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# St. Paul needs to recognize Hwy. 14 impact

By *OPP Editorial*

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Nothing else has seemed to spur the good folks in St. Paul — and specifically those with the Minnesota Department of Transportation — so maybe, just maybe, some good old-fashioned business talk will sway the powers that be.

We're not holding our breath.

Still, it was good to hear from members of the business community in and around Owatonna on Friday when they came together to voice their support for the expansion of Highway 14, looking to St. Paul for the money to complete the expansion of sections of the highway from two lane to four lane. Some of the business people noted that they had drivers, lots of drivers, out on Highway 14, many of them making the trek from here in Owatonna to Rochester and back, and that they were concerned about the safety of their drivers, especially on that stretch from here to Dodge Center.

We can't blame them. Anyone who has traveled that two-lane stretch knows that it's not the safest roadway.

Yet, we doubt that the argument will sway those who hold the purse strings. Though you would think folks in St. Paul would want to find ways of keeping motorists safe, the argument about the safety concerns on Highway 14 have been made time and again, but rather than convincing anyone, the dates for the expansion keep getting pushed back more and more, as if no one in St. Paul is really concerned about the safety of Minnesota motorists.

Well, if that doesn't work, perhaps what will work are the words of other business people on Friday who noted how the expansion may affect business. One local company — Ag Power Enterprises — noted that the decision to build where it is building had much to do with the soon-to-be-completed expansion of Highway 14 between Owatonna and Waseca. The access to the new stretch of Highway 14 was so important that when the company decided to build, it built with that highway in mind.

The economic impact that Highway 14 has had and will continue to have on this region cannot be over-emphasized. And it's time that people in St. Paul wake up to the fact that not all business in Minnesota happens in the Twin Cities and therefore not all funding for roads needs to be in the Cities.

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