

Calvin William Gogo Charged: Double Fatal On Pressey Line, Malahide, March 26th, 2011

It has been reported that at approximately 10:35 P.M. on Saturday, March 26, 2011, an eastbound GMC Pick-up truck, carrying a driver and four passengers collided with the south concrete bridge abutment on Pressey Line just west of Carter Road, just north-east of Aylmer, Ontario. I was out at the accident site this afternoon and have the following to report.

First, we begin by looking eastward along Pressey Line from a distance of 200 metres west of the point of impact (POI) with the concrete bridge abutment.



On the right side of this photo you should see a warning sign indicating that there is a "Single Lane Bridge" ahead. This sign is posted about 188 metres west of the bridge. If you look carefully you will find my black Buick Regal parked on the north roadside just past (east of) the point where the bridge was struck.

As you can see this is a very straight and somewhat level road although there might be a minimal downgrade. Being a rural area and this not being a main road one would think

there would be a very low volume of traffic here but that is not the case. While taking these photos on a Sunday afternoon there was a steady parade of eastbound and westbound traffic such that it would not surprise me if the volume was near 1000 (AADTV) units per day or higher.

The road near this 200 metre location is about 6.0 metres wide so it is quite narrow and is at the limit allowable for a two-way roadway. If you look carefully you might observe on the right side of the road that I have placed small orange cones at 25 metre intervals progressing westward to a location 150 metres west of the POI. This is to help you appreciate the distances being shown in the photos.

Below is a view looking east from 150 metres west of the POI.



You should now begin to see the small bridge and its concrete abutments which are exposed to traffic without any guardrails. Below is another view looking eastward but now 100 metres west of the bridge (POI). But now the view is taken along the south edge of the road so that you can start looking for any tire marks that would indicate that the vehicle travelled off the roadway before encountering the bridge abutment.



In my opinion there are no visible tire marks on the south roadside. Next is a view looking east from 50 metres west of the bridge. Again, this view was taken along the south edge of the road so that you can examine if there is any evidence of tire marks on the south roadside.



I might comment that there are tire marks near the edge of the road but we would be unable to distinguish those from passersby or emergency vehicles. All I can say is that there are no obvious tire marks along this south edge.

Next is a view from just 15 metres west of the bridge and still looking along that south edge of the road. I see no obvious tire marks.



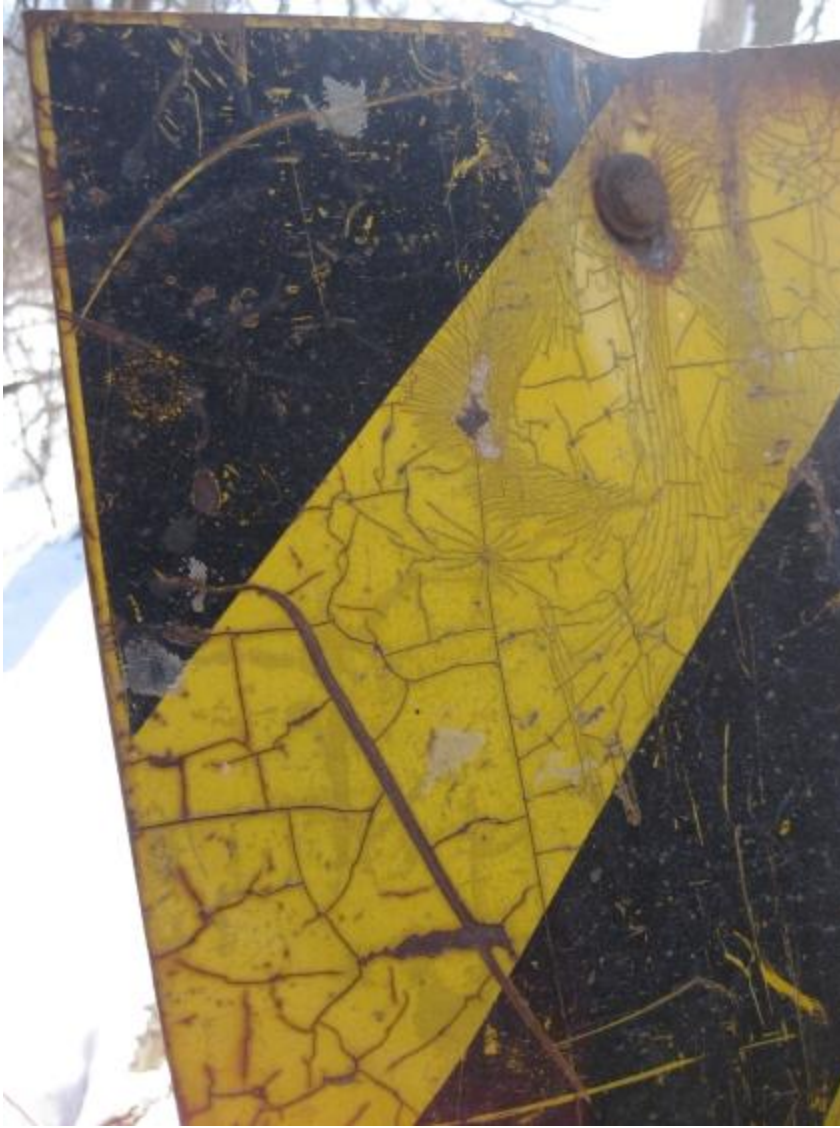
If you look at this photo and the one previous it should become apparent that the bridge is quite narrow and that traffic approaching it has a good likelihood of getting close to the concrete abutments because the width between the abutments is only 6.2 metres. No wonder there was the sign indicating this was a "Single Lane Bridge". For example below is a photo, zoomed in from 150 metres west where we see two vehicles passing each other near the bridge. Yes, two vehicles could make it through but just barely.



