

Trunk Highway 74

Otta Seal for an Improved Safer Surface and Reduced Maintenance

House File No. 366; Senate File No. 620

- Minnesota Trunk Highway 74 north of Elba is currently the *only unpaved state trunk highway* in Minnesota.
- Highway 74 from north of Elba to Winona County State-Aid Highway 30 currently carries 200 vehicles per day. At this traffic volume, engineering research recommends serious consideration be given to paving the highway, due to increasing costs of maintaining a gravel road at this traffic volume.
- In 2001 MnDOT upgraded Hwy 74 with a double Otta Seal surface, recognizing the significant benefit in reducing gravel road maintenance, and providing an improved surface.
- An Otta Seal surface has been studied and proven to cost less over its lifecycle than adding new crushed rock every year and grading the road time and time again each year.
- While the Otta Seal surface was in place on this segment of Hwy 74, the traffic volume increased to 650 vehicles per day. Additional traffic utilized the improved surface, increasing area transportation efficiency. This demonstrates the need for an improved roadway.
- The Otta Seal surface held up extremely well for 15 years, and the State of Minnesota enjoyed very low maintenance costs during that time.
- In 2021 MnDOT removed the 20-year-old deteriorating Otta Seal, with no plans for its replacement or upgrade, causing much dismay for local residents and road users. A petition signed by over 700 residents and a resolution of the Winona County Board requested MnDOT to replace the double Otta Seal surface or pave the road with bituminous.
- The current Hwy 74 crushed-rock surface produces heavy dust conditions which is not just a simple nuisance, but is a major safety issue on a curvy state highway when other vehicles are hidden in clouds of dust.
- What is an Otta Seal? Otta Seal is a surface treatment constructed by placing aggregate on top of a thick application of relatively soft bituminous binding agent. The Otta Seal surface appears similar to asphalt pavement, and is an intermediate surface between aggregate and traditional pavement. It was developed in the Otta region of Norway in the 1960s.
- To improve safety and efficiency for the users of the only unpaved state trunk highway in Minnesota, coupled with reducing ongoing maintenance costs for MnDOT, please support House File No. 366.

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