

Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office

Supplemental Report

Case #: 16-14099

MCBRIDE, ZACHARY 11/17/2016

SYNOPSIS:

This case is about the investigation into the death of Jordin Taylor. At about 1300hrs on 10/29/2016, Jordin Taylor was found deceased under a disabled bus at the Cool River Ranch, 601 Dupuy Ranch Road in Northern Guadalupe County. Through further investigation and an autopsy it was revealed that Jordin's death was caused by being dragged under the bus for about 527 feet. No evidence or eyewitnesses were located to describe or indicate how Jordin Taylor wound up under the bus. Although the bus was mechanically disabled, this malfunction was found not to be the cause of the incident.

Investigators did not locate any evidence of foul play. Fail to stop and render aid was eliminated. Gabriella Wilson, the driver, gave a plausible statement that she didn't know she was dragging anyone and exited the bus when it malfunctioned. The most plausible explanation based on the information available was Jordin's death was an accident. There was no evidence that Jordin was struck by any vehicle, to include the bus itself. Jordin's injuries were consistent with being dragged under the bus, not being struck by it. Toxicology revealed that Jordin had consumed alcohol and marijuana prior to the incident, and while not the cause of her death, this intoxication cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor.

Please see the following report and other reports in the case file for further details.

DETAIL:

On 10/29/2016, Investigator Murphy was on call. He notified me of this case in that the body of an adult female had been located under a bus at 601 Dupuy Ranch Road, Martindale, Guadalupe County Texas. I was told there had been a large party the night before, but no one was known to be missing. Through further investigation, the deceased was identified as Jordin Taylor, a Texas State University student who had attended the party the night before.

I was told that after Jordin was removed from under the bus, it was obvious the body had been dragged underneath the bus for an undetermined distance. I was further told the bus had become disabled due to failure of the air braking system, which stopped the bus at about 2315hrs the night prior. Jordin wasn't discovered deceased until about 1300hrs the next day. For this reason, the bus driver was not evaluated for intoxication as too much time had passed.

Investigator Murphy told me he spoke with the bus driver, Gabriella Wilson. Investigator Murphy told me that Gabriella remembered the bus starting to lose air pressure due to a warning buzzer as she approached the pickup area where people were waiting to get on the bus. Investigator Murphy told me that Gabriella told him she was able to get the bus out of the way before the air brakes engaged, stopping the bus (a safety feature that the bus will automatically apply brakes in the absence of air to operate them). Investigator Murphy reported to me that Gabriella told him she didn't hit anything or

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anyone and that she would have known it if she did. Gabriella Wilson was unable to explain how Jordin's body came to be dragged under her bus.

The cause and manner of death was not known and an autopsy was scheduled. I suggested that Investigator Murphy attempt to identify evidence indicating how far the body was dragged and from what point. Also suggested he have measurements taken. It was also suggested he seek the assistance of a License and Weight Trooper who may be able to assist with identifying equipment deficiencies with the bus. I gave this direction via phone as I didn't respond to the scene. Please see investigator Murphy's report as well as the responding Deputy reports for further information gathered on scene this date.

10/31/2016. Lt. Rios and I went to 601 Dupuy Ranch Road to survey the scene for ourselves. Upon arrival, we were able to find the location of the incident as there was still blood on the ground where Jordin's body was located under the bus. I had learned that no measurements were taken to exactly define the location of the bus. We were able to extrapolate an approximate location via the blood on the gravel road and looking at photographs taken on 10/30/2016 and comparing those to nearby landmarks.

The scene we were looking at involved a large circular road that resembles a very long circular driveway. Part of it was paved and part of it was gravel. There were two loops, one larger over all loop, with a gravel loop inside the larger one that intersected with the gravel road where Jordin Body was found. An overhead satellite image will accompany this report labeled attachment "A". The significance of the two intersections prior to the close of the loop will be very important to the investigation and will be explained later. For clarity Purposes, the start of the loop will be labeled intersection "A" the next closest intersection in labeled intersection "B" and the third labeled intersection "C".

