

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, colleagues and fellow stewards of the 169 Corridor. For 17 years, the Hwy 169 Corridor Coalition has stood as a steady and determined voice for progress. We meet this evening at the close of a chapter that began in 2009, when a handful of communities made a simple but consequential decision: that the challenges of Hwy 169 would not be solved city by city, mile by mile, or voice by voice—but together. That often-admired trait of Minnesota—unity of purpose—has served us well. We did not form this Coalition to admire the problem. We formed it to address it.

From Mankato to the Metro, cities and counties set aside parochial interests and spoke as one. We insisted that safety was not optional. That congestion was not inevitable. That economic growth required infrastructure worthy of it. And the results stand before us. At the time the Coalition started its work, too many intersections along this corridor were defined by red traffic lights and red brake lights—and too often, by red in the accident reports. Congestion burdened commuters. Freight was slowed. Growth strained against infrastructure that had not kept pace.

And so we set about the steady, patient work of advocacy. That advocacy led to interchanges replacing dangerous crossings. Bottlenecks, relieved at I-494. Transit stations being opened. Flood-prone segments rebuilt stronger than before. Overpasses rising where once there were only delays and hazards. These are not abstractions. They are steel and pavement. There are lives made safer. There are minutes returned to families. And commerce has been set free to move.

On a more specific basis, we championed the reconstruction of the I-494 /Highway 169 interchange—once a daily trial for thousands—and saw it transformed into a gateway worthy of a growing region and in the process solved the #1 infrastructure challenge for Mankato. We supported the conversion of dangerous at-grade crossings into modern interchanges at TH-19, CSAH-69, and County Road 41. We stood behind the Marschall Road Transit Station, expanding opportunity and mobility beyond the single occupant vehicle.

We saw the 9 Mile Creek causeway rebuilt stronger and wider, prepared for the future. We watched the St Peter reconstruction and flood mitigation efforts protect both travelers and communities from forces beyond our control. We encouraged the development of grade separations, overpasses, and access management that turned conflict points into corridors of flow.

More recently, we lent out collective voice to the CH-59 interchange, to improvements at Bluff Drive and Jordan Avenue, and to the coming Hwy 282 and County 9 interchange—knowing that progress is not a single event, but a continuum.

We know that the Coalition did not pour the concrete, MN DOT and our local partners did that. We did not swing the hammers. Engineers and contractors did that noble work.

What we did was no less essential.

We brought cities and counties into one room. We forged agreement where geography might have divided us. We carried a unified message to St. Paul and beyond: that Hwy 169 is not

merely a road, but an economic spine, a commuter lifeline and a corridor of opportunity stretching from Mankato to the metropolitan heart.

And because we spoke together, we were heard. Perhaps our greatest accomplishment was not a single project but proving, in real life, the value of collaboration. And we proved that when communities align their voices, the State and Federal governments listen. The results of that effort show that safety has improved, bottlenecks have eased, transit has expanded. Commerce moves more freely. Families arrive home more reliably. These are not abstract achievements—they are measurable, visible and enduring.

Tonight, the Coalition concludes its formal work. But it does not conclude in failure or fatigue. It concludes its work because the mission it set for itself—to elevate, prioritize and advance the corridor—has been fulfilled in substantial measure. The corridor is stronger. The partnerships are mature. The voice we cultivated now echoes naturally through established channels and the future projects now underway are carried forward by the very relationships that this body forged.

So let it be recorded that the Hwy 169 Corridor Commission stood its watch and did its duty. Faithfully. Steadily. Patiently. And well.

We leave behind safer intersections, stronger bridges, improved mobility and a corridor better prepared for the next generation.

We leave behind proof that when communities stand shoulder to shoulder, progress follows.

And we leave knowing that the road ahead—quite literally—is better than the one we inherited.

That is no small legacy and is certainly accomplishment enough for all our communities.

Thank you.