



# PRELIMINARY REPORT

## HIGHWAY

### HWY18MH016

*The information in this report is preliminary and will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.*

About 12:20 p.m. (local time) on Thursday, August 30, 2018, a 2016 Freightliner truck-tractor in combination with a 2017 Utility refrigerated semitrailer, was traveling east in the right lane of Interstate 40 (I-40) near Thoreau, in McKinley County, New Mexico, when the driver lost control of the vehicle, entered the 33-foot-wide depressed earthen median, jackknifed, and continued into the westbound lanes—striking a 2015 MCI motorcoach. The combination vehicle, operated by Jag Transportation of Fresno, California, and occupied by the 35-year-old driver, was transporting produce to Memphis, Tennessee. The motorcoach, operated by Greyhound Lines and occupied by the 50-year-old driver and 48 passengers, was traveling west in the left lane of I-40. In this area, I-40 is a four-lane controlled-access highway. The posted speed limit is 75 mph.

In the vicinity of milepost 50, the left front tire of the combination vehicle experienced a sudden air loss. After impact, the semitrailer separated from the truck-tractor and came to rest in the westbound lane and center median on its right side, spilling its load onto the roadway. After rolling onto its roof, the truck-tractor came to rest just off the westbound lanes of I-40, next to a service road. The final rest position of the motorcoach was on the right edge of the roadway, westbound. Figure 1 shows the combination vehicle and the motorcoach at final rest.



**Figure 1.** Postcrash scene, looking westbound, with service road at far right (Source: New Mexico State Police).

As a result of the crash, seven motorcoach passengers were fatally injured, 39 received minor-to-serious injuries, and two were uninjured. The motorcoach driver did not survive the crash. Following the crash, one motorcoach passenger prematurely went into labor and delivered

twins. One of the twins died from complications on September 9, 2018. The driver of the combination vehicle received minor injuries.

Both vehicles were severely damaged (see figures 2 and 3). NTSB investigators conducted detailed postcrash inspections. No mechanical defects were found. The tire carcass from the left steer axle of the truck-tractor was shipped to the NTSB materials laboratory for additional examination. Investigators are also evaluating maintenance records for the combination vehicle. The motorcoach was equipped with lap/shoulder belts for all seating positions, and the extent of passenger belt use is being examined.



**Figure 2.** Front view of motorcoach.



**Figure 3.** Front and right-side angle view of truck-tractor.

The NTSB is evaluating motor carrier operations and driver performance as related to the crash. For both drivers, records will be examined for driver qualifications, medical qualifications, training, and experience. Electronic driver logs and automatic onboard recorder devices are also being reviewed. Postcrash drug and alcohol tests were negative for both drivers.

All aspects of the crash remain under investigation as the NTSB focuses on determining the probable cause, with the intent of issuing safety recommendations to prevent similar crashes. We are working in conjunction with the New Mexico State Police, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to compile a complete and accurate account of the crash.