

# The Free Press, Mankato, MN

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## MnDOT plan reflects lack of funding, not priorities

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---- — MnDOT is currently hosting meetings across the state to preview their 20-year State Highway Investment Plan. At the meetings held in Rochester and Mankato, participants were frustrated to see that the department has very little planned for the completion of Highway 14.

Along the entire 85 mile stretch from Rochester to New Ulm, it appears the only planned expansion project is the segment from North Mankato to Nicollet in 2018 — as was committed to by Gov. Mark Dayton last year. As the department heard from meeting attendees, this plan does not match the priorities of the citizens of Highway 14 communities nor does it address the economic development and safety needs of our region.

I understand that this plan was developed to spend existing revenues and that these sources of funding have declining buying power into the future. I also understand that the framework of the 20-year plan has changed due to federal requirements and individual projects are only listed for the first seven years.

I also understand that it is now possible for projects to be added into the plan should additional funding become available.

I'm confident, that if asked, nearly every business person from Rochester to New Ulm would say that completing Highway 14 is the most important project that MnDOT could undertake in the next 20 years.

This document is clear evidence of the need for additional transportation funding. The Legislature and governor could not come to an agreement on a transportation investment this past session. The deficiencies in this plan are a battle cry to get it done next year.

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