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### **Highway 14 Chambers to Zelle: Use Corridors of Commerce for Highway 14 ROW**

Today, six chambers of commerce along Highway 14 issued a letter to MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle, urging him to use the newly provided Corridors of Commerce appropriation to acquire right of way along the unfinished segments of Highway 14.

Representatives of Greater Mankato Growth, the New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce, the Nicollet Chamber of Commerce, the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce, the Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce and Tourism identified Highway 14 as crucial to southern Minnesota's economic success. The lack of a consistent four-lane corridor results in employee recruitment difficulties, shipping delays, and missed opportunities for development.

"The initial Corridors of Commerce program funding will result in significant progress being made on Highway 14," said Audra Shaneman, President/CEO of the New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce and member of the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership Board of Directors. "However, even with those projects moving forward, more needs to be done to provide four lanes from Rochester to New Ulm. This new funding is an opportunity to get the remaining segments ready to go."

The 2014 Legislature provided a \$31.5 million Trunk Highway Fund appropriation for the Corridors of Commerce program. This funding source provides increased flexibility in program spending, and unlike bonds, could be used for right of way acquisition or engineering.

MnDOT estimates show that \$25-28 million in right of way is needed for phases two and three of the Owatonna to Dodge Center expansion. An estimated \$16-19 million in right of way is needed to expand Highway 14 west of Nicollet through the New Ulm Highway 14/15 interchange.

"Area businesses recognize that economic success is tied to an efficient infrastructure, and we look forward to the continued discussion of how to address the state's transportation needs," said Patrick Baker, Director of Government and Institutional Affairs for Greater Mankato Growth and U.S. Highway 14 Partnership board member. "Investing in Highway 14 right of way now would not only accelerate the remaining projects once full funding is secured, but demonstrate to citizens and businesses that completing Highway 14 is a priority of the state."

It is expected that MnDOT will issue its 2014 Corridors of Commerce funding announcement this summer.

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