

Overcoming Barriers

Strengthening Connections



Ensuring Opportunities

Planning One Community

MPO Staff Report

MPO Executive Board: April 17, 2019

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Discussion on Recent Pedestrian Fatalities.

Matter of the Recent Pedestrian Fatalities.

Background: Within 48 hours, two pedestrians died after being struck by vehicles. The MPO has set a target of 4 or fewer nonmotorized users serious injuries or fatalities for the year. This is an actual increase from the target set last year, which was at 3 or fewer. The number of serious injury crashes were slightly higher during this last 5 year rolling average; hence the higher number.

This number reflect the combined number of crashes involving serous injury or death. The MPO area had zero deaths for many of the last years. Our data covers between 2007 and 2017. The low target reflects then a number of serious injury crashes that have been occurring. In May, 2018, there was a pedestrian death on 32nd Ave S. and S. 20th St.

MPO staff has reached out to the GF City Traffic Engineer and to the GF Police Department. As of the writing of this staff report, the only information available is what has been covered by the local newspaper – The Herald. Provided below is the article.

Two pedestrians die after being struck by cars within days

By Tess Williams

A Grand Forks man died Monday evening when he was struck by a car on Gateway Drive.

Officers were called to the 4300 block of Gateway at 10:11 p.m. and found David R. Hagen lying in the road with a head injury, according to a press release release from the Grand Forks Police Department. First responders performed CPR on Hagen, 65, but he died on scene, the release said.

His death marks the second pedestrian fatality in as many days in Grand Forks.

Investigators said Hagen, of Grand Forks, was crossing the road southbound outside of the crosswalk when he was struck by a 1996 Honda Accord driven by 40-year-old Tyson Sewell. Sewell, of Grand Forks, was westbound, the release said.

Lt. Brett Johnson said there is a potential for charges to be filed against Sewell as the investigation continues. Johnson said it is not clear if drugs or alcohol contributed to the incident.

At 5 a.m. Sunday, police found 39-year-old Christina Lynn Melvin's body in the area of Interstate 29 and DeMers Avenue, a press release said. Investigators believe she was hit by a car that fled the scene. First responders attempted CPR, but Melvin, of Bedford, Penn., was declared dead while being transported to Altru Hospital, the release said.

Melvin was passing through Grand Forks on the Amtrak train, heading home to Pennsylvania from Williston, N.D., Johnson said. Investigators are unsure why she was walking or where she was going, he said.

Investigators said they believe the car that struck Melvin was eastbound on the 4500-4600 block of DeMers Avenue. Evidence is being analyzed to identify the make and model of the vehicle, but investigators say it likely has front-end damage.

Altru Ambulance, Grand Forks Fire Department, Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department, North Dakota Highway Patrol, Crash Reconstruction Team and the Regional UAS team assisted police with both investigations.

Johnson said police interviewed witnesses who saw Melvin walking and are using nearby surveillance videos to try to narrow down suspects.

Police urge anyone with information to contact them at (701) 787-8000, investigate@grandforksgov.com, through the department's Facebook page, the Tip411 smartphone app or by texting the word "GFPD" with the tip to 847411.

"They may think it's unimportant but it could end up being very important," Johnson said. "If they have information and can get that to us then we can sift through what's important and what's not. Beyond that, probably the most important thing is for the driver of that vehicle to come forward immediately."

Johnson said he can't remember any other pedestrian fatalities on consecutive days in Grand Forks during his 27 years with the department.

"It's definitely unusual and a good opportunity to remind people to be extremely safe around roadways, especially busy roadways, because it can be dangerous," he said.

Findings and Analysis:

- The MPO has a target of the number of serious injury and fatal crashes involving nonmotorized users.
- The MPO area has had many recent years without any fatal crashes involving nonmotorized users
- The City Engineer and Police Department have been contacted to discuss and additional information

Support Materials:

- None