

# Missing woman's family still hoping for information

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

It has been almost four months since Graciela Garcia went missing, but her children haven't given up sharing her picture far and wide, and they hope others in the community won't give up either.

The Hermiston hairstylist, age 49, was last seen on Nov. 8, 2019.

Her daughter, Gabby Bautista, said not knowing what happened has been extremely difficult.

"Her family is devastated through all of this," she said. "Her grandkids cry for her."

Bautista said they are grateful for people who have continued to share Garcia's photo and description on social media, and those who have offered sup-

port and prayers. However, it can also be frustrating when strangers commenting on posts demand answers on her children simply don't have.

"We didn't see her that night," she said. "We don't know what she was wearing."

She said when people ask what they can do to help, often there are no answers there, either, which can feel "overwhelming."

"People have wanted to do a search, but we don't think that would work, because we don't know where to search," she said. "She could be in another state."

Others have suggested holding a candlelight vigil, and Bautista said the family may do that sometime in the future.

Garcia's daughter, Anabel Coria, said they still have faith that Garcia is out there somewhere, and begged anyone with information that could help locate her to come forward.

"We're still keeping up our hopes that we will hear something soon about her, or the cops will have new leads, or someone will have seen something," she said. "If anyone knows anything, please share it, even if it's anonymously. We just want information."

Police continue to investigate the case. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston told reporters that Garcia's husband reported she had been seen at home on Nov. 8, and another person also corroborated that she was in Hermiston that day.

Since then, no one has

reported hearing from her, and her vehicle and possessions were left behind.

Edmiston said that while her disappearance was "incredibly suspicious," the investigation is ongoing and police are still following the evidence to determine whether foul play was involved.

Coria said she hoped detectives were doing everything they could to solve the case.

"This is someone's daughter, someone's mother, someone's sister," she said.

"She's a grandmother. She's important to people, and it's so hard she's missing without a clue."

Anyone with information regarding Graciela Garcia's case can call the Hermiston Police Department at 541-567-5519.



Photo contributed by Gabby Bautista

**Graciela Garcia, a hairstylist in Hermiston, was last seen on Nov. 8, 2019. Police continue to investigate the case. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said Garcia's husband reported she had been seen at home on Nov. 8, and another person also corroborated that she was in Hermiston that day.**

# Man found dead in house fire

Police say the 25-year-old man suffered a gunshot wound

HERMISTON HERALD

HERMISTON — A Hermiston man was found deceased with a gunshot wound inside a burning home on Monday night.

According to a news release from Umatilla County Fire District 1, the victim was a 25-year-old male with a single gunshot wound. A handgun was located inside the residence as well.

The victim's next of kin have been notified but his name has not been made public.

The fire district responded shortly after 8 p.m. Monday night to a report of a structure fire at Chateaubri Mobile Home Park, 1030 S.W. 11th St., in Hermiston.



Photo contributed by UCFD1

**Umatilla County Fire District 1 personnel fight a house fire in Hermiston on Monday night.**

According to the release, fire personnel arrived to find fire coming from the roof

and back of a single-wide manufactured home. Personnel quickly began to sup-

press the fire, and during a search of the home's interior located the deceased victim, and removed the body from the burning home.

They also rescued a dog, and protected the adjacent homes that stood a few feet away.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said that based on communications the victim had before his death and other evidence, the department's entire investigation is limited to the burned home and its lone resident.

"We feel confident we know what transpired in that mobile home with the lone individual," he said.

The fire district is working to investigate how the fire was started. Hermiston Police Department assisted on scene on Monday evening and is collecting evidence for a death investigation, which will likely include an autopsy.

# HART ridership continues to grow

By JADE MCDOWELL  
NEWS EDITOR

funds for state and federal grants.

Ridership for HART, Hermiston's public bus system, increased by about 1,120 passengers in 2019, according to the city.

