

# Winona goes around in circles

While I am not a fan of Visit Winona's slogan for marketing our city, I think that if the decision is made to build four roundabouts within a short stretch of Mankato Avenue, then the one on the Highway 61 intersection should have a sign saying: "Welcome to Winona. Surprisingly weird." After watching Winona drivers attempting to navigate the horrible roundabout on Highway 43 by Pleasant Valley Church, or even the simpler more intuitive version by Hy-Vee, it's difficult to imagine the traffic mayhem that will ensue at 30 mph on Mankato Avenue. Then try to picture a supersized roundabout on Highway 61. Hang onto your hat! Just make sure your car insurance is paid up.

For the record, the only proposed roundabout location that I am in favor of is at the intersection of Sarnia and Mankato. It is currently nearly impossible to take a left turn on Mankato from Sarnia, making this intersection an ideal candidate for a roundabout. All the other locations are ill-conceived.

However, you don't need Nostradamus to predict how this is going to turn out. All you have to do is get in a conversation with Winona residents of a certain age at the Eagles Club, American Legion, VFW, any church basement, or the meat counter at Midtown Foods. They'll tell you what will happen because they have seen this movie before. After complaining about having two bridges over the Mississippi (and one that is already looking "raty") they'll predict that the roundabouts will be approved, tying up Mankato Avenue and Highway 61 forever, the project will be immediately ridiculed and judged a failure, and then the state will finally decide to build an overpass on Louisa Street. Why not just build the Louisa street overpass now and get the truck traffic off Mankato, as well as avoiding all of the endless disruption, frustration, and delays that will be caused by tearing up Mankato Avenue, you ask? A quick history lesson says that is usually not the way Winona rolls.

The overwhelming opinion seems to be that although Winona is brimming with history, part of that legacy seems to be making bad decisions, and then throwing good money after bad in an attempt to make things right.

To make their case, a lot of people point out the history behind the Broadway lane reduction project. It wasn't too long ago when

the city paid a lot of money, and destroyed hundreds of beautiful shade trees to widen Broadway. Now, in the interest of safety, Winona officials want to shrink Broadway back to two lanes, with an additional lane to accommodate bicycle riders. What hasn't been advertised is the fact that pedestrians will still have to walk the exact same distance to get across Broadway as they did before the project. It seems more sensible, and far less costly, to add more of the "blinker" pedestrian signs at the Broadway crosswalks, and put a bike lane on Seventh Street.

If Winona taxpayers seem a little jaded and skittish, it's hard to blame them. Many lived through the destruction of the historic Morgan Block during Urban Renewal and saw the movie theater built in its place. They witnessed Third Street being transformed into a pedestrian mall and then opened back up as a street after most of the businesses suffocated. The Princess Wenonah statue has lived a nomadic existence in recent history, moving from Central Park, to the downtown plaza, to Lake Park, and finally to her current beautiful home at Windom Park. Most of these (with the exception of the Morgan Block) eventually had happy endings, but only after years of anguish, angst, and expense.

You would think that people would be over our "spare" Mississippi River bridge by now, but it seems to still be a source of consternation for a large, vocal group of Winona taxpayers. They make a good argument. Did we really need to go from two lanes to four lanes of bridge back to two lanes? There were a lot of statistics from government experts saying that in 20 years the traffic trend was going to substantially increase. We are hearing a lot of the "20 years from now" argument about the roundabouts too. In both cases the Mn/DOT playbook offers us a pile of our own money to wildly overbuild projects and asks us to trust their data and expertise. That trust got us two mismatched bridges and traffic confusion for vehicles venturing across the Mississippi. Who knows what weird mischief the Mankato Avenue roundabouts will bring?



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## letters

### Why should we pay for bad dredge sand plan?

From: Jim Bonilla  
Winona

Why should our taxes pay for the Corps of Engineers despoiling the shores of Latch Island and Homer?

In one of your recent articles, Winona's efforts to boost tourism by applying for funding to build trails along the river and bluffs were highlighted. As someone who moved to Winona three years ago, I'm in awe of the beauty of this community. Paddling or driving along the Mississippi River never fails to inspire wonder. A recent

Super Bowl commercial has even resulted in renewed interest in our environmentally gorgeous community. Does anyone seriously think that the eyesores of huge piles of sand dumped along the shoreline will appeal to funders, tourists, and local residents?

Instead, I suggest we continue paying more attention to preserving the natural beauty of Winona and her environs. I'm glad to have my tax dollars go to enhancing nature trails, scenic river walks, and bikeways. I'm opposed to my taxes underwriting dredging operations for Big Agri-

culture and other multinational corporations that don't even pay their fair share of taxes to begin with.

Rather than have us taxpayers on the hook, make Big Ag pay their own freight! Thanks to Trump's tax break, multinational corporations are awash in cash while regular folks are struggling to pay their bills.

Please contact our city leaders, county commissioners, and Congressman Hagedorn. Tell them to stand up for regular people and our environment, not multinational corporate interests.

### Worlds Best Workforce plan needs community dialogue

From: Brian Neil  
Winona

With regard to the World's Best Workforce document that the WAPS Board will be finalizing soon, there is a thing or two to consider.

First, according to the Minnesota Department of Education, the board was required to hold a public meeting to allow the voters a chance to query and comment on last year's student achievement goals. That did not happen for reasons only an elite few are allowed to know.

Second, at such a meeting the board would have had the opportunity to respond

to a question such as this: If, in our names, the board decides to set a goal of increasing student achievement in some area by some student subset from 30 percent to 35 percent, a significant increase, does that not also state that we as a community are prepared to celebrate, on the achievement of that goal, a failure rate of 65 percent? Whom exactly are we planning to leave behind with these goals?

I know I could not name one classroom teacher in this district that would stand up in public and say that 100-percent success for every child in that classroom was not every day's goal. And where is the WEA leadership on this issue? Is there to be any

separation between educators and administrators with regard to achievement goals in our schools?

There is a definite communication gap that exists in this arena. Perhaps some brave soul will come forward to enlighten the community as to how we can regain faith in our public education system. Will someone step up to blow away the smokescreen of eduspeak and confirm that educators intend to work tirelessly for the achievement of every student? And how can the rest of us help? Encouragement of a community-wide dialog may be a start.

### More on 'What it means to be truly pro-life'

From: Alima Fairchild  
Rushford

Thank you for Bernard F. McNab's "What it means to be truly pro-life"! I have never heard a description of that position that I could subscribe to. I have a few small tweaks to propose, to better address this

profoundly unifying list:

1. Add "and their mothers" after "unborn children"
5. Add "and the artificial prolonging of death" after "assisted suicide"
6. Insert "and gender discrimination" after "racism"
12. Insert "and exercise" after "respect

and desire"

13. Insert "and sacrifice" after "work"
14. Add "by enabling every woman to bear only wanted children and feed the ones she bears" after "war"

Can you open your pro-life hearts just that little bit more? Love is the answer!



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