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Highway 14 fatal accident rate increases

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MANKATO — Highway 14 between North Mankato and New Ulm is even more dangerous than previously reported, according to a safety audit released by the Minnesota Department of Transportation this afternoon.

Both crashes that cause deaths and those limited to serious injuries occur at three times the rate of comparable Minnesota two-lane highways, the report found. A high-level MnDOT official said the data boosts the chances that safety improvements will be approved in coming years but probably not the four-lane expressway long sought by local leaders.

The safety audit also laid out some of the options for lower-cost improvements that could be implemented more quickly and for less money than an expressway. Focused on the section between North Mankato and Nicollet, the options include creating buffer zones between the two directions of traffic and possibly installing a barrier between the competing lanes.