

Support Expansion of Highway 2 to a Four-Lane between Superior and Hurley, Wisconsin

THE CITIZENS OF NORTHWEST WISCONSIN REQUEST

That the State Legislature Support the Expansion of US Highway 2 between Superior and Hurley. Add the Expansion of US Highway 2 to the WisDOT 2030 planning document (moving it ahead, if possible) and allocate funds for the study of the expansion of US Highway 2 between Superior and Hurley, Wisconsin.

BACKGROUND

- US Highway 2 is a two-lane highway with passing lanes. It is the only highway traversing Northern Wisconsin crossing both west and east borders, connecting Wisconsin with the States of Michigan and Minnesota.
- Over 60% of the northern tier counties that Highway 2 bisects are timbered. Bio-energy and related industries are becoming more prevalent in this region.
- Northern Wisconsin has the only National Park in the state which Highway 2 accesses. Highway 2 in Wisconsin includes 100 miles of roadway and is the main transportation route for commerce, residents and tourists through Northern Wisconsin.
- US Hwy 2 connects with US Hwy 53, a four-lane expressway, as well as Interstate Hwy 35 at the Minnesota border, also a 4-lane freeway. These freeways are main arteries to the metropolitan areas of the Twin Cities and Eau Claire.

Economic Development Impact:

1. A four-lane US Hwy 2 would facilitate high potential for job expansion and attraction. In Governor Thompson's 2001 State of the State address, he said that 95% of all new manufacturing jobs during his 14 years in office were within 5 miles of the centerline of a backbone highway (meaning a 4 lane, 65 mph highway). This continues to be the requirement needed for economic development organizations to bid on businesses desiring to site in Wisconsin.
2. US Highway 2 is consistently used by logging companies with their large tractor/trailers to transport logs to market. Logging is key to long-term economic development for this region, and industry must continue to be accommodated with open arms.
3. Northern Wisconsin is the vacation spot of preference for thousands of local and out-of-state visitors. Improved access to our region will enhance tourism, a huge economic driver for our region.
4. Mining is being explored in Northern Wisconsin. With the potential of this industry becoming a reality in the next few years, a four-lane US Highway 2 is an infrastructure that will be high in demand because of the high increase of employment to the area, meaning more residents and potential transport of heavy tractor/trailers to provide product to the mining area, which will only be 25 to 30 miles south of Highway 2.

Safety Impact:

1. Roadway improvements including passing lanes on US Hwy 2 in Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland and Iron Counties have greatly improved safety during peak traffic times.
2. Severe weather and climatic changes along Lake Superior compound traffic safety issues in this hilly, forested region, therefore a four-lane expansion would address this definite concern.
3. A four-lane highway would assure more safety for the logging industry to transport their products, both for the truck drivers and other passengers on Highway 2.
4. Increased lanes for the smooth transportation of emergency vehicles, transporting critical care patients will impact safety for our regional residents utilizing the roadways.

Concluding Thoughts:

- Another key expansion we highly recommend is completing the four- lane north of Tomahawk, at the intersection of Hwy 51 and Hwy 8, to Hurley. This additional infrastructure will complete a four-lane highway loop to Northern Wisconsin.
- Thank you for your serious consideration of support for these projects for the good of the residents of Northern Wisconsin as you reflect on the aforementioned economic development and safety benefits such a project would afford the region.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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