

Gov. nixes Hwy. 14 studies through bill veto

Wendy Reuer

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By WENDY REUER

wreuer@owatonna.com

ST. PAUL — A bill that would have required the Minnesota Department of Transportation to finish Environmental Impact States along Highway 14 in southern Minnesota — one from Owatonna to Dodge Center, a second from New Ulm to North Mankato — was vetoed Wednesday by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

“For me, I regret the fact that he chose to do that because those two EIS’s is what is preventing those projects from being shovel ready,” said Rep. Kory Kath, DFL-Owatonna.

Kath co-authored the provision in the Minnesota House.

“Citizens of our district have said this is priority No. 1 and I would have to question why the governor would do this,” Kath said Wednesday.

The EIS deadlines were a provision in a state comprehensive transportation and transit policy bill (HF 928) which Pawlenty vetoed.



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The final version of the Highway 14 provision as passed by the Legislature required the New Ulm to North Mankato segment be completed by the end of 2010, and the Owatonna to Dodge Center segment completed by the end of May 2010. Any delays in the timelines would trigger monthly public reporting requirements by MnDOT on the status of the environmental impact statements.

Notes included with Pawlenty’s veto decisions made no mention of why the governor rejected the EIS provision.

Messages left with Pawlenty’s office were not returned.

“I’m very saddened that the governor vetoed a bill that would have moved Highway 14 closer to completion,” said North

Mankato Mayor and Highway 14 President Gary Zellmer in a prepared statement. “The Legislature spoke clearly that we must fix Highway 14 now; it’s disappointing that their voice was vetoed.”

Kath said he will now turn his focus on working directly with MnDOT District Six and Seven representatives to continue work on the EIS projects.

Earlier this month U.S. Rep. Tim Walz announced he would seek money for Highway 14 at the federal level through the Surface Transportation Bill. He is asking for \$103.1 million in funding for Highway 14, including \$35 million in funding for the Owatonna to Dodge Center Highway 14 section.

Walz said the Highway 14 project probably won't get all of the funds he is proposing but his request would help it remain on the front burner.

Wendy Reuer can be reached at 444-1565.