church associations and other special activity groups; H-89-4 through -6 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; and H-89-8 through -14 to the State of Kentucky.

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, and BURNETT, LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in this recommendation.



By: James L. Kolstad
Acting Chairman

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