

The Free Press, Mankato, MN

July 2, 2014

Our View: Highway 14 funding moves forward

Why it matters: Another shot of funding for Highway 14 will help complete the four-lane from New Ulm to Rochester

The Mankato Free Press

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Businesses, including Wal-Mart, that use the road that spans southern Minnesota border-to-border will benefit as the four-lane expansion is completed. A \$1.5 million infusion from the Corridors of Commerce funding program will help acquire right-of-way for the stretch between Owatonna and Dodge Center that now carries an increasing amount of traffic in just two lanes.

Indeed, the Owatonna to Dodge Center stretch of the roadway is the last two-lane portion of the road from North Mankato to Rochester. Work continues on the four-lane expansion from North Mankato to Nicollet. Funding has already been approved through an earlier allocation and some Corridor of Commerce money.

Now, advocacy groups like the Highway 14 Partnership can turn their sights to the roadway from Nicollet to New Ulm. Four lanes for that stretch will improve safety and commerce from New Ulm that is home to several trucking companies as well as major employers like Kraft, 3M and AMPI.

The relatively new Corridors of Commerce program allows trunk highway bond funding for roads critical to commerce in Minnesota. Highway 14 was the recipient in the last round of funding of some \$70 million all tolled.

The bipartisan group of lawmakers who approved the program deserve credit for coming up with a way to fund roads that removes the decisions from terrifically difficult political waters of raising the gas tax or other users fees.

We continue to support more road funding for all of the critically important roads in Minnesota. User fees and/or gas taxes have been reasonable ways to address those needs. Democrats have vowed to attack the long-term road funding problems in the next session.

We hope they are true to their word. There are few infrastructure investments more critical for growing Minnesota's economy than roads that move goods across the state and country and that bring jobs to Minnesotans.

