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## 3 Hwy. 14 projects get money for construction

Dayton administration approves \$300 million for roads

November 15, 2013  
The Journal

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By PATRICK CONDON

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) - Gov. Mark Dayton's administration on Thursday directed \$300 million toward ten highway construction projects that the Minnesota transportation commissioner said are meant to break up bottlenecks and improve the movement of freight around the state.

The projects, which the administration dubbed "Corridors of Commerce," were designed not just to relieve congestion but to do so in spots where it's hindered economic growth, said Transportation Commissioner Charlie Zelle. Construction on five of the projects will begin next summer, with three more planned for 2015 and the final two in 2016.

The \$300 million will come in the form of transportation bonds; Zelle said his department determined it had enough debt capacity to include the new projects on top of other transportation funding plans. Competition for the money was fierce. The department got 400 proposals related to 100 different road projects around the state.

"This is a down payment," Zelle said. While the \$300 million is enough to fully fund those ten projects, he and Dayton said that only amounts to a tiny portion of what's needed to simply maintain the state's aging transportation infrastructure - much less improve it.

Dayton and Zelle said they intend to propose a comprehensive transportation funding package to state lawmakers ahead of their 2014 session, one that could include a gas tax hike and other new transportation-related tax hikes or fee increases.

"We need to figure out what else we can do to get to where we need to be," Dayton said. He acknowledged it could be hard to win legislative support for transportation tax increases in an election year.

Two of the ten projects are in the Twin Cities, with the rest spread across Minnesota. Zelle said the two Twin Cities projects are more expensive, and that spending-wise the list is roughly balanced between the Twin Cities and the rest of the state.

The projects are:

- Adding a second lane in each direction on Highway 169 for a stretch just north of Grand Rapids.
- Three new passing lanes on a 38-mile portion of Highway 2 between Deer River and Cass Lake.
- New lanes on Interstate 94 between Rogers and St. Michael, northwest of the Twin Cities.
- The addition of passing lanes on Highway 34 from Detroit Lakes to Nevis.

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- Transforming Highway 14 into a four-lane highway for a stretch east of Owatonna headed toward Rochester; from Mankato to Nicollet; and in a bypass around Nicollet. These three projects together bring the major southern Minnesota artery several steps closer to a goal of four lanes all the way from New Ulm to Rochester.

- The addition of passing lanes on Highway 23 from Interstate 90 north to Willmar.

- A new freeway connection along Highway 610 north of Minneapolis between Interstate 94 and Hennepin County Road 81.

- A new temporary shoulder lane from Rice Street to Lexington Avenue on Interstate 694 north of St. Paul.

Online:

List and map of projects: [www.mn.gov/governor/images/corridors-of-commerce-map.pdf](http://www.mn.gov/governor/images/corridors-of-commerce-map.pdf)

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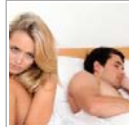
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