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July 30, 2013

Ryan Wilson, P.E., AICP
Planning Engineer
Office of Capital Programs and Performance Measures
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 440
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Mr. Wilson:

On behalf of Greater Mankato Growth, the chamber of commerce and economic development organization serving the Greater Mankato area, I write to submit the following comments on the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) draft Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP).

As an organization representing over 800 businesses and organizations that must make strategic investments with finite resources, we understand the inherent constraints that underlie this plan and commend MnDOT for its efforts. The vitality of our regional economy relies on strong transportation networks and we appreciate that the plan makes investments in projects for our region including roundabouts in Mankato, flood mitigation on Highways 22 and 169, upgrades to the Veterans Memorial Bridge in Mankato and the four-lane expansion of Highway 60. We also appreciate MnDOT's commitment to the four-lane expansion of Highway 14 from North Mankato to Nicollet.

However, we would like to express the frustration of our members and the entire region over the lack of inclusion of the full expansion of Highway 14 from Rochester to New Ulm in the plan. As you are aware, Highway 14 is a vital economic lifeline for our region that countless businesses and individuals rely on for the movement of goods, as well as themselves and their families. For more than 50 years the communities along the corridor have waited for this highway's completion. The omission of the complete four lane Highway 14 expansion is a disappointing blow and demonstrates the shortcomings of the plan in meeting the actual transportation needs of the state and its citizens.

Continued significant growth in our region is placing immense pressure on Highway 14 and challenges with congestion and safety continue to mount. The Greater Mankato area will be a significant contributor to this growth. The Mankato-North Mankato Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) leads all outstate MSAs in population growth since 2010 and leads all state MSAs in employment growth in goods production. Further, Walmart has identified Mankato as the site of its next Midwest distribution facility with construction scheduled to begin within a year. The need for our community to efficiently and safely move goods and individuals out of, and into, this market has never been more important.

As our businesses make significant investments in their own expansions and our region continues to grow and become an even bigger contributor to the state's economy, we expect our public partners to do their share by shaping a plan that shows real vision and makes the necessary investments in infrastructure. Businesses, local governments, and citizens from all along the Highway 14 corridor are united in our support for investment in this critical project. Going forward, we respectfully request that Highway 14 be a top state priority to ensure that we have adequate infrastructure that enables future economic opportunities and improves safety along the corridor. The longer this expansion is put off, the more lives

that will be lost, the more expensive these projects will become and the more regional economic growth that will be forgone.

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