

Search

Article search...

Go

Lawmaker pushes for Highway 14 improvements near Nicollet



Clark Johnson

(<http://mankatofreepress.com/local/x620882190/Lawmaker-pushes-for-Highway-14-improvements-near-Nicollet>)

By Tim Krohn

Free Press Staff Writer (<http://mankatofreepress.com>)

ST. PAUL — Rep. Clark Johnson on Friday made an admittedly long-shot request for \$65 million in highway bonding to fast-track two critical links on Highway 14, at Nicollet and New Ulm.

Johnson, DFL-North Mankato, gave testimony and introduced bills in a House panel hearing that would provide \$29 million to build a four-lane bypass around Nicollet and an interchange with Highway 14 and Highway 111 at Nicollet.

A second bill would dedicate \$36 million to build an interchange at the intersection of Highway 14 and Highway 15 at New Ulm.

Johnson said getting those two sections done — and eventually linking them into a four lane from North Mankato to New Ulm — are top priorities.

“We know the four lane is coming to Nicollet, so people would just be coming through Nicollet faster and it’s already a terrible spot.”

And he said it makes sense to build an interchange in New Ulm in 2018, which is the year the city will be replacing the Highway 15 bridge adjacent to the intersection.

“It’s just common sense to do those projects at the same time rather than shutting the bridge down twice,” Johnson said.

He said that while getting funding among a long list of backlogged highway projects in the state is very difficult, he thinks there are some positive signs for Highway 14. The chairman of the committee has been focusing on “corridors of commerce” for priority funding.

Potential funding could be from bonding, a gas-tax increase or other revenue.

“Whether it’s this year or next, we wanted to be ready,” Johnson said. “And our argument is compelling: safety, commerce and common sense. Shutting down the bridge twice doesn’t make sense, and making a bad stretch of road in Nicollet worse doesn’t make sense.”

Making the case for the two projects at the hearing were several local civic and business leaders, including New Ulm Mayor Bob Beussman, Nicollet Mayor Fred Froehlich, farmer Brent Krohn and Gary Schmidt of Schmidt’s Meat Market in Nicollet.

“They did really well,” Johnson said.

“They all had a story about someone who has been injured or killed on Highway 14, and it was really touching.”

At the same House Transportation Finance Committee hearing, another bill was offered seeking \$199 million to build a four lane between Owatonna and Dodge Center — the remaining link in the four lane running from Mankato to Rochester.

The Free Press, Mankato, MN 418 South Second Street Mankato, MN 56001