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Bipartisan Coalition Introduces Legislation to Finish Highway 14

Bills in House and Senate respond to MnDOT 20-year delay in project's completion.

Legislation has been introduced in the State Legislature to complete the four-lane expansion of Highway 14 from New Ulm to Rochester, increasing safety along a dangerous roadway in southern Minnesota and helping boost economic development in the region. The legislation would force the state to recognize that Highway 14 must be finished by mandating that two unfinished projects be completed in a timely manner.

“Southern Minnesota residents who have to drive Highway 14 everyday - whether it is to school, to work, to visit family, or to the Mayo Clinic - fear this highway. They avoid it, if possible,” said Gary Zellmer, North Mankato Mayor and Highway 14 Partnership President. “Two-more decades of delay in completing this project is outrageous and unacceptable. The state needs a push, and this bill gives it to them.”

The legislation (HF 2427 / SF 2794) would mandate that two unfinished four-lane expansion segments along Highway 14, including New Ulm to North Mankato and Owatonna to Dodge Center, be added to the next update of the State Transportation Improvement Program, or STIP. Updated annually, the STIP is MnDOT's four-year plan for funding transportation projects. Adding the projects to the STIP ensures MnDOT will begin work on the segments in the next four years, ensuring the projects will be completed in the short- rather than long-term.

The two bills have significant bipartisan support, with legislators across the corridor committed to the bill as co-authors. This includes Sen. Kathy Sheran (DFL – Mankato), Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL – St. Peter), Sen. Mike Parry (R – Waseca), Rep. Randy Demmer (R – Hayfield), Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R – New Ulm), Rep. Kory Kath (DFL – Owatonna), Sen. Dave Senjem (R – Rochester), Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL – Mankato), Sen. Julie Rosen (R – Fairmont), Rep. Tony Cornish (R – Good Thunder), and Rep. Patti Fritz (DFL – Faribault).

“The level of bipartisan support we've achieved for this bill across the corridor is overwhelming,” said Mayor Zellmer. “Our legislators know their constituents will no longer wait for MnDOT to act alone. They know MnDOT's 20-year highway plan is simply unacceptable.”

Last August, MnDOT released its 20-year Highway Investment Plan, designed to provide the Department and the state with guidance on MnDOT's funding plans and priorities over the next 20 years. Despite growing anxiety about the safety of these roads, the two Highway 14 projects are designated for completion only in the distant future, if at all. As a result, southern Minnesota residents must continue to wait decades for the state to fix this dangerous highway.

The U.S. Highway 14 Partnership is a public-private advocacy organization supporting the four-lane expansion of Trunk Highway 14 in southern Minnesota between New Ulm and Rochester. Formed in 1998, the Highway 14 Partnership lobbies at both the state and federal levels of government.

For more information, please contact J.D. Burton at 651-225-8840 or visit the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership website at www.ushighway14.com.

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