Anyway, below is a view of the actual impact point to the west end of the south abutment of the bridge.



One might say this abutment "never shed a leaf". These things are very stiff and immovable. You can see there was a hazard sign posted in front of the bridge but my inspection revealed that it was very old and was likely of very low reflectance. See the close-up of the sign below.



With so many roads that a small municipality like this has to deal with there is eventually a neglect to replace such signs until something like this occurs and the issue becomes "Was the driver given sufficient warning by the sign" due to its age and lack of reflectance"?

Yes, the news media quote police as saying that the driver may have been alcohol impaired and, if so, that would be a factor. But this was a night-time collision. If the hazard sign did not provide proper reflectance then it too was a factor. But this factor is not mentioned. Let's move on.

The extent of overlap between the GMC Pick-up and the abutment can be appreciated by noting the rotational rubber transfer on the bottom of the abutment. What you should be recognizing is the curved black marks on the concrete which are from the rotating, right-front tire of the vehicle.



In order for the sidewall of the tire to have scraped the abutment in this fashion the truck would have to impact the abutment in a narrow fashion with a small overlap. Secondly, the fact that the marks are curved indicates that the tire is rotating. This is important because it does not indicate, for example, that the driver applied maximum braking before impact and therefore locked up the right front wheel (or nearly locked it with ABS). So we might expect that the truck struck the abutment at essentially the original speed that it was travelling, or close to it.

Below you will see the result, just after impact, as the rear of the vehicle rotates clockwise about the abutment and the left-rear wheel produces the dark, yaw, tire mark that you see in this view.



This is further evidenced in the photo below where you should see two tire marks: the darker tire mark on the left is from the left rear and the light mark on the right is from the right rear. Note that as the tire marks cross each other in the background this is the point where the GMC Pick-up is travelling essentially sideways, leading with its driver's side, as it spins towards its final rest position (FRP).



The vehicle continues to rotate clockwise in this fashion until it reaches its final rest position as shown in the photo below.



Note that we always look for a dark stain, whether it be from engine oil, coolant, or some other substance which always indicates where the front end of the vehicle came to rest.

It can be noted that the GMC Pick-up came to rest about 47 metres east of where the initial impact occurred. Using a conservative drag factor of 0.4g this would result in a speed loss of about 70 km/h. This is conservative because the right front suspension of the vehicle was dragging and the right front wheel was likely jammed by the deformation at that location. So any speed loss from the impact with the abutment would be "combined", not added, to the speed loss from post-impact spin-out. I'm not going to discuss the speed calculation details for now only to say that even if the speed lost from the abutment impact was 70 km/h (which is highly doubtful), the calculated impact speed would only be about 99 km/h. What I would say is that the speed was likely less than 99 km/h and therefore high speed was likely not a factor in this collision.

But let me return you to some other interesting evidence just before the impact with the abutment. We can never be certain, just by looking at the evidence at the site, what was caused before or after impact or what was created by another event. Emergency personnel have a habit of producing fresh evidence that can become confusing.

