

Westport fatal Hit and Run driver placed in custody

The 54-year-old Fall River man accused of a fatal hit-and-run incident on Old Bedford Road in Westport earlier this month has turned himself in to authorities at the Westport Police Station, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Gerardo Lugo, 54, of Fall River, is charged with leaving the scene-death resulting, negligent operation of a motor vehicle, driving with a suspended license and trafficking heroin in excess of 100 grams.

The suspect vehicle, a grey BMW, was located and seized last week in Fall River after an anonymous tip was received. During a subsequent execution of a search warrant at the defendant's Cherry Street apartment last week, investigators found the keys to the BMW and a plastic bag containing just under 200 grams of suspected heroin.

After this office released the defendant's identity to the media yesterday and listing him on the Bristol County Most Wanted Fugitives List, the defendant chose today to turn himself over to authorities. He will be arraigned tomorrow morning in Fall River District Court.

"I would like to thank the public and the media for their assistance in solving this case," District Attorney Quinn said. "The publicity in this case clearly resulted in the defendant turning himself in today."

Westport Police received a 911 call at 8:15 pm on May 7 to report a crash and a severely injured woman in the area of 288 Old Bedford Road. When first responders arrived, they located the victim, Stephanie Tripp, 30, of Fall River, face down in the breakdown lane suffering from major injuries. The victim

was rushed to Rhode Island Hospital, where she remained in critical condition until her death on May 16.

A preliminary investigation has revealed the victim was walking along the side of the roadway when she was struck by a BMW. The male operator of the vehicle exited the car momentarily. A witness told the driver to stay on scene, but as the witness was providing aid to the victim, the driver sped off in an easterly direction on Old Bedford Road. Another witness attempted to follow the suspect's vehicle, which, according to the witness, was travelling at high rates of speed and passing vehicles by passing into the opposite travel lane. The witness lost the suspect's vehicle in the area of Faunce Corner Road in Dartmouth.