

Highway 14 Partnership seeks federal funding

By FAITH KAMMERDIENER
Press staff writer

OWATONNA — The Highway 14 Partnership is going to make a bid for federal funding in an effort to accelerate the expansion of Highway 14 from Rochester to Mankato.

The proposal would ask for \$32 million in Federal Demonstration Funds for a section of highway found between Eagle Lake and Owatonna.

Mankato city manager Pat Hentges unveiled the plan Friday at a Highway 14 Partnership meeting Friday at Owatonna's Holiday Inn.

The Highway 14 Partnership is a nonprofit group attempting to keep the expansion project in front of Minnesota state law makers.

The stretch of highway has experienced 27 fatalities, which is much higher than the state average for other similar highways. Hentges contends that should be an eye-catcher in congress especially since the highway leads to Rochester, home of one of the best

medical clinics in the world - the Mayo Clinic.

Hentges also pointed out other features making Highway 14 a prime candidate for federal funding.

Those are:
• The project has the largest group support of any project in Minnesota. The Highway 14 Partnership has 48 affiliates and 25 local government members.

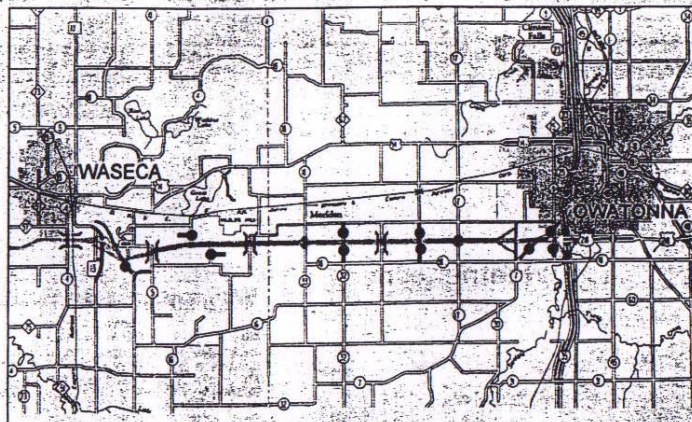
• Highway 14 has been identified, for the second consecutive year, as the worst non-metro highway in Minnesota.

• Highway 14 is a critical roadway across southern Minnesota.

• By utilizing innovative construction/design techniques and advance funding, the project is expected to save millions of taxpayers' dollars.

Traditionally, the Minnesota Department of Transportation hasn't used "demo" money for highway projects.

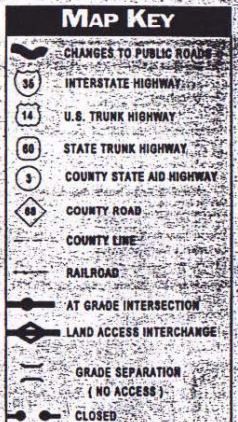
District 7 Engineer John Huseby said MnDOT has in the past objected to using "demo"



SEGMENT C
Distance: 7.5 miles
Cost Estimate - Present Worth (2001):
Constructors: \$31 million
Right-of-Way \$2.2 million

SEGMENT D (District 6)
Distance: 10.5 miles
Cost Estimate - Present Worth (2001):
Constructors: \$40 million
Right-of-Way \$3.5 million

Total Construction Cost
Present Worth (2001 Dollars):
= \$125 million
Right-of-Way
= \$9.6 million



Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities is also lobbying for \$300 million to be targeted toward at-risk highways during the 2001 legislature.

The Highway 14 Partnership also talked about allocating local government funding toward the project. However, details of how that money would be allocated and whether MnDOT would have to pay it back haven't been worked out. The Partnership decided not to take a position on the issue.

money because it has felt the funding was "pork" money gained by special interest groups lobbying congress.

He said MnDOT takes no position on the Highway 14 Partnership's quest to get some of that money for the highway.

MnDOT is currently finding a use for \$13 million allocated by the Minnesota Legislature in May toward Highway 14. The funding is part of its inter regional corridor program. Right-of-way from Waseca to Mankato will be purchased using \$4 million of the

funds. The remaining \$9 million is being used in expanding Highway 14 between Steele County Road 45 and Highway 218 from two to four lanes. The funding has a 2003 deadline.

Highway 14 Partnership lobbying Corey Elmers said the

Owatonna 11/13/01