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MEDIA RELEASE

**WOMAN CHARGED IN INVER GROVE HEIGHTS CRASH
THAT KILLED A PEDESTRIAN**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that **Breyona Sadi Cotton**, age 30 of Inver Grove Heights, has been charged* by summons with one count each of Leaving the Scene of a Collision Resulting in Death and Failure to Notify Police of a Collision Resulting in Death (both felonies), in connection with a crash that took place on 80th Street near the intersection of Blaine Avenue in Inver Grove Heights on January 5, 2019, that caused the death of 55-year-old Haimanot Gezahegne Gebremedhin.

A summary of the allegations contained in the criminal complaint is set forth below:

On January 5, 2019 at approximately 5:40 p.m., a vehicle stopped to report to an Inver Grove Heights (IGH) police officer on routine radar patrol that they had just observed what appeared to be a deceased woman lying in the road near the intersection of 80th Street and Blaine Avenue. Officers were immediately dispatched to this location. They found an unconscious woman lying on the north side of 80th Street who appeared to have been struck by a motor vehicle. Lifesaving efforts were unsuccessful and the woman, later identified as Haimanot Gezahegne Gebremedhin, was pronounced dead at the scene.

On January 6, Breyona Cotton came to the Inver Grove Heights Police Department with her attorney to report that she had information pertaining to the crash that killed the victim. Ms. Cotton's attorney told police that she had learned from friends who saw news coverage of the incident that she had struck a person the night before. She told police that after she left a nearby McDonald's drive-thru, she turned west onto 80th Street she saw two police cars in a high school parking lot, checked her speed and was traveling 40 miles per hour. She said she had a green light when approaching Blaine Avenue at approximately 5:40 p.m., when "out of nowhere" she heard a collision and thought she had struck a deer. After the collision, she said she turned right onto Blaine Avenue and stopped, but didn't see or hear anything and did not exit her vehicle, as she believed she hit a deer. She then drove home.

The accident reconstruction report by the Minnesota State Patrol concluded that the victim's legs struck the front bumper of Cotton's car, forcing her entire body onto the hood and her head struck the lower portion of the windshield. The report concluded that the victim should have been visible to the driver of the vehicle that struck her and that any reasonable investigation into the collision would have revealed the victim's body.

A copy of the criminal complaint can be found at [Criminal Complaint Search](#). If in custody, a mug shot can be viewed at [Inmate Search](#). Cotton's first court appearance has been set for October 7, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in Hastings.

Backstrom commented: "*Any driver who strikes an object has an obligation to reasonably investigate what was struck and remain at the scene when the collision results in injury to or the death of a person.*" Backstrom extended his sympathy to the family and friends of Haimanot Gezahegne Gebremedhin.

Backstrom thanked the Inver Grove Heights Police Department and the Minnesota State Patrol for their thorough investigation of this crash.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4438.

*Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.