Never-the-less, look at the evidence in the photo below taken from about 10 metres west of the bridge, looking eastward.



If you look carefully at the photo above you should see a "whitish" scrape in the pavement near the right edge of the road. Such "whitish" markings indicate that they are fresh. Let me show you a closer view below.



Extending eastward from this mark is a darker mark similar to a tire mark that would be created after an impact. Look more closely at the scrape in the close-up view below.



Now, it is common for vehicles that hit non-yielding abutments like this for the underside of the vehicle to bottom out and produce a gouge. But such a gouge would be located near the front end of the vehicle where the impact occurred. The scrape I am showing you is located 6.5 metres west of the abutment. Note that a full size GMC Pick-up like this would not be more than 6.0 metres long. Therefore something caused a gouge behind the Pick-up. It cannot be from the Pick-up at impact. Now that is unusual. But here is more. Take a look at the next photo. Can you see the white acid drip on the road that leads from that scrape to the rear tire marks in the background?



This is curious if it is by coincidence because this information would suggest there was another impact, about 6.5 metres west of the impact to the abutment. Strange. Coincidence, possibly. Caused by emergency personnel - not likely. Caused by another recent collision, yes, possibly. But very strange particularly since the acid trail travels to match with the rear tire marks of the Pick-up.

One explanation could be that the GMC Pick-up was hauling something like a small trailer and the tongue of the trailer made the noted scrape. I don't know since I was not there. But it will be interesting to follow through with any additional info that may be provided through the news media.

UPDATE: March 28, 2011, 0838 Hours

It has been reported that Calvin William Gogo was the driver of the Pick-up and he has been charged with impaired driving.

Fatally injured in the crash were Jayson Hugh Irwin, 30, and Lori Wooley, 46, both of Aylmer, Ontario.

UPDATE: April 1st, 2011, 1525 Hours

There have been no additional news media articles since my last report. Yet there appears to be considerable interest in this accident judging by the number of visitors to this article on our website. As a result I have decided to add some more photos and thought-provoking details for you to consider.

First let me show you some additional photos of some strange marks just after the Chevrolet Silverado (that is what I'm being told it was) struck the bridge abutment. First an overall view of the yaw marks after the impact.



Now, if you look at the above photo you should be able to recognize the very typical markings of a yaw mark to the left and a somewhat less typical tire mark on the right as the two converge. As I mentioned before these are tire marks from the two rear tires of the Silverado. But look closely at the fatter mark on the left which is supposed to be the mark caused by the left-rear tire. Do you see anything peculiar? Let me show you a close-up of the area of interest in the photo below.



What you should recognize in the above photo is a circular scraping of the pavement within the yaw mark. Let me show you another close-up view below.



I can tell you that this circular marking that you are looking at is fresh. So why is it there?

I am going to give this a few days for visitors to ponder and then I will continue on.

UPDATE: April 6, 2011, 1520 Hours

Ok, I know I have had visitors wondering what these markings are and I will give you my opinion. But again, before I do, I want to give you just a couple of more photos of a tree on the south side of the struck abutment. Below is the view of the tree.



If you look up into this tree you will see several branches that have broken and in particular there is a fresh break as shown in the photo below.



Pieces of such branches can fall onto the road and cause problems.

So now, what is the point of me mentioning all these additional things. Let me refresh your memory.

1) I showed you a fresh gouge that 6.5 metres west of the point of impact and I stated it was doubtful that this could have been caused by the Silverado at impact.

2) I showed you a fresh circular scrape within the yaw mark caused by the left-rear tire after impact. And

3) I have now shown you some broken tree branches next to the bridge abutment that was struck.

What is my point? Well, just this.

I or anyone else can come to the site of a serious motor vehicle collision and find all kinds of markings. Some of them related the collision, some caused by emergency and towing personnel and some that just happen to be there from something else. When we are shown such evidence some of us will want to believe what we do based on a preconceived bias or paranoia. Like: "It could not have happened this way because here is some evidence which could mean something totally different". We believe what we want to believe not according to logic and science but according to our emotions and bias. That's OK if that is our objective in life.

An unbiased investigator's approach to these things is to first recognize that sometimes things just happen and many things get created from unknown sources. Some evidence you can be pretty sure about because you have seen it before. But in many instances mysterious gouges are created, circular scrapes exist, or something nearby like a tree could potentially be related. But all these things could be unrelated. If I was conducting an actual investigation for a legal or insurance client I would have access to the full police investigation materials and I would also be able to examine the vehicles myself. I would be able to examine witness and driver statements and conduct further testing. Many of these mysteries could be clarified.

