

● Accident

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

stable condition, and Zachary was in critical and stable condition Tuesday. Both are continuing to improve, said Jo Ann Klooz, spokeswoman for the hospital.

There were conflicting reports on whether the vehicle stopped before crossing the tracks.

Witnesses said the car slowed before crossing. The train conductor told police the vehicle stopped but was on the tracks partially and then continued forward in front of the train, according to police reports.

Investigators plan to speak with Tina and Ted Alexander again but are waiting until their medical conditions improve, Werden said.

Tina Alexander was in and out of consciousness Sunday

when she was interviewed, and investigators hope to get a more complete statement soon.

Ted Alexander, who was interviewed shortly after the accident, told police he could not remember the accident.

The sheriff's office is also trying to determine who were wearing seat belts.

After the vehicle was struck on the passenger side, it landed on the driver side in a ditch near the tracks.

Witnesses have said one of the boys was lying in the back of the vehicle after the accident and that Tina Alexander was on top of Ted Alexander.

Investigators do not believe alcohol was a factor in the accident. Police are still waiting on results of blood tests, which are typically conducted after fatal accidents.

The train conductor tested negative for alcohol. Police are waiting on results from Ted Alexander.

RAILROAD CROSSINGS AT A GLANCE

Find a look at several southside railroad crossings below, including how many cars and trains pass each crossing every day and what safety features each uses. For a complete list of Johnson County crossings, visit thejournalnet.com.

Street name	Average trains per day	Average cars per day	Cross arms	Pavement markings	Warning signs	Lights	Bells
County Road 144 (Bargersville)	4	4,735			✓		
Fairview Road (Center Grove area)	4	5					
Olive Branch Road (Center Grove area)	4	3,200			✓		
Peterman Road (Center Grove area)	4	3,243	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Smith Valley Road (Center Grove area)	4	10,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Smoky Row Road (Center Grove area)	4	1,105		✓	✓		
Stones Crossing Road (Center Grove area)	4	6,200		✓	✓		
Whiteland Road (Center Grove area)	4	1,400		✓	✓		
Center Cross Street (Edinburgh)	8	4,150	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
U.S. 31 (near Edinburgh)	10	5,700		✓	✓	✓	✓
U.S. 31 (near Edinburgh)	2	10,120	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commerce Drive (Franklin)	4	700	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hurricane Street (Franklin)	10	800					
Jefferson Street (Franklin)	8	10,490	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yandes Street (Franklin)	10	250			✓		
East Main Street (Greenwood)	6	14,200		✓	✓	✓	
North Meridian Street (Greenwood)	8	6,600		✓	✓	✓	✓
Smith Valley Road (Greenwood)	8	5					
Worthsville Road (near Greenwood)	8	2,750	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Main Street (Whiteland)	8	9,310			✓	✓	

SOURCE: Federal Railroad Administration

● Warning

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

Stones Crossing Road, where the accident occurred, should be a priority, since teens headed to and from Center Grove High School cross the tracks every day, according to residents.



J. FINDLEY

A county commissioner is calling for gates that would stop traffic and flashing lights where the Indiana Railroad Co. railroad crosses the road, and Sheriff Terry McLaughlin wrote a letter to state transportation officials and the railroad company asking for a review of the warning devices at the crossing.



T. FINDLEY

At least three other railroad crossings in the Center Grove area require more warning signals, commissioner Mitch Ripley said. Frequent use and poor visibility make stop signs inadequate as protection at those crossings, Ripley said.

The county must act swiftly to correct dangerous crossings, he said.

"It's the most highly populated area in the county, and they just have stop signs," he said. "It's inexcusable."

Ripley, who attends Mount Pleasant Christian Church with the parents of the boys, said he nearly collided with a train at the Stones Crossing Road railroad crossing six months ago at sunset.

He inched toward a passing train after coming to stop at the stop sign.

It's impossible to see trains coming at that crossing if drivers are facing the sun, he said. He added that many Center Grove High School students pass the

"The need is different than what it was 15 to 20 years ago. You don't want to waste money, but this is needed."

Forrest Chambers

Former member of White River Township Advisory Board on how a railroad crossing where two children were killed is used more now and needs to be made safer

railroad crossing daily, and it's been an ongoing safety issue.

The commissioners support more warning signals, provided a number of railroad crossings receive them, he said.

Area residents hope the accident will help bring safety improvements to the railroad crossings.

"If it takes something like this happening to know there needs to be more than a stop sign at a railroad crossing, maybe that's what you need," said Aaron Hommell, who lives about a half-mile away from the crossing and witnessed the accident.

People who saw the wreck said the accident was horrifying and burned an image into their minds.

Hommell held the hand of Tina Alexander, a passenger in the vehicle, after the accident. He told her to stay calm and reminded her to breathe. There was little else he could do to help.

"It's something you're not going to forget," said Hommell, a senior at Roncalli High School.

After seeing the train strike the vehicle and fling it only feet from his vehicle, Larry Buck had trouble sleeping for days.

"Every time I shut my eyes, I could still see it," said Buck, of Franklin.

Hommell and Buck agree with neighbors and members of the community who believe the accident could have been prevented if the crossing, which is marked with stop signs, had flashing lights or cross arms.

Now, people from all over the area are contacting local officials and trying to figure out what to do next.

Center Grove area resident Charles Miller started calling the state when he and his family moved into a home near the tracks in November.

He thought the crossing was dangerous and worried about his children, ages 9, 12 and 15, getting into an accident.

"I'm going to have people driving down that road for many, many years to come, and something needs to be done," Miller said.

But state officials told him there was little money available to upgrade railroads, and Stones Crossing Road was about 1,000 on a list of more than 6,000 crossings to be fixed.

Since the accident, Miller's renewed his efforts and is contacting his county commissioners, he said.

"I'm hoping someone will find the money somewhere. It just seems silly we can't get lights up there," he said.

Several neighbors said they thought an accident was possible for years and now blame themselves for never speaking up about their concern.

"I'm just so sorry it took a fatality before we all spoke out," said Melissa Ottney, who lives near the crossing.

Ray Johnson, who lives in the Center Grove area, blames himself for not calling local officials, the newspaper or anyone else who could have done something to prevent the accident.

"It takes a tragedy like this to get anyone's attention," he said.

Whatever the cost, the money needs to be spent so that the road will be safe, said Forrest Chambers, a former member of the White River Township Advisory Board who lives near the crossing.

The crossing doesn't serve the same number of people as it used to, when the area was mainly farmland, he said.

"The need is different than what it was 15 to 20 years ago. You don't want to waste money, but this is needed," Chambers said.

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