



Push on for Hwy 14 funding

By Robb Murray
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— Congressman Tim Walz — along with the mayors of North Mankato and New Ulm and state Rep. Terry Morrow of St. Peter — announced plans Monday to push for \$103 million in federal funding to upgrade Highway 14, including the stretch between North Mankato and New Ulm.

Walz cited the cooperation among various cities and levels of government between the Mankato area and New Ulm as a major reason why he's agreed to push for the highway improvement funding.

Walz, a Democrat from Mankato, serves on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the U.S. House.

"Anyone in this region knows how important this is," Walz said.

Walz will make the request in the reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Bill soon to be written by Congress. The request would provide funding for four projects relating to Highway 14:

- \$35 million to upgrade the highway between North Mankato and New Ulm. This part of the project would expand Highway 14 from two to four lanes.
- \$35 million to upgrade the highway between Dodge Center and Owatonna. This part of the project would expand Highway 14 from two to four lanes.
- \$18.4 million for an interchange at Highway 14 and County Road 41 in North Mankato. This project would expand Highway 14 from two to four lanes between Nicollet County Road 6 and Lookout Drive in North Mankato.
- \$14.7 million for an interchange at Blue Earth County Road 12. This project would extend Blue Earth County Road 12 to County Road 17, build a bridge over the DM&E railroad and create a separated-grade interchange with Highway 14.

North Mankato Mayor Gary Zellmer, whose city has been trying for several years to get an interchange at County Road 41, said the city needs this federal help to get that project done.

He lamented the many lives lost on Highway 14, and highlighted the boost an upgrade and interchange would give to local jobs.

New Ulm Mayor Joel Albrecht said improvements to the highway have been needed for years.

"This is as close to something good happening as we've been in 14 years," he said.

Walz said he hopes the bill will be done soon. The Senate must also pass a similar bill, and then the two bills will merge into one and be forwarded to President Obama.

Walz said he hopes the House can have its bill done by August, and perhaps the entire process by the end of the year.

State Rep. Terry Morrow, DFL-St. Peter, called this a "critically important week," and said that in a few years, when this project is getting done, people will look back at this week as the one that launched a Highway 14 revolution.

Said Walz, "This is one of the most dangerous roads in Minnesota."

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Congressman Tim Walz speaks to reporters Monday about his plan to seek \$103 million for upgrades to Highway 14. The Free Press



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