

# The Journal

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## Highway 14 gets federal funds

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POSTED: July 5, 2008

WASECA - Standing just off U.S. Highway 14 right-of-way in Maplewood Park Thursday, First District Congressman Tim Walz announced the Highway 14 expansion would be getting \$766,000 in federal money to help move the project along.

"I'm here today to talk about the Department of Transportation grant funding that is going to provide about \$766,000 for two major sections of this road, the one from North Mankato to New Ulm, and the section we're standing on here, \$451,000 that will provide the ability to move the utilities in preparation for the four-lane expansion," Walz said.

In lauding the work that the Highway 14 Partnership and its president, North Mankato Mayor Gary Zellmer, had done in getting this grant funding, Walz also commended the ground work supplied by New Ulm Mayor Joel Albrecht who wasn't in attendance for the day's event.

"About 80 percent of our largest employers use this highway to move goods and employees. There's not a single one of us, and Mayor Zellmer will unfortunately talk about, I think, the death of his brother-in-law, who doesn't at least know someone who has died or been injured on this road," Walz said.

"This is not an earmark. This is a grant project. It is a reflection, I think, of the Department of Transportation's belief and commitment in seeing now that the state of Minnesota has put itself in position to be able to match the federal dollars in terms of finishing this project," he continued.

"That MnDOT here in Minnesota has made an absolute commitment to it. That this is a priority. It's staying on the priority list, and it needs to be completed."

Later, in taking questions, Walz said that, in light of the great amount of attention being paid to bridge reconstruction, he doesn't doubt the state will stay the course in taking care of transportation needs.

However, when asked if Congress will stay the course, he responded, "That's a good question. I'm really not sure it will so that's why we in Congress and groups like the Partnership will have to keep these projects in the forefront."

"This will be like the kickoff for us. We were expecting this money to be coming. We were just waiting for it to be officially designated. It's designated for right-of-way purchase on that three-mile stretch coming out of North Mankato. So, it's the beginning of the real progress and we're going to push it then," Zellmer said.

"We're negotiating with the Highway Department right now with an agreement that Nicollet County and North Mankato will start acquiring right-of-way, and we can add this money to it so that when the funding for construction is available then we will be ready to go. We don't have to worry about the right-of-way."

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