

The Free Press, Mankato, MN

April 13, 2012

Details remain sealed about Highway 14 double fatal in July

By Dan Nienaber

Free Press Staff Writer

NORTH MANKATO — It could be awhile before the State Patrol releases details about a Highway 14 crash in July that killed two motorcyclists and seriously injured two others traveling in a car.

The reports about the crash haven't been made public yet because a teenage boy involved in the crash is facing a misdemeanor charge or charges that haven't been resolved in Nicollet County District Court.

County Attorney Michelle Zehnder Fischer said it could be another month before the case is resolved. She would not say what charge or charges the teen is facing.

Initial reports about the July 20 crash said the teen was driving a pickup truck east on Highway 14 just west of North Mankato when he fell asleep and drifted over the center line. His pickup struck two westbound motorcycles and a westbound car.

The motorcyclists, 49-year-old Lars Albrecht of Rio Rancho, N.M., and 61-year-old Robert Austin of Canby, Ore., were killed as a result of the crash.

The driver of the car, 68-year-old William Gray, and his passenger, 30-year-old Adam Gray, were seriously injured.

The reports resulting from the investigation of the crash have been returned to the State Patrol by Zehnder Fischer. The patrol was prepared to make the reports public earlier this week until the investigators learned the case hasn't been resolved, said Sgt. Jacalyn Sticha.

If the driver had been charged with a felony-level crime, the charges against him and the allegations supporting the charges would have become public shortly after they were filed. Misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor charges filed in juvenile court are not public.

Sticha said, even after the court case is resolved, the driver's name will likely be redacted from the crash reports. If the driver hadn't faced criminal charges, his name would have been public when the crash happened. Sticha said the boy's name will not be made public even if he is found not guilty.

Although Zehnder Fischer wouldn't reveal the charge or charges against the boy, she said the crash does support a push to make Highway 14 four lanes between North Mankato and New Ulm.

"Because of the number of fatalities we've seen, the need to look at the safety on this road is necessary," she said.