Lt. Rios and I determined that further investigation was needed to see if any evidence or observations could be gained to better explain how Jordin came to be under the bus. Upon further investigation, Lt. Rios and I were able to follow a blood trail consisting of small dime to quarter sized patches of blood back several hundred feet. The blood's color had faded and dust had covered it making it difficult to see.

As we walked back the blood trail, that evidence ended at intersection "B". From that point and that perspective I was looking at, I couldn't tell which way the trail diverged. That being if it went back the shorter loop back to the paved road and intersection "A" or the longer way to intersection "C". The blood trail was noted for future documentation and measurements.

Jordin Taylor's father, Joey Taylor was on scene as well. He was looking for Jordin's iPhone, which was not recovered with her body. We allowed him to look around the area away from where Jordin's body was found in the off chance he came across it. As Lt. Rios and I were following the blood trail, Joey signaled us he had found Jordin's iPhone in the ditch at intersection "C". We moved to that location to investigate further. Investigator Murphy arrived to assist further.

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11/2/2016: On this date, I was with investigator Murphy when the bus was inspected at the Texas State University Bus Maintenance Facility on Posey Road. This was coordinated with the Burleson's and Corporal Duran of DPS. Also participating was maintenance personnel, Tom Hoblin and Warren Johnson, from Texas State that allowed us to use their lifts to get the bus off the ground.

In testing the air brake system on the bus, the Trooper's opined that it was operating correctly. It was estimated that if the bus experienced a failure as Gabriella had experienced, it would have approximately thirty seconds of operating capacity until it stopped producing enough air to replace what was lost. It also depended on how much the operator used the brakes. If she didn't use too much air, the bus could have gone a considerable distance. I was told this test showed that the brakes and air system did operate as intended and most likely did not contribute to Jordin's death.

We also looked for evidence as to where Jordin could have gone under the bus. No evidence was found on the sides of the bus, such as blood, disturbed dust or grime or other physical indication. Underneath the bus, I did locate a hand print that could be from Jordin, but there was no ridge detail to lift to determine if it was hers. There were also disturbed areas of grime under the bus, which could be from Jordin's body. There was also the broken air fitting and tank. All these items were documented with photographs. No evidence as to how Jordin came to be under the bus was found. Investigator Murphy also pointed out to me there is no evidence of an impact to Jordin's body outside of the drag marks to indicate the bus struck her at all.

NOTE: There was no evidence as to why the air fitting broke at that point in time. There was no indication or evidence the Jordin's body caused it to fail. According to Gabriella, the failure happened well prior to where it was later determined that she "picked up" Jordin's body under her bus. The cause of the air fitting coming loose was not located.

After inspecting the bus, it was determined the mechanical failure of the air tank had no bearing on Jordin's death, other than it prevented her body being dragged further that it actually was. The bus was released back to Skyline.

Later in the day, Corporal Duran and Trooper Horner came to the office and reviewed the photographs from the scene and the autopsy. After extensive review, they saw no evidence that Jordin's body was impacted by anything. The only visible trauma was from the actual dragging or close contact with the rear axle of the bus. There is still no evidence or other explanation as to how Jordin came to be under the still moving bus. The only evidence known is that showing Jordin being dragged while under the bus is what caused her death.

11/08/2016: Inv. Murphy showed me a video taken by someone at the party showing everyone leaving. It was chaotic and un-organized in appearance. The video didn't show anything related the events leading up to Jordin's death. It appears that it was made after the Bus failed and Jordin was already deceased.

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Standing at intersection "C", I was able to see an iPhone lying in the grass to the side of the paved road and the gravel road. The phone was lying inside the turn if you were making a left turn from the paved road to the gravel road. There were tire tracks consistent with a bus's dual wheels going over the grass at the location where the phone was found. The Phone's location will be detailed on the satellite photograph.

