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U.S. Economic Development Administration Invests \$9.8 Million to Help Rebuild Critical Highway Link in Mankato, Minnesota

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Commerce Department’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) today announced a \$9.8 million grant to the Minnesota Department of Transportation for rebuilding portions of State Highway 169 near Mankato, Minnesota. The rehabilitation of the highway, which suffered severe flood damage in late 2010, will support the creation of 500 new jobs in the region and attract an additional \$10 million in private investment, according to grantee estimates.

“This EDA investment is a great example of the Obama administration’s commitment to helping communities affected by natural disasters rebuild critical infrastructure,” said U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Matt Erskine. “The EDA grant announced today will help rebuild a vital transportation link between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities region, supporting the local economy and ensuring that the highway will continue to reliably serve the area’s many agricultural producers and the jobs that depend on them.”

“This announcement is great news for the region and for our state and will help attract investment in the region,” said U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar. “These funds will go a long way to improving critical transportation infrastructure so that Minnesota’s farmers and businesses can continue to use Highway 169 even during severe flooding.”

“Highway 169 is critical to the movement of goods throughout south central Minnesota. I’ve seen firsthand what happens when floodwaters make it impassable and it’s not something we can afford to repeat,” said U.S. Senator Al Franken. “This is a smart, forward-looking investment that will help make sure Highway 169, and the economy of the region, isn’t disrupted by future floods. I’m very glad we’re finally going to get this done.”

“Highway 169 is a vital corridor for southern Minnesota families and businesses and is in dire need of repair,” U.S. Congressman Tim Walz said. “This is a smart investment that will rebuild critical infrastructure, create good-paying jobs, and help Minnesota’s economy grow. I’ve advocated for this project and am pleased it was chosen by the EDA on its merits.”

The project funded by EDA will raise the grade of a three-mile stretch of Highway 169 out of the 100-year floodplain between Mankato and St. Peter, allowing for future movement of freight even during severe floods. The area serviced by the divided multi-lane highway is an important agricultural region. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, it is home to more than 1,100 farms, with approximately 4.3 million acres in production. They account for almost half of Minnesota’s corn, soybean, and ethanol production. Up to \$2 million worth of agricultural products are hauled each day through the segment of Highway 169 that will be rebuilt.

This project is part of a \$200 million appropriation made by Congress to EDA to help communities that received a major disaster designation in fiscal year 2011 with long-term economic recovery and infrastructure support.

Within the context of the administration’s National Disaster Recovery Framework <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/recoveryframework/ndrf.pdf> (NDRF), EDA serves as the Coordinating Agency on behalf of the Department of Commerce for the Economic Recovery Support Function (RSF) to coordinate the activities of a diverse group of partner agencies supporting recovery in disaster-impacted communities. The activities consist primarily of improved information sharing and the leveraging of existing resources to make a positive impact for communities affected by disasters.

About the U.S. Economic Development Administration (www.eda.gov <http://www.eda.gov>) The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA makes investments in economically distressed communities in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.

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