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Funding bill includes more Corridors of Commerce funding

May 21, 2014
 The Journal

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ST. PAUL - An additional \$31.5 million in Corridors of Commerce program funding was signed into law Tuesday by Governor Dayton. This funding was included in the supplemental budget bill passed by the Legislature, which included a \$6.5 million appropriation in FY 2014 and a \$25 million appropriation in FY 2015.

"Securing additional funding for the Corridors of Commerce program was the top priority of the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership this session," said Partnership President/ New Ulm Mayor Bob Beussman. "Significant progress is being made on Highway 14 because of the initial funding of Corridors of Commerce in 2013. It's important to keep up this momentum until we have four lanes from Rochester to New Ulm."

Unlike the 2013 funding, which came in the form of Trunk Highway bonds, the new funding is appropriated out of the Trunk Highway Fund (gas tax, motor vehicle sales tax, and tab fee revenues). Using Trunk Highway Fund dollars enhances flexibility, allowing program funding to be used for right of way acquisition.

"The three Highway 14 projects that were part of the initial Corridors of Commerce awards were essentially shovel ready," said Beussman. "However, to complete Highway 14's expansion west of Nicollet to New Ulm and between Owatonna to Dodge Center, right of way will need to be purchased. The Partnership will make a strong case to MnDOT that using this new Corridors of Commerce appropriation for this purpose would be a smart investment."

Beussman said that members of the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership played an active role in advocating for this funding by sending hundreds of postcards to corridor legislators, holding a lobby day at the State Capitol, and contacting legislative leaders and the Governor during end-of-session negotiations.

"I'd like to thank our Highway 14 legislators and the House and Senate Transportation chairs for going to bat for Corridors of Commerce funding," said Beussman.

"This program is the key to continuing to make progress on Highway 14, so establishing Corridors of Commerce as a funding priority is an important accomplishment as we move forward."

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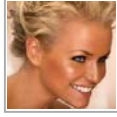
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