Looking down the gravel road from intersection "C", I could see a distinctive gouge or drag through the gravel headed in the direction of the bus. This gouge can also be described as a groove in the gravel. The gouge appeared to have been made by something being dragged. Following the gouge toward the bus, I saw pieces of red cloth that look just like Jordin's shirt that investigator Murphy had already showed me. This gouge and pieces of cloth led directly to intersection "B" where the blood trail began. Following the blood trail back to the location where the bus was parked, I found an earring. This earring was matched to the one recovered at the autopsy and matched Jordin Taylor's other earring. This evidence meant the groove in the gravel was made by Jordin's body as it was dragged under the bus.

Investigator Murphy and I then marked blood evidence, the earring, the pieces of cloth and the iPhone with evidence markers. The evidence items were then photographed and collected as evidence. I made sure the gouge in the gravel was documented via photographs. The length of the area between Jordin's last known resting spot where the blood was pooled to where her iPhone was found was 527 feet. Please see the photographs and attachment "A" for further details.

This evidence was compared to what Investigator Murphy learned at the autopsy. According to Dr. Perez, a subdural hematoma was the cause of death. The hematoma was on the right side of the head that was drug along the ground. Based on this, Dr. Perez was able to extrapolate that being dragged underneath the bus was the cause of death, not by being struck with it or any other object. I was told there was no evidence that Jordin was injured in any other fashion prior to the subdural hematoma and that there is no evidence she was struck by any object or vehicle. This includes the bus she was found under meaning the bus didn't strike her either. Any intoxication or overdose was not the cause of death, although it could be a contributing factor. I was told this means Jordin died by being dragged by the bus and not any other factor. No evidence or indication of how Jordin became to be under the bus in the first place was ever located.

Also while on scene, I spoke with Michelle Burleson and Bryan Burleson. Michelle and Bryan are Brandon Burleson parents and apparent "partners" in his business ventures. Inv. Murphy later obtained documentation that Michelle and her husband, Bryan Burleson were part owners of Skyline Party Bus. This includes the Skyline Party Bus Jordin was found under. She was also aware of Brandon's Leasing of the Cool River Ranch as a party destination for the party where Jordin was last seen. Michelle acted as Brandon's Agent on scene, gave us consent to search the property, and later the busses at their service yard.

Michelle called the bus driver, Gabriella Wilson, back to the scene where I spoke with her. I had her walk back through with me what she experienced right before the bus stopped working. Gabriella told me

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she came to the Cool River Ranch to pick up persons attending the party to go back to San Marcos. Gabriella described to me what I will paraphrase into what is on the map, attachment "A".

Gabriella told me she went through intersection "A" headed to intersection "B" via the shorter gravel road. Gabriella reported to me that she began to lose air pressure just after passing intersection "A", near a large felled tree, which can be seen on the map. Gabriella told me she called Brandon to let him know what was happening and she told me he said to park the bus out of the way. Gabriella told me she went past the stop, without stopping to pick anyone up, at the pavilion near the gravel road between intersections "A" and "B". Gabriella said she kept going until the brakes locked up and she could go no further. Gabriella confirmed the bus stopped at the same spot where it remained until the next day when Jordin was found underneath the bus.

Gabriella told me she was distracted with her malfunctioning bus, but that she was alert to driving and did not hit anyone or anything. Gabriella denied seeing anyone or anything go under her bus. Gabriella said she didn't hear or feel anything get caught up under the bus either. Gabriella told me she had no idea anyone was under the bus until she was told the next day.

Significantly, Gabriella told me she never went the route that passed intersection "C". I showed her the "groove" in the gravel along with the other evidence we recovered that showed she must have gone that route. Gabriella told me she didn't and if she did, she didn't remember it that way. Gabriella told me she was sure she went the shorter gravel route through intersection "B" and not even going through intersection "C". I explained that the only way that could be true is if there was other evidence of another vehicle hitting Jordin, and there was no evidence of that.

