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Highway 14 advocates strongly rebuked MnDOT's emphasis on www.nujournal.com/page/content.detail/id/529421/MnDOT-debuts-CIMS-funding-program.html?nav=50...

short-term projects would only cost approximately \$5 million while

a four-lane expansion could cost around \$15 million.

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short-term projects. They voiced concern that a CIMS approach would not result in the four-lane expansion project being placed on MnDOT's 20-year plan, which could jeopardize its access to federal funds.

North Mankato Mayor Mark Dehen said the group's concern was that the project would limit their leverage for a four-lane project. He also said they felt short-term projects were a waste of funds because the road would be redone when a four-lane expansion was eventually implemented. He said they would rather see the funds put towards a four-lane project.

MnDOT District 7 Traffic Engineer Scott Thompson said MnDOT's ultimately also wanted to have a four-lane expansion, but it was looking for solutions during the immediate funding crunch. He said the short-term projects would improve safety immediately until full funding for a four-lane project could be obtained.

He admitted the situation was frustrating. He said Highway 14 was not the only project out there, so it had to run through MnDOT's criteria like any other project to be fair to all.

New Ulm City Manger Brian Gramentz said MnDOT could possibly fund the highway and still meet its fairness standards by emphasizing its unique nature, similar to the Stillwater Bridge project.

Thompson said Highway 14 had high fatality rates, but he doubted it was sufficiently high enough than other deadly roads to qualify.

Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL- St. Peter) also spoke at the meeting,

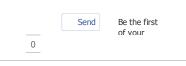
suggesting a four-lane was more cost effective since the highway already needed approximately \$5 million in repaving in the coming years. He said MnDOT could consider it as cost saving towards the project.

MnDOT officials took notes during the discussion, which will be used to develop projects for the Highway 14 corridor that can utilize CIMS funds. The results and potential funding will be announced by MnDOT towards the end of the year.

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