

# The Free Press, Mankato, MN

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## **Our View: Keep road funding bill on track**

**Why it matters: The state needs a long-term funding plan for roads and bridges and politics should not be in play**

### **The Mankato Free Press**

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Its executive director noted that while the president was “finally focused on funding our nation’s transportation system,” it fell short of providing long-term funding solution to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent.

At least here in Minnesota legislators are taking up that challenge for the state but it faces a bumpy road already. Transportation funding bills making their way through this session provide reform for funding roads and bridges and include \$800 million toward the Corridors of Commerce which would be a big boost for funding the long-awaited Highway 14 project.

It’s a balanced bill providing funding for regional corridors in greater Minnesota as well as congested roads in the metro. There’s even assistance to expand the Metro Transit and suburban transit system.

Some of the reform closes loopholes and allocates federal funding along with the tax increases necessary to provide funding for transportation.

Area businesses have recognized the need for additional funding. In a recent Greater Mankato Growth survey of its members, 72 percent of respondents agreed that the state needs additional revenue to “keep our transportation system safe, effective and properly maintained.” And responding to concerns from businesses on MnDOT efficiencies, an amendment was made requiring an annual report on efficiency measures.

But legislative leaders are balking. On a party-line vote, the House version was re-referred to the Tax Committee. And House Speaker Paul Thissen said absent support from Republicans and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the package will not move forward this session.

Politics as a stumbling block was evident when Rep. John Petersburg of Waseca said he was against the bill because it did not move progress up for Highway 14 – a stand that perplexes representatives of the Highway 14 Partnership which supports the bill.

It appears the Senate Transportation Committee will hear its bill this week. We are still hopeful a compromise can be worked out – preferably focusing more on roads, bridges and mass transit this session. But it will take resolve and a bipartisan effort to do what the federal government cannot – provide a long-term funding solution to our transportation needs.