But when I just go out like this to examine a collision site much of that additional evidence is not available to me. And it is also not available to you. So I apologize for stringing you readers along for several days while I introduced these additional photos. I wanted you to start hypothesizing and concluding about some of these things so you can appreciate how wrong it can be to do that. If this was a real investigation and we were police officers or technical analysts we might have gone off on all kinds of tangents. Fortunately in most real investigations there is much more evidence to rely upon.

Oh, by the way, that circular scrape - very often a vehicle is stopped on the road and the driver performs a "dry steer". In other words the driver turns the steering wheel sharply while stopped because the confined space does not allow the driver to make a wider turn. If you looked at the road surface where the front tires were located at that dry steer you would see circular markings such as what I showed. Yeah, I know, I have not proven anything but I'm just giving you further things to think about.

After 30 years of looking at a lot of physical evidence I can be no better than anyone by failing to recognize an important fact. It happens and I continue learning. But that is what makes this job challenging and interesting.

UPDATE: April 13th, 2011, 0750 Hours

This case is an opportunity to re-examine the competing interests of investigators and society as it relates to alcohol impairment versus other sources of collision causation such as roadway deficiencies. This is a topic I have discussed a number of times before.

The news media are provided with comments from investigating police about what caused this collision and then these comments are published or broadcast to the general public. Much of those police comments have been about alcohol impairment. If the driver was impaired by alcohol then those comments are justified, but that still has to be proven in court.

On the other hand no comments have been made about the other possible causation of the accident - an improperly reflective, hazard warning sign that may have made the bridge abutment difficult to detect until it was too late. I have shown you photographs of that sign, its advanced age, and the poor condition of its reflective surface. No one has asked why this sign existed in the condition that it did.

But you need to dig deeper into this story. For example, the maintenance of infrastructure on such low volume roads such as Pressey Line is not funded to a proper level. This is admitted by municipalities across Ontario. Even in the Minutes of Malahide Township's Council of April 7th, 2011 we see the following:

AND WHEREAS the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review identified a transportation infrastructure investment gap between the Government of Ontario and Ontario's municipalities of approximately \$3.8 billion;

AND WHEREAS a lack of sufficient funding for essential transportation infrastructure construction, maintenance and rehabilitation has created a situation where many of Ontario's municipalities do not have the financial capacity to construct new transportation infrastructure and conduct the maintenance and rehabilitation needed to sustain existing transportation infrastructure;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Township of Malahide requests that the Government of Ontario consider directing a portion of the revenue derived from HST charged on gasoline and diesel sales to a new predictable funding mechanism that will allow Ontario's municipalities to make the critical investments needed to be effective stewards of transportation infrastructure;

Also, the news media did not mention the fact that Malahide Township had requisitioned an engineering firm, Spriet Associates, last year to review their bridge and culvert needs for maintenance/safety and this engineering firm noted that, due to safety concerns there should be an improvement to the Pressey Line bridge in the amount of \$35,000.00 for "Improve Railings in conjunction with guardrail". The timetable for this need was noted as "Now".

It is notable that this engineering firm did not mention or discuss signage improvements or replacement and that should be a concern. Although they recommended that guardrails should be installed they failed to mention that the signage was of poor quality due to its age and that the hazard signs at the bridge abutments should be replaced. If such a warning was provided the replacement of the old hazard signs could have been conducted much quicker than the installation of a guard rail. So the question still remains, why was this aged, hazard warning sign in existence at the time of the crash?

Even now, an aged sign still exists on the south side of the bridge facing westbound traffic. Here are some views of that sign from April 12th, 2011. First an overall view below.



And the view below is a closer view of the front face of that sign.



In comparison we can look at the sign that was freshly erected for eastbound traffic as shown below.



And now a close-up of the reflective surface of that new sign is shown in the photo below.



Would there have been a difference in reflectivity between this new sign and the sign above or the old sign that was struck at the time of the accident (see my previous photos)? I should think so. But none of this evidence has been discussed in the media nor has it been released to the media via the police investigation. If such evidence is not revealed or identified how can we expect corrections to be made? If we are truly interested in public safety we cannot go on ignoring factors such as these when they contribute to the collision consequences.