

# MnDOT continues to change lanes with Highway 14 from Owatonna to Dodge Center

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Is the four lane completion of Highway 14 important to Minnesota?

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has toyed with this question and the residents of southern Minnesota for four decades. Confusing reasoning like: “Yes, it’s a priority. We’ll build a four lane road from Waseca to Owatonna,” and then “No, it’s not a priority. We’re not sure when we’ll finish the road from Owatonna to Dodge Center.” The mixed messages, lack of timeline and lack of funding is creating anger in our business community and certainly with the general public over this project.

It is illogical to leave a two-lane segment unfinished right in the middle of the larger project between Rochester and Mankato.

Here are our questions about Highway 14:

- Why have we invested hundreds of millions of dollars into the expansion of this highway only to leave a 16-mile stretch of road, right in the middle of the expansion, unfinished?

Highway 14 from Owatonna to Dodge Center has now had two environmental impact statements (EIS) completed, costing several million dollars. Every year that goes by gets us closer to the expiration of the current EIS and the need for yet another environmental study.

- In addition, MnDOT has an overlay planned for this stretch of road in the year 2015 at a cost of \$5.9 million. If we are committed to expanding to a four-lane road, why are we investing in a new pavement project on the two lanes?

Businesses need this infrastructure to grow and prosper. It is a major highway for transporting goods and in particular important for getting people to work. Failure to complete this road as a four lane will hinder the economic development of a growing region and the challenges facing Highway 14 today will only get worse in the future.

Thousands of commuters drive Highway 14 to work in Owatonna, Rochester, Dodge Center and points along that roadway. Companies like Coca Cola in Owatonna run close to 2,000 tractor trailers on Highway 14 on an annual basis. That’s just one company! This, combined with the other semi-truck and commuter traffic, adds to the congestion of the highway and increases the need for a more effective way to transport goods east and west.

- Are we crazy to think Highway 14 needs to be completed?

The impact of a highway in greater Minnesota is more important to our overall economy than any one road in the metro area is to that economy. Highway 14 is the economic pipeline across the major cities of southern Minnesota and beyond. It is used to haul products for agriculture and manufacturing — the main drivers of our economies in southern Minnesota. Not to mention the human capital that uses this road to work at places like the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, the ethanol plant in Claremont and manufacturing companies in Owatonna.

The games need to stop and a definitive commitment from the State of Minnesota to complete the four lane expansion of Highway 14 needs to happen now. We encourage members of the community to call Gov. Mark Dayton today (800-657-3717) and ask him to complete the four-lane expansion of Highway 14 now.