

The State Patrol has identified the man who died in that horrific crash late yesterday afternoon on US 421. The patrol reports that 61-year-old Ricardo Tscherpel, front passenger in the Jeep that was struck head-on, died at the scene in that 4:44pm collision. Witnesses said a Toyota Highlander ran the red light at 421 and Old 421, passing traffic at a high rate of speed...the Toyota then crossed into the north-bound lanes about a half mile east, and slammed head-on into a blue Jeep Patriot. Trooper Townsend of the State Patrol said that the driver of the Toyota was 79-year old Margaret Stechman of Boone, and that she was rushed by Watauga Medics to Watauga Medical Center, then transferred to Wake Forest Baptist medical center. Her vehicle continued on after slamming into the blue SUV, crashed into and over the guard rail, where it came to rest as a crumpled pile. WINGS Air Rescue flew to the scene and landed in the middle of US 421 at the North Pine Run Road intersection, and flew the second driver, Steven Havner, of Boone, to the Johnson City Medical Center. Deep Gap Fire/First Responders, Watauga Medics, Watauga Rescue, and Boone Fire joined the State Patrol on the scene, closing off US 421 while dealing with the destruction, death, and injuries, then the investigation, and it was after 8 last night that the highway reopened to traffic. Townsend said the crash is still under investigation.

There is compelling audio of witness accounts on High Country Radio News