



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 27, 2009

Contact: J.D. Burton
651-225-8840

Highway 14 President: “How Much Longer?”

Mayor Gary Zellmer releases letter to MnDOT asking for clarification on 20-year highway investment plan that places low priority on fixing Highway 14

Today, North Mankato Mayor and Highway 14 President Gary Zellmer released a letter to Minnesota Transportation Commissioner Tom Sorel inquiring into the decision-making behind MnDOT’s 20-year Highway Investment Plan. Specifically, Mayor Zellmer sought clarification as to why MnDOT’s plan fails to make the four-lane expansion of Highway 14 a top priority.

“The conclusions reached by the Department are disappointing, and unacceptable,” wrote Mayor Zellmer. “After so many years, how could these two Highway 14 projects still remain a low-end priority for the Department? How many more deaths on Highway 14 must occur before the Department considers the completion of Highway 14 expansion a top priority?”

In August, MnDOT released its 20-year Highway Investment Plan, designed to provide the Department and the state with guidance on MnDOT’s funding plans and priorities over the next 20 years. The plan identifies two unfinished projects along Highway 14: The four-lane expansion between North Mankato to New Ulm, and the four-lane expansion between Owatonna to Dodge Center. Despite growing anxiety about the safety of these roads, these projects are designated for completion only in the distant future, if at all. As a result, southern Minnesota residents must continue to wait decades for the state to fix this dangerous highway.

Mayor Zellmer’s letter asks the Department to explain in greater detail what criteria were used by to conclude the Highway 14 projects do not merit completion over the next two decades, and how these projects compare to similar 2 to 4 lane highway expansion projects throughout the state.

After giving southern Minnesota residents the opportunity to digest this plan’s conclusions, the Highway 14 Partnership felt now was a time to respond.

“It is increasingly difficult to explain to southern Minnesotans why a highway feared by so many people, for so long a time, simply can’t or won’t be fixed,” wrote Mayor Zellmer. “Our residents wonder how much longer they have to wait to fix Highway 14.”

The U.S. Highway 14 Partnership is a public-private advocacy organization supporting the four-lane expansion of Trunk Highway 14 in southern Minnesota between New Ulm, Rochester and Winona. Formed in 1998, the Highway 14 Partnership lobbies at both the state and federal levels of government.

For more information, please contact J.D. Burton at 651-225-8840 or visit the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership website at www.ushighway14.com.

###