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March 28, 2014

Senator Scott Dibble
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol, Room 111
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Dear Senator Dibble:

On behalf of Greater Mankato Growth, I write to request that as the Legislature considers a supplemental budget for the state's surplus you support additional funding for the Corridors of Commerce program. Transportation infrastructure is a tried and true investment tool that yields short-term job production and long term economic returns.

The passage and initial funding of the Corridors of Commerce program in 2013 yielded significant progress for the expansion of Highway 14. Of the initial \$300 million trunk highway bond authorization, \$73 million was awarded to Highway 14 for three projects: the North Mankato to Nicollet expansion, the Nicollet bypass, and the Owatonna to Dodge Center Phase I expansion. Thank you for your support of the Corridors of Commerce program funding, which made these advancements possible.

While these are meaningful and appreciated steps towards completing the four lane corridor from Rochester to New Ulm, our resolve cannot fade, as projects still remain to fix Highway 14's missing links:

- Owatonna to Dodge Center, Phase 2 and 3 expansion
- Nicollet to New Ulm expansion
- New Ulm Highway 14/Highway 15 interchange

As you are aware, Highway 14 is a true "Corridor of Commerce" for our region that countless businesses and individuals rely on for the movement of goods, as well as themselves and their families. Southern Minnesota's economy is thriving and growing, but our infrastructure is not keeping up. The Greater Mankato area is a significant contributor to this vitality, leading the state in the growth of its gross domestic product and a number of other metrics. Additionally, as you're aware, Walmart and FedEx will begin construction of major distribution facilities in Mankato this year, adding to the already high commercial vehicle levels on Highway 14.

Further, soon 35,000 to 45,000 jobs will be added to downtown Rochester with the Destination Medical Center, adding commuters to the corridor. Owatonna is home to 34 manufacturers and numerous retail and service industries that rely on Highway 14. And an estimated 1,000 trucks are dispatched out of New Ulm each day, transporting the products of major manufacturers like Kraft Foods, Schell's, 3M, and AMPI. The need for the entire Highway 14 corridor to efficiently and safely move goods and individuals out of, and into, this market and across our entire region has never been more important.

Continued investment in the Corridors of Commerce program will allow us to continue the progress that is being made on Highway 14 and finally deliver the four lane corridor the region has been promised for over 50 years. Please support "14 in '14" by providing additional funding for the Corridors of Commerce program.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Zierdt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jonathan G. Zierdt
President & CEO