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« Truth in love about marriage... Highway 14 has to be a prior...»

Highway 14 illogic

April 19, 2012
The Journal

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Sometimes it is hard to fathom the inner workings of the bureaucratic brain. Presented with facts and situations that call for a certain course of action, the bureaucratic brain often comes up with a different course of action that does not address the need at hand, but fits more comfortably with the need of the bureaucracy.

Such is the case with Highway 14 between Mankato and New Ulm. On Tuesday, Minnesota Department of Transportation bureaucrats presented the results of an independent safety study that MnDOT had commissioned on Highway 14. The results of the study not only confirmed local concerns that the stretch of highway is deadly, but showed it is even more deadly than earlier studies had shown.

The study showed that the rate of crashes along the highway is about average for two-lane highways in the state, but that the rate of fatal crashes is three times the state average.

So what do the MnDOT bureaucrats think should be done to save lives? Should MnDOT make this a priority and funnel money toward the ultimate solution of expanding the highway to four lanes, which everyone agrees will make the highway safer?

No, that would be very expensive, and MnDOT's need to spread its limited budget over as wide an area and as many projects as possible trumps the need of travelers on Highway 14 to have a safer road.

So MnDOT experts proposed on Tuesday some alternative actions to take, like narrowing the shoulders and widening the buffer strip along the highway between Mankato and Nicollet, or making the highway a three lane road, two lanes heading east and one lane

for westbound. East and west would take turns having two lanes every mile or so, so the faster drivers could pass the pokier ones. This apparently would mean that every mile or so the two lane travelers would have to merge into one lane. We don't have a degree in highway engineering, but this doesn't sound too safe.

It's time for area residents to start raising enough noise with legislators to force the bureaucrats to do the right thing.

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