NOTE: a misremembered fact by a witness is not unusual. At the time of the incident, it was dark and Gabriella was distracted by a malfunctioning bus, angry people upset she didn't stop to pick anyone up and talking on the phone to her boss. With all that going on, it's very possible she simply doesn't remember that she went the longer route. Investigators relied on the evidence, such as the groove in the gravel, the dropped phone and the blood and clothing trail to establish the path the bus actually took.

Also on scene, on the larger loop from intersection "A" to intersection "C", Investigators located a broken vehicle mirror. At the time, we didn't know it had any involvement in Jordin's death so it was photographed and collected as possible evidence. There was a red stain on the pavement near the mirror. I used a blood quick check kit to test it. According to the test, it was not blood. I found no indication the mirror struck anyone.

NOTE: The owner of the vehicle from where this mirror came from was later identified and interviewed. He stated someone hit his mirror and knocked it off at the Cool River Ranch while it's owner was taking down equipment from the party. However, it was reported to have been knocked off after midnight and after Gabriella's bus broke down. This means it is indicated the incident in which this mirror was knocked off the car happened after Jordin was already known to be deceased. This makes its involvement in her death impossible, should the vehicle's owner's statement be accurate. The mirror

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and its parts have been sent to the DPS lab to confirm there is no trace DNA, clothing or paint transfer to corroborate the driver's statement. Also note there is no corresponding injury by a possible vehicle mirror documented in the preliminary autopsy report. Please see Investigator Murphy's report for further details.

After speaking with Gabriella, we went with Michelle and Bryan to go look at bus number 12, the bus involved in this incident. Mechanics on scene, one identified as Lionel Tolbert, attempted to educate us in why the bus brake system failed once pressure was lost in the tank. A demonstration was held, in which the bus brake system didn't fail as they predicted. We were told it can take more than a few seconds, even up to a minute, for the brake system to seize the movement of the bus.

We also looked up under the front of the bus. I saw a large bar under the front that would have stopped any person from going in under the front. I was told by Lionel that the bar was there for that reason, to keep items from being run over and damaging the underside of the bus. This observation was significant because the only way Jordin came to be under the bus was under the side, such as when it was turning. No such evidence such as dents, marks in the dirt and grime, clothing or body fluids were located to indicate where she went under the bus were located. No evidence as to how Jordin may have got under the bus in any other manner was located either. The only manner ruled out were from the front between the front tires or from the rear, since the autopsy showed she was dragged from forward of the rear axle where her body hung up on it, and not after it.

We then left the bus yard and returned to service. Please see investigator Murphy's report for further details.

11/1/2016: On this date, I went with Investigator Murphy to Texas State University. There we met with Texas State University Police Lieutenant Villalobos and Police Chief Banales. Since Jordin Taylor was a Texas State University student at a fraternity party, who are accountable to Texas State University as a Fraternity, We briefed them on the investigation to this point. Lieutenant Villalobos was able to provide information on the fraternities so we could have a point of contact with the administration. We also received information on the student who turned Jordin's phone into lost and found. We then left, leaving our cards as point of contact for the investigation.

NOTE: Investigator Murphy later interviewed the person who tuned in Jordin's other cell phone. He said he found it near the event stage where she was last seen by other people. In speaking with Investigator Murphy, it appears this person was just doing the right thing by turning the phone into lost and found and is not involved in her death. Please see Investigator Murphy's report for further details.

Later this date, Texas Highway Patrol Troopers from the Commercial Vehicle section called and told us they might be able to assist us in this case. They offered to meet at Skyline Party Bus and look over the bus to provide their expert opinions as to the conditions of the bus. We went to Skyline and met with the Troopers. Upon speaking with them and the Burleson's we agreed to give the bus a more thorough look over on a lift at the Texas State University bus yard equipped with such lifts. Michelle and Bryan consented to this.

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