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March 23, 2009

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## **Legislation to Complete Highway 14 EIS Statements Moves Forward in House Committee**

Tonight, a transportation committee in the Minnesota House of Representatives advanced legislation that will mandate completion of two outstanding environmental impact statements along Highway 14 in southern Minnesota: one from New Ulm to North Mankato, a second from Owatonna to Dodge Center.

“Every few months, MnDOT tells us they are going to complete these environmental impact statements by a certain date, and then without fail, they are delayed another few months or longer,” said North Mankato Mayor and Highway 14 President, Gary Zellmer, who testified in support of the bill. “Our communities can’t plan for the future with such delays and uncertainty. We need a commitment, and this bill will provide it.”

Also, testifying in support of the legislation was Mike Milstead, Vice President of Owatonna-based Ag Power. Millstead presented the private sector support for this legislation. “Ag Power Enterprises had two very successful years, but the agricultural business is cyclical, and we know a downturn is likely coming,” said Millstead. “For us to build a new facility in a down year will be very difficult to manage, if at all. Continued delays in the Highway 14 project could impact the financial ability for our company to expand and grow.”

The legislation, H.F. 1693, authored by Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL – St. Peter), would require that MnDOT complete the New Ulm – North Mankato and Dodge Center – Owatonna environmental impact statements by December 31, 2009. Once completed, the local communities and businesses along the corridor would be better prepared to begin planning for future growth along the corridor.

“Just when we feel we are moving forward, MnDOT makes another excuse. Tonight, MnDOT tells us the New Ulm to North Mankato segment is delayed because of a dispute with the Army Corps of Engineers,” said Mayor Zellmer. “It’s just one thing after another.”

Upon completion of testimony and a question/answer period, the House Transportation Policy and Oversight Division laid over the bill for possible inclusion in an omnibus transportation policy bill.

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 and Rochester. 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](http://www.ushighway14.com).

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