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PRESS RELEASE

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Oroville Vehicular Manslaughter 100 MPH Suspect Held to Answer

An Oroville man previously charged with vehicular manslaughter for broadsiding another car at 100 mph had his preliminary hearing today in Butte County Superior Court.

At the end of the hearing, a local judge found sufficient evidence to hold **Joseph Robert Hendrix, 58, of Oroville**, to answer for a jury trial on a charge of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said evidence presented at today's hearing showed Hendrix was driving his 2018 Dodge Challenger west on Oro Dam Boulevard on the afternoon of February 16, 2022, when he ran into the driver's side of a 2011 Chevrolet sedan driven by 52-year-old Maria Barajas-Medina, of Oroville. Barajas-Medina was turning east onto Oro Dam Boulevard from 10th Street. An examination of Hendrix's Challenger's "black box" showed Hendrix was traveling at 103 mph just before he applied his brakes and then slammed into Barajas-Medina's driver's door.

Barajas-Medina was pronounced dead at the scene of the collision.

Ramsey said an examination of Hendrix's blood taken by a search warrant shortly after the collision showed an extremely high level of methamphetamine. A female passenger in Hendrix's car and Hendrix survived the collision with minimal injuries.

The passenger testified at the preliminary hearing today that as Hendrix came off the Oro Dam Boulevard bridge over the Feather River headed west, he exclaimed he believed he saw police behind him and suddenly sped up to avoid them. There were no officers in the area at the time, Ramsey said, noting that Hendrix was then on parole.

Ramsey said Hendrix was also charged with a special allegation that he has suffered two prior violent sexual assault "strike" convictions, exposing him to a range of up to possibly 20 years to life in prison.

Hendrix will next be in court on May 24, 2023, for the setting of his jury trial. He remains in Butte County Jail without bail after the District Attorney's Office filed a "no bail" motion to keep him in custody given his risk to public safety.



Joseph Robert Hendrix