

# The Free Press, Mankato, MN

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## Our View: Safety push needed on Highway 14

### The Free Press

— The reputation of Highway 14 as one of the most dangerous in the state is slowly but surely being modified and hopefully dismantled.

A newly commissioned safety audit of the highway by MnDOT may provide highway planners with more information to make short-term safety improvements. But it never hurts to have more safety information for eventually making a case for expanding the roadway to four lanes between Mankato and New Ulm.

Independent safety auditors heard from highway stakeholders Wednesday as part of a plan to assess and improve the highway's safety. The problems are not new. Interests representing trucking, motorists and government told the auditors that the highway is one of the most dangerous in the state.

They were armed with not only anecdotes of losing friends in accidents, but also experiences of driving the highway in fear of their life.

The issue is not new, but this audit seems to be another good "action step" to improving the highway's safety. The Free Press published in September 2010 a three-day series that revealed the fatality rate on Highway 14 was double the state average and that there had been more than 25 fatalities on the roadway from Waseca to New Ulm in the last decade.

The report and constant lobbying from local governments prompted MnDOT to approve a four-lane expansion project on the highway for about two miles west of North Mankato. Unfortunately, before the safety record had been detailed, expansion of the roadway was not planned for at least 20 years.

The Free Press report also detailed several other rural roads in Minnesota that had horrendous safety records. Focusing on safety of roads and not just how much traffic they carry is a good way to prioritize road funding.

So, any attention Highway 14 safety can get, whether short-term or long-term, is welcome.

It would be time well spent for MnDOT to continually update safety information on Highway 14 to speed up the funding for a needed four-lane expansion from North Mankato to New Ulm.