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Dangers and Economic Impact of Highway 14 Highlighted in House Committee

The Minnesota House Transportation Finance Committee today heard strong arguments in favor of the four lane expansion of Highway 14. Under consideration by the committee was H.F. 210, authored by Rep. Kathy Brynaert (Mankato), which appropriates funds to complete a four lane corridor between Rochester and New Ulm.

Committee members were presented with persuasive evidence of Highway 14's significance as a regional economic corridor, as well as the traveler safety concerns presented by the two unfinished segments of Highway 14: Owatonna to Dodge Center and Nicollet to New Ulm.

Beth Hodgman of West Concord, whose husband Scott was killed while traveling on Highway 14 on November 6, 2012, shared her emotional account of the dangerous stretch of highway.

"My husband Scott was on his way home from work and heading to vote when his vehicle and another collided head-on, killing three people and injuring another. The other two people that were killed were the 10-year old boy who was receiving treatment at the Mayo and his father," explained Hodgman. "I know this accident could have been avoided if this deadly stretch of Highway 14 would have been a four lane. I know if Highway 14 was a four lane that my children, my grandchildren, and I would still have Scott here with us."

Audra Shaneman, President/CEO of the New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce, provided compelling testimony regarding Highway 14's impact on her community's economy. Her organization of over 330 members has made the completion of Highway 14 a top priority.

"Our Economic Development Corporation has been told by multiple site selectors that the presence of a four lane road is a common threshold in the site selection process. This means that New Ulm doesn't even make the list to attract these new businesses," she said. "We are making progress, but unfortunately, Highway 14 is not progressing with us."

Shaneman noted that there are an estimated 1,000 commercial trucks affiliated with New Ulm businesses and manufacturers.

“I hear from my members that Highway 14 is a hindrance to the manufacturing industry in New Ulm. Being able to transport their goods in a cost effective manner is essential to the health of their business and the livelihoods of their employees,” said Shaneman. “For over 40 years, New Ulm businesses have had to adapt to an inadequate road and I am here today to advocate for them and their future success. The state must provide the resources to complete Highway 14 in the near future.”

H.F. 210 was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus transportation finance bill.

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