



For Immediate Release: Jan. 13, 2017

Contact: Carolyn Jackson

[ccjackson@flaherty-hood.com](mailto:ccjackson@flaherty-hood.com)

612-735-2627

### **Highway 14 advocacy group urges lawmakers to pass \$350M in funding for successful Corridors of Commerce program**

OWATONNA—With their sights set on completing the last remaining miles of the U.S. Highway 14 expansion project, members of the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership have determined that obtaining additional funding for the Corridors of Commerce program is their top legislative priority for 2017.

“The Corridors of Commerce program plays a vital role in improving transportation throughout Minnesota,” said Mankato City Councilor Karen Foreman, who was elected to serve as president of the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership at its annual meeting Thursday. “Our main goal this session will be to make sure our state lawmakers understand the importance of this program and provide the dollars it needs to help fund Highway 14 and other highway projects across the state.”

Established in 2013, Corridors of Commerce is a statewide program designed to fund transportation projects that reduce barriers to commerce by expanding capacity and/or improving freight movement. Several U.S. Highway 14 projects have received funding through the Corridors of Commerce program in the past, including the newly opened expansion of Highway 14 from North Mankato to Nicollet, the two-mile expansion west of Owatonna and significant land acquisition.

For the 2017 legislative session, the Partnership is seeking \$350 million for Corridors of Commerce, including \$300 million in one-time trunk highway bonding and ongoing funding of \$50 million a year from the state’s general fund in years that the state runs a budget surplus.

According to Partnership members, one of the key components of their Corridors of Commerce proposal is that it is not dependent on the Legislature passing a larger, more comprehensive transportation bill.

“We continue to support a comprehensive, long-term transportation plan, but based on all the recent discord at the Legislature over transportation issues we felt it was key that we pursue legislation that can run independent from a major transportation bill,” said Owatonna City Councilor Kevin Raney, the Partnership’s newly elected vice president. “Even if lawmakers can’t agree a long-term transportation plan, they should be able to pass meaningful funding for Corridors of Commerce.”

The U.S. Highway 14 project, which seeks to expand the highway to four lanes from Rochester to New Ulm, is nearing completion. Only two portions remain – 12 miles from Nicollet to New Ulm and 12.5 miles from Owatonna to Dodge Center. The Partnership is hopeful that Corridors of Commerce funds can be a major component in financing the final stretches of the project.

“We have made great progress on Highway 14 over the years, but we are all eager for entire whole project to finally be done,” Foreman said. “Additional funding for Corridors of Commerce would be a big step toward getting us there.”

###