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## Highway 14 group urges right-of-way funding

### Purchase would accelerate expansion

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The co-signing chambers of commerce organizations are from Mankato, New Ulm, Waseca, Nicollet, Owatonna and Rochester.

This year the Minnesota Legislature approved \$31.5 million in trunk highway funds for the new Corridors of Commerce program. Last year the program received even larger funding and a portion was allocated to cover the long sought four-lane expansion of Highway 14 from North Mankato to Nicollet.

The Highway 14 Partnership is seeking a complete four-lane expansion of Highway 14 from Rochester to New Ulm. For the remaining two-lane segment from Nicollet to New Ulm, about \$16 million to \$19 million in right-of-way purchases is still needed. For the phase 2 and phase 3 portions of the planned Owatonna to Dodge Center four-lane expansion, about \$25 million to \$28 million in right-of-way purchases is still needed.

The Highway 14 Partnership is urging MnDOT to make these purchases because they would allow for faster completion of further four-lane expansion. The organization argues the eventual four-lane expansion will end Highway 14's significant fatal crash problems and boost regional commerce development.

During his May 28 visit to Nicollet, Zelle said he was supportive of the idea of using this year's funding for Highway 14 right-of-way purchases. However, he said it was too early in the allocation process to make any definitive determinations, particularly given the large number of important projects around the state.