

# Don't politicize Highway 14 expansion between Owatonna and Dodge Center

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As if the road to finding the funding for the Highway 14 expansion isn't bumpy enough, diverting the discussion with partisan politics is one detour that certainly is not needed. And yet, that's exactly what happened this past week when Republican state Sen. Mike Parry of Waseca proposed and then withdrew an amendment to the state's transportation bill.

The amendment offered by Sen. Parry, whose district includes Steele County, that would have put the highway expansion between Owatonna and Dodge Center and between North Mankato and New Ulm back into the 20-year plan of the Minnesota Department of Transportation where it has been for years and years. But no sooner had Sen. Parry made the amendment than the DFL pounced on him, accusing him of trying to make an earmark out of the expansion.

Why would the DFL jump on Sen. Parry? Undoubtedly because he is seeking the Republican nomination to run against 1st District Congressman Tim Walz and those within the DFL are looking something — anything — to make Sen. Parry look bad in the eyes of the electorate. And if you don't think that that is true, then consider that Sen. Parry's remarks on the Senate floor were posted on YouTube under the heading "Congressional Candidate Backs Down After Earmark Challenge."

Yes, Sen. Parry did withdraw the amendment, but not because he was being accused of offering an earmark. The reason Sen. Parry withdrew the amendment was because he knew he didn't have the votes for the amendment to pass — something that could have hurt funding in the future. That was something that was acknowledged by the state senator who initially suggested that Sen. Parry was seeking an earmark. On Friday, state Sen. Katie Sieben, DFL-Newport, said that she gave Sen. Parry the benefit of the doubt and acknowledged that he likely was offering the amendment to "make a point" about the need to fix this dangerous highway.

She was not alone.

Even the left-leaning Bluestem Prairie website, which admits that it is "no fan of Senator Mike Parry," came to the senator's defense this past week, saying that Sen. Parry seemed to be the victim of "nuisance 'gotcha' politics" hatched by someone in the DFL ranks.

We expect the DFL to challenge Sen. Parry the way it does, especially in an election year. But we would hope that someone in the party would come to the realization that Highway 14 is too important of an issue to politicize. It's a dangerous road and people's lives are at stake.

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