In total, the free service gave 5,897 rides last year. More than 1,400 of the passengers rode during the morning and evening hours that were added partway through the year. The bus service had previously run 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. but now runs 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

HART began in 2017, offering free rides to any member of the public. It is managed by Kayak Public Transit, with funding provided by the city and leveraged as matching

"We're happy to see people taking advantage of the early morning and evening hours, and expect to see that increase as people get used to the expanded options," assistant city manager Mark Morgan said in a news release. "We want to be attuned to the public's needs and make sure everyone can get where they need to be, whether that's the grocery store, a job, or a medical appointment."

According to the release, the two most popular stops are Walmart (with 1,400 people getting on or off there) and the Hermiston Plaza where Safeway is located (1,350 riders).

# Tugboat recovery on Columbia River



Staff photos by Ben Lonergan

**At left, crews work to recover the Tug Nova, a 38-foot tugboat owned by HME Construction, from the Columbia River 10 miles north of Umatilla on Thursday afternoon.**

**The vessel sunk after being blown away from its mooring about 3/4 of a mile downriver on Monday. While the situation has been monitored by various environmental agencies since then, recovery operations kicked off around 8 a.m. and lasted much of the day Thursday before the vessel was loaded into a barge for shipment to Vancouver, Wash.**

**Above, an additional absorbent boom is loaded into boats to control oil in the water. While there was oil visible on the surface of the water, the tugboat's 750-gallon diesel fuel tank remained intact.**

## Comments Welcome on Planned Statewide Transportation Projects



Now is the time to comment on the list of upcoming highway projects that help make up the **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program**, also known as the **STIP**. The STIP is ODOT's to-do list for capital improvements for state and federally funded highway projects. The 2021-2024 draft list is developed through the combined efforts of our staff working closely with local city, county, tribal, and other agency partners to prioritize the needs of the transportation system for all users.

The Oregon Transportation Commission is accepting public comments on the proposed transportation projects at various public meetings and, for the first time, through an online open house.

You have **three ways to participate** in the Draft 2021-2024 STIP review process for ODOT Region 5. The Region 5 area includes Umatilla, Morrow, Union, Wallowa, Baker, Malheur, Grant and Harney counties, plus the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Burns Paiute Tribe.

1. **View the information and provide your comments via the online open house at:** <http://openhouse.oregondot.org/openhouse/oregon-draft-stip>. The online open house lists key projects around the state, but you can use the map tool to zero in on the ones that interest you the most. There's also a project list that you can sort by county. The public commenting period runs from now through Friday, April 10, so log in anytime between now and then.
2. **Attend the STIP public outreach meeting in John Day in person.**  
When: **March 10, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.** Pacific Time,  
Where: **Oregon Department of Forestry, 415 Patterson Bridge Rd., John Day, Oregon.**  
This STIP public meeting is part of our North East and South East Area Commission on Transportation meeting. The STIP overview begins at 11:30 a.m., however, you are welcome to attend the full Area Commission Meeting that starts at 10 a.m.
3. **Connect to the March 10 meeting remotely** via internet based online meeting system.

By connecting to the March 10 meeting remotely you'll see and hear the presentation, and be able to ask questions and provide comments from the comfort of your home or office.  
**Details about how to connect to the March 10 meeting via the internet will be posted by March 5 at <https://tinyurl.com/STIP-mtg>.**

Why should you provide your comments regarding the Draft 2021-2024 STIP? Simple, your feedback helps us answer important questions such as:

- Will a project impact something that you think we should know about?
- What projects do you support?
- Are there projects that concern you? What are those concerns?

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities and is open to the public. Meeting information can be made available in alternate formats, such as braille upon request. If you need a special accommodation, or you would like more information about this meeting, or the online open house, contact Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg at **541-963-1330**, or via statewide relay 711, email: [thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us](mailto:thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us). Please make alternate format or special accommodation request 48 hours prior to meeting.

Name & Phone Number

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