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# Rep. Morrow pushes hard to create movement on Hwy. 14

By Josh Moniz

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Staff Writer , The Journal

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ST. PAUL - Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter) has been active in the last two days working to create movement on the notorious Highway 14, after the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) shot down prospects of a four-lane expansion earlier this month.

Morrow introduced a symbolic amendment to the Omnibus Transportation Policy Bill on Thursday night that would force action by MnDOT. The amendment required that MnDOT identify portions of undivided highways with high-danger statistics essentially the same as Hwy. 14 and develop plans to make them divided highways. The plans would have to be placed on the state transportation improvement plans within five years and the plans couldn't be delayed except in extremely unusual situations approved by legislators on the related committees.

Morrow gave a speech while introducing the amendment, calling Hwy. 14 the deadliest road in Minnesota and saying MnDOT decision to move away from a four lane expansion was throwing away 60 years of promised improvement.

"More people have died on Hwy. 14 in the last decade than in the 35W bridge collapse. I've had it," said Morrow. "We're done being polite."

After his speech, Morrow withdrew the amendment. He explained that it was a symbolic gesture since the MnDOT's recent Road Safety Audit of Hwy. 14 was presented too late to draft a bill through the proper committee process.

"My purpose [with the amendment] was to cast a spotlight on the serious Hwy. 14 issue and emphasize we need to address safety as the primary concern when the state develops road projects," said Morrow.

The next morning on Friday, Morrow joined Sen. Kathy Sheran (DFL-Mankato) in a meeting with Gov. Mark Dayton and MnDOT Commissioner Tom Sorel about the Hwy. 14 safety audit.

Morrow said he is refraining from detailing the meeting to give MnDOT time to react. However, he said he believes they came to an agreement on something that people will consider a good sign of progress. He said the talk focused on the segment of Hwy. 14 between Nicollet and North Mankato, which was the only focus of the safety audit. He also said that Dayton was very engaged and helpful on the topic.

Morrow had to leave for work on the floor of the Minnesota House before being able to detail a timeline for when action should be expected.

MnDOT's Road Safety Audit report on Hwy. 14 between Nicollet and North Mankato earlier this month showed the section had a fatal crash rate three times the state average for similar roads. It



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...also showed the segment was more than 50 percent higher in fatal crashes than four-lane highways with similar traffic.

MnDOT officials at the meeting detailed that the four-lane project was unlikely due to MnDOT's new emphasis on "low-cost, high-benefit" projects to maximize limited funds. However, MnDOT plans to debut a brand new Corridor Investment Management Strategies program to for projects like Hwy. 14 that usually miss MnDOT's maximization criteria due to quirks. The program would create a fund that qualified projects from all over the state would compete for. The funds would be directed at in-between projects like two-and-one lane repainting until funds for major projects become available.

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