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RESOLUTION 09-RB02-09

SUPPORT FOR SAFETY AND CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS ALONG TRUNK HIGHWAY 15 FROM ST. CLOUD TO FAIRMONT

WHEREAS, state Trunk Highway 15 is a critical transportation corridor serving the economic interests of South Central Minnesota from St. Cloud to Fairmont, and

WHEREAS, TH 15 is a regional corridor connecting the regional trade centers of St. Cloud, Hutchinson, New Ulm, and Fairmont, and

WHEREAS, safety and capacity improvements to TH 15 have long been recognized as key transportation and economic priorities for South Central Minnesota, and

WHEREAS, the 2000 Census indicates that more than 22,000 commuters who live in one county and work in another use the corridor every day, and

WHEREAS, over 6,000 crashes resulting in over 50 fatalities have occurred on TH 15 since 1990, and

WHEREAS, a TH 15 Corridor Coalition was established in 2004 comprised of city, county, and township governments, businesses, and citizens along the corridor who are united in their support for safety and capacity improvements along the corridor, and

WHEREAS, members of the Minnesota Congressional delegation including Senator Amy Klobuchar, Congressman Jim Oberstar, Congressman Collin Peterson, and Congressman Tim Walz have committed their support for improvements to the corridor,

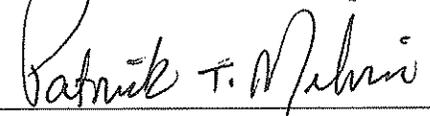
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the McLeod County Board strongly supports safety and capacity improvements along the TH 15 corridor from Fairmont to St. Cloud.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the McLeod County Board strongly supports inclusion of federal funding in the next reauthorization bill for safety and capacity improvements along said corridor.

Adopted this 17th day of February 2009.



Kermit D. Terlinden, Chairperson



Patrick T. Melvin, County Administrator

Trunk Highway 15 Coalition



Congressman Collin Peterson
2159 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

March 25, 2009

Dear Congressman Peterson,

As you know, the TH 15 Corridor Coalition is a broad-based coalition of nearly 150 public and private members established in 2004 to promote safety and increased mobility through much needed improvements along the rapidly growing 130-mile TH 15 Corridor from Sauk Rapids (at I-94) to Fairmont (at I-90). The corridor is used each day by thousands of local commuters, regional shippers, and tourists serving the regional centers of St. Cloud, Hutchinson, New Ulm, and Fairmont. It is critical to the economic development and sustained growth in all of south-central Minnesota.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your support for federal funding for a comprehensive corridor study identifying specific safety and access needs along the entire length of the corridor from Sauk Rapids to Fairmont, and funding for critical corridor preservation needs.

A study of this corridor is a critical first step to implementing improvements along the corridor that will benefit the entire region and the state. The Highway 15 Corridor is the first continuous north/south state Trunk Highway west of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and represents the best link outside of the metro area between Interstates 90 and 94. The corridor runs through the following nine counties: Benton, Stearns, Meeker, McLeod, Sibley, Nicollet, Brown, Watonwan, and Martin. The corridor is also an important tourism route, bringing southern Minnesotans, Iowans, and other non-residents to Minnesota's northern lakes and tourism destinations. It is anticipated that ultimate improvements to the corridor recommended in the study will attract some of the traffic away from both the I-35 corridor in Minnesota and the I-29 corridor in the Dakotas.

The Trunk Highway 15 Corridor Coalition recently achieved an important goal in securing a commitment from Mn/DOT to provide funding for a preliminary study of key safety, mobility, and continuity needs along the TH 15 Corridor, and to identify low cost, high benefit concept solutions. This preliminary study will incorporate a strong public participation component.

This request would support a much needed comprehensive study of the entire corridor and funding for critical corridor preservation needs. A small investment now to finance corridor planning and to encourage and train local governments in use of proper land use controls and access management standards will save millions of transportation dollars in the future, when highway construction investments are made.

The request for federal funding can be broken down into two components that are both critical to the orderly development of the corridor:

- 1) TH 15 Corridor Improvement Study: \$400,000
 - Coordination of existing and proposed county and municipal capital improvement plans and long range comprehensive plans.
 - Development of consensus of top corridor improvement priorities.

- Preparation of a Planning Guide for future development and improvements along the corridor, which addresses corridor safety and optimal land use planning and access management to promote economic growth.
- Specific and detailed planning for five segments of the highway corridor that are under immediate pressure to initiate corridor preservation.

2) Corridor Preservation: \$400,000

- The Coalition will coordinate local planning and zoning agencies and Mn/DOT to identify required setbacks and preservation areas.
- Right-of-Way acquisition and official mapping of key segments of the corridor

Mn/DOT has indicated that they support this request, and has pledged their support to provide funding for a portion of the required local match.

We will also continue our efforts to impress upon all members of the Minnesota congressional delegation the return-on-investment of this project. We believe that the TH 15 Corridor Study project will effectively identify corridor needs, including operational improvements and property acquisition needs that – if identified early – will save significant resources in the future.

Finally, on behalf of all of the members of the TH 15 Corridor Coalition, thank you very much for your past efforts in support of funding for the Trunk Highway 15 Corridor study and preservation project. We appreciate the commitment and hard work that you and your staff have demonstrated in working with us to secure federal funding for this important regional project.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Nies
TH 15 Coalition
McLeod County Commissioner

Dale Grove
TH 15 Coalition Secretary
Bonestroo

cc: Robin Goracke